

Former Adventist Fellowship Weekend Registration

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Proclamation!

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FOR FORMER ADVENTISTS • INQUIRING ADVENTISTS • SABBATARIANS • CONCERNED CHRISTIANS

Victoria's journey

through Adventism and cancer to Jesus

Abiding in the Word

The faith once for all
delivered to the saints

Do not nullify the grace of God

Nailed! The law in Colossians 2 Appeal to Adventists Sabbath pride drained



Faithful to his promises

COLLEEN TINKER

This December marks one year and a half since Richard was fired from Loma Linda University because of his commitment to Life Assurance Ministries and his involvement in *Proclamation!* This December also marks another anniversary for us. It was Christmas of 1997 when God assured us that as we left Adventism and faced the losses and changes we could not yet see, our bread and water would be sure.

That Christmas we purchased a tree in the rain at night—and upon bringing it home we discovered the trunk was crooked, and the tree would not stay upright. After an

hour of struggling, Richard's frustration and mine were reaching critical mass. Suddenly, as clearly as if they had been spoken, the words "Give thanks in all things" rang in my mind. Leaning all my weight into the tree as Richard did something with shims at its base, I said, "Thank you for this stupid tree, Lord—now please make it stand up!" Moments later, the tree was standing, firm and solid, and it never faltered throughout the rest of the season.

The next morning, though, that tree had not drunk any water—not a good sign for an eight-foot fresh tree. The excessive amounts of dry needles that had fallen onto Richard as he struggled the night before had alarmed him then, but now they seemed to be a sign. The "stupid tree" was not only crooked; it was dead. It was too late to get another one; company was coming. We had to make the best of it.

Remembering the command to give thanks, Richard and I told Roy and Nathanael that the tree was dead, but we were going to thank God for it anyway. Every night our sons thanked God for the "stupid tree!"

Four days after the four of us began praising God for that dead evergreen, the water in its stand disappeared. I stared in disbelief at the empty water basin—but it wasn't quite "empty." A thin film of moisture remained on the surface of the bowl, as if the tree had just finished drinking, and the container was still damp. Astonished, I refilled the bowl—and I refilled that bowl every day for

the rest of the month. That night Nathanael thanked God for the "good tree!"

The day our company was coming I stood looking at that tree, sparkling with clear lights and white bows on its supple boughs. No more dead needles had fallen from that tree. "It's a resurrection tree, a tree of life," I whispered to myself as I breathed its fragrance. And then, as distinctly as I had heard the command to give thanks, I "heard" these words: "Your bread and water will be sure."

"Thank you, Jesus," I cried. If He could make a dead, crooked Christmas tree stand tall and drink, He could provide for us as we left Adventism and all we knew.

During this tenth year since God showed us His power to call things that are not as though they are (Romans 4:17), we have experienced His promises in even more profound ways. Some months we did not receive our stipends, diverting the money toward printing *Proclamation!* Logically our survival makes no sense, but as God promised, we have had what we needed. Looking backward at 2007, we can only say, "We praise you, Lord Jesus, for Your faithfulness!"

In this issue, Victoria Joustra shares her story of coming to faith in Jesus through the hills and valleys of brokenness and illness. Rick Langer reminds us to contend for the faith handed down to us once for all, and McGregor Wright and Dale Ratzlaff explore the details of this faith as described in Colossians 2 and Galatians 2. Joseph River shares his appeal to use the word of God as our only reference, and Dennis Palmer tells his experience of losing his Sabbath conviction.

If you know God is calling you to follow Him with deeper integrity, to trust Him with your convictions and cognitive dissonance, we want to assure you that He is faithful. He has promised His certain care and provision, and He will provide for you. Even if you lose everything as you follow Him, He is faithful and will give you Himself in unimagined ways.

The words of Paul tell the truth: "I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:8).

Give thanks in all things; your bread and water will be sure. †

"I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ."

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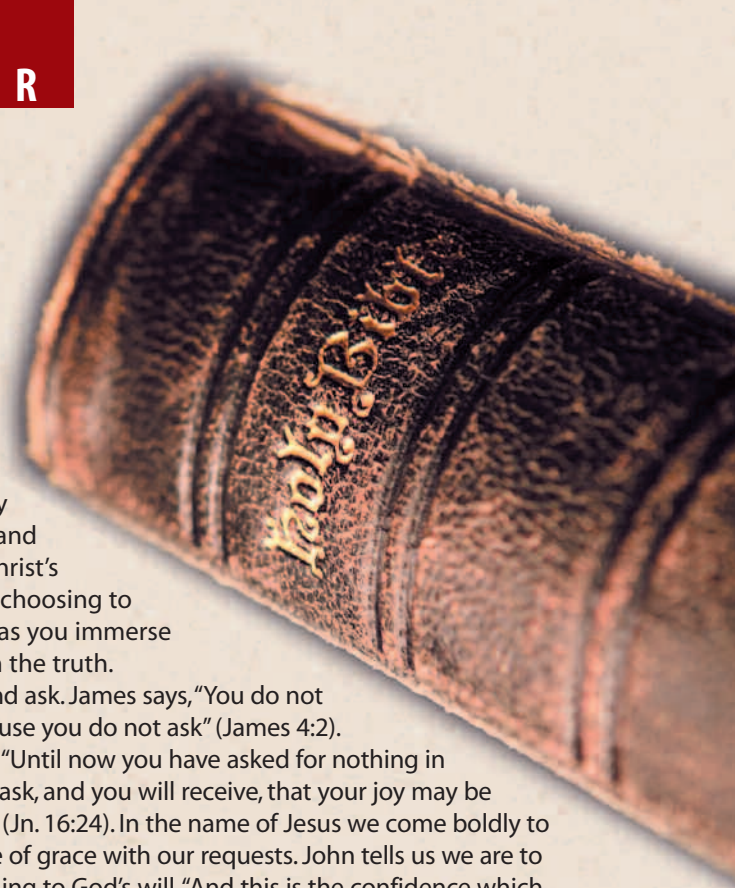
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Abiding in the Word



Q: How can I pray so my prayers will be answered?

A: There is more authority and power in the word of God¹ than I had imagined. When we finally come to the point that we *really* believe the word of God is true, it transforms our faith, our prayers, and our lives. Let's look at two of Jesus' promises to start:

If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it shall be done for you (Jn. 15:7).

And Jesus answered saying to them, "Have faith in God. Truly I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be taken up and cast into the sea,' and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that what he says is going to happen, it shall be granted him. Therefore I say to you, all things for which you pray and ask, believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you" (Mk. 11:22-24).

It is hard for us to comprehend the breadth of these promises. Our carnal minds immediately want to diminish

When we pray according to God's will, we are asked to believe we have received the request of our prayer before we see any visible evidence of its fulfillment.

these verses to hyperbole. The illustration of the mountain, however, is probably figurative—an illustration that could stand for any "mountain of difficulty," but if we meet the conditions, the promises should be taken at face value. Let us look at the conditions one by one.

Abide means to stay or remain. How do we abide? Jesus said, "If you abide in My word, *then* you are truly disciples of Mine" (John 8:31). To have the intimate fellowship of abiding in Christ requires that we remain in His word, because that is where we find the truth about Him.

Faith is a requirement in salvation as well as a condition for answered prayer. How, then, do we build up our faith? Paul tells us, "So faith *comes* from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ (Romans 10:17). My best faith-building exercise is to get out in nature by myself and pray God's word aloud so I will be speaking and hearing the word of Christ. I focus on His promises to me and His declarations about me. Try this exercise; it will build your faith in God's word and your fellowship with the Lord. You will be engrafting the word into your spirit.

Doubt is the opposite of faith. After Jesus calmed the storm on the lake, He said to His disciples, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" (Matthew 14:31). Therefore, instead of focusing on the reasons why God's promises may not work for us, trust in the power of God to fulfill His own

promises. Build up faith by speaking and hearing Christ's word and choosing to trust Him as you immerse yourself in the truth.

Pray and ask. James says, "You do not have because you do not ask" (James 4:2). Jesus said, "Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be made full" (Jn. 16:24). In the name of Jesus we come boldly to the throne of grace with our requests. John tells us we are to ask according to God's will. "And this is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask *anything* according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him" (1 John 5:14-15). Where do we find God's will? In His word.

Believe that you have received them, and they shall be granted you." When we pray according to God's will, we are asked to believe we have received the request of our prayer before we see any visible evidence of its fulfillment. This belief is not something that we can muster up in the flesh; it springs from the trust we build as we worship God and saturate our spirits with the promises in His word. This kind of prayer is not repetitive, begging prayer. Rather it is prayer offered in the name of Jesus based upon the known will of God as expressed in His word.

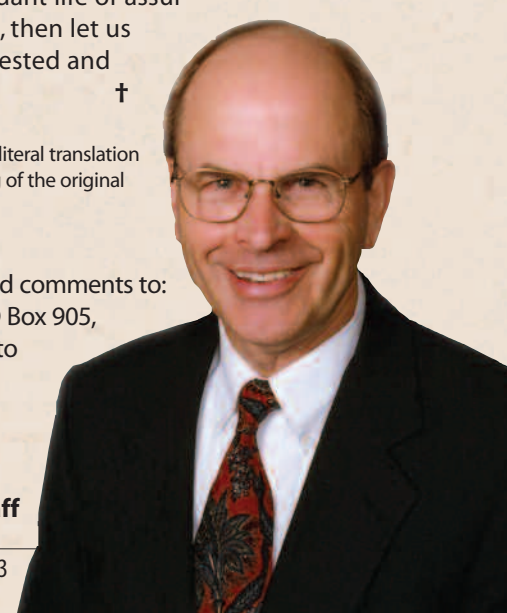
Ask and then, like Abraham, trust God's power to fulfill His own promise.

If we want to live the abundant life of assurance, joy, peace, and provision, then let us feed on God's word, which is tested and true and abides forever. †

1. By word of God, I mean a trustworthy, literal translation that accurately translates the meaning of the original languages, not a paraphrase.

Send your Bible questions and comments to: *Proclamation!*, Ask the Pastor, PO Box 905, Redlands, California 92373. Due to limited magazine space, not all questions can be published.

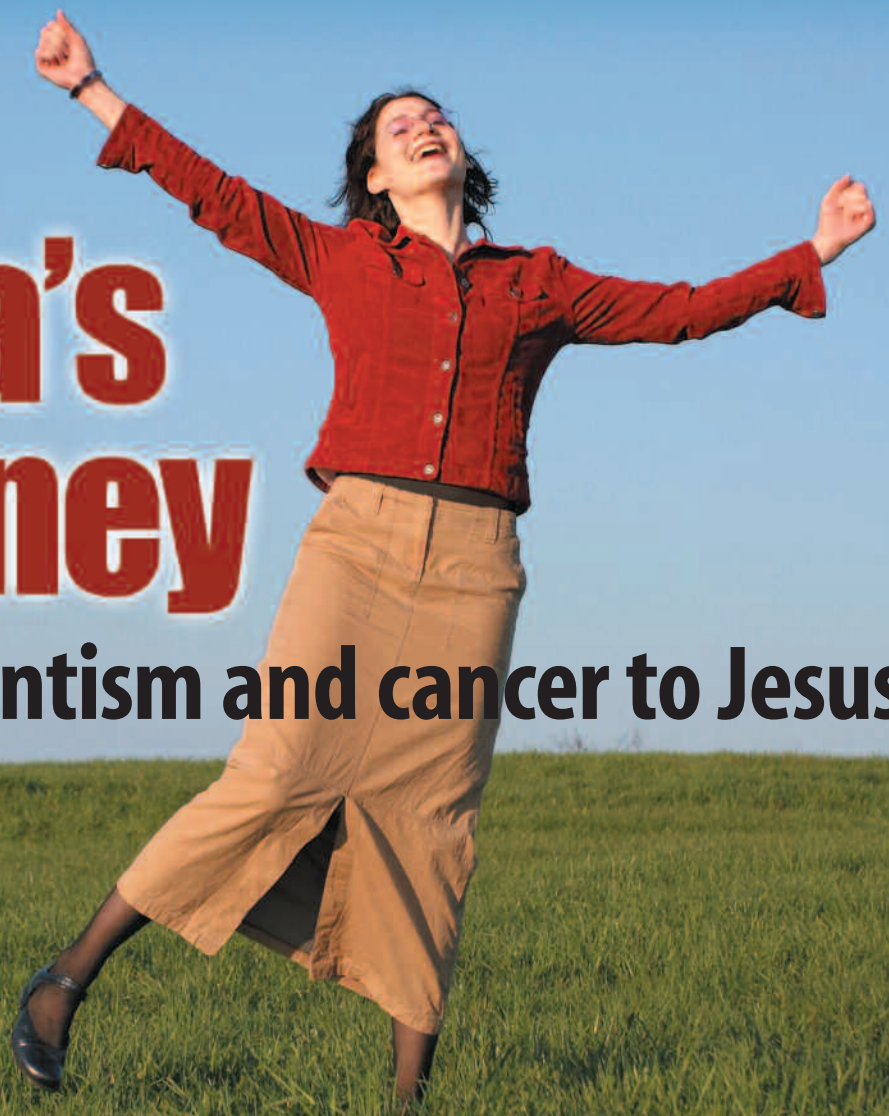
Pastor Dale Ratzlaff



Victoria's Journey

through Adventism and cancer to Jesus

VICTORIA JOUSTRA



A few months ago while visiting a local church I listened to a sermon on the Christian's walk. The preacher spoke of the mountains we climb, the valleys we have to go through, and the giants we need to slay. Over the next few days I found myself thinking about the mountains and valleys in my own life and how they have defined my walk with my Saviour.

I did not really know Jesus until late in my life. I was born into a family that had been Catholic for many generations. My parents did not attend church, but when we children were younger, we usually accompanied my grandmother, who was always very involved with the church. I learned more about God from her than from any religion. She also taught me my prayers when I was very young. When I was in my teens, I stopped going to church except for funerals and weddings—including my own nuptials when I was 19.

The years passed. At the age of 32 I helped bury my beloved grandmother. A short time later I went through a very bitter divorce and a custody battle for my son. When the legal proceedings were finished, we moved to a new town, a new house, a new job, and a different life.

Sometime later I met a really good man who loved me and my son, and we both loved him. We had begun to talk about

sharing our lives, when someone ran a red light, and our beloved friend was taken from us.

I spent three days at the hospital praying to God to spare him, but he did not get better. His parents finally gave the doctors permission to take him off life support, and he was gone. Heartbroken, I walked out of ICU where I overheard the pastor from his parents' church tell them that their son was taken because he was a sinner. I told that pastor that if this was how God operated, I wanted no part of Him. Then I told God to stay out of my life and leave me alone.

I walked—no, I ran away from God. Years went by before I knew that He did not leave me.

Empty

Life went on. For the next few years I believed the emptiness I felt inside was my mourning for my lost friend. Some of it surely was, but I didn't understand the depth and source of my pain. My life was a routine of going to work, taking care of the home, and spending as much time as possible with my son. He became my one reason for living, the only person inside my heart. I kept all others at a distance.

Then came the day that the company I worked for declared bankruptcy, and I was out of a job. I had no notice and no pay-

check. Without realizing what was happening to me, I went into a depression. The only time I could force myself to act normal was when my son was home. When he went to school, I closed the drapes, locked the doors, and shut out the world. I would either sleep or sit in front of the TV until it was almost time for him to get off the bus.

One day a program came on TV in which Billy Graham was giving a sermon on forgiveness. I started to change channels, but for some reason I didn't. I ended up watching the whole program. Graham said there was nothing we could do that God would not forgive, if we sincerely repented. I did not know if I should believe that, but something happened inside, and I got on my knees and told God that while I did not expect Him to forgive me for telling Him to stay away from me, I was truly sorry for doing so. I had come to realize that the dark emptiness in me was because He was not there. I told Him that I wanted Him to know how truly sorry I was. I don't remember the next minutes, but when I became aware again, I was still on my knees, and there were dried tears all over my face. I felt at peace for the first time in many years. It took me a few minutes to realize that my empty feeling was gone.

For the next few weeks, I cleaned house, did yardwork, and watched the TV listings for the next Billy Graham program. When it finally returned, I called the number listed on the screen for those who wanted prayer. After hearing my story, the lady talking with me prayed with me, and I invited Jesus into my heart and life. When I got off the phone, I went to my knees again, promising that never again would I turn my back on Him, no matter what came my way. I promised to be faithful. A few weeks later the Billy Graham ministry sent me a Bible study on the book of John and advised me to find a church home.

I dusted off the Bible that had been given me years before and started reading. I read it through several times; then I started doing Bible studies I would get through the mail. Some of them were quite good; others I discarded after a few lessons. I learned something from all of them.

A new church

Life went on. I returned to work, this time with developmentally delayed adults. They taught me much about love, acceptance, and trust, and I am grateful for the time I spent with them. During this time my dad became ill, and as my son was about to finish high-school, I made plans to move back to my hometown. We put our house up for sale and found another where we wanted to live. Also during this time, I had renewed an old friendship with the man who later became my husband. We share many things in common and have a deep devotion and love for each other. My one regret is that he does not share my

faith, although I believe that God is working on that.

After getting settled into our new home, I continued my correspondence Bible studies. When I had completed one particular set of lessons, I got a call from a pastor of the local Adventist church. That last set of lessons had been from the Adventist ministry's head office in the province where I live. The pastor had been contacted when I finished the course, and he called to see if I would like to visit his church on Saturday. They were having a special service, he said.

I went, and I witnessed the baptism of a young girl that day. Everyone was celebrating the event with a potluck and much socializing. There were so many happy people, and they all were praising and loving the Lord. I enjoyed the service and was drawn to them, so when they invited me back, I went again the next Sabbath.

I did not attend for the next few weeks, but then I got a call from the pastor, letting me know a seminar would soon be held in town. It would not be at the church, he explained, but he thought I would benefit from attending. I wanted to learn a little more about these "new found friends". Since I did not yet have a church home but was actually looking for one, I thought I would check out the coming meetings.

One year later I was baptized into the Adventist church.

Changes

The church soon took up a lot of my time as I threw myself into different activities: fundraisers, committee meetings, board meetings, Bible study night, women's ministry, and Sabbath morning and afternoon meetings. I was seeing less and less of my family, and I had not much time or energy for personal Bible study.

In fact, I started getting tired more than I should have been, and I visited my doctor. Several days later I received the news that I had advanced ovarian cancer. I had major surgery followed by three months of intense chemo therapy. Not long after that, I had more major surgery and six more months of chemo. My friends from church buoyed me up with visits, cards, uplifting little gifts, and much prayer. They really helped me through a rough time.

As I recovered I returned to church, only to find that some things had changed. There was a new pastor, and very few people were happy with him. Some had even quit coming to church, and there was much tension among the members. I now heard a lot of Ellen G. White in the serv-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Victoria Joustra and her husband Jacobus are retired and share their home in Newfoundland, Canada, with their two dogs. She has not found a church home yet but attends services at different churches and a non-denominational Bible study once a week.



The Faith once and for all delivered to the saints

RICK LANGER

This article is part of a presentation Rick Langer gave at the 2007 Former Adventist Fellowship weekend at Trinity Church in Redlands, California. In it he shows from the book of Jude that the gospel was entrusted to the church once for all, and as the body of Christ, Christians have the obligation to guard and share this pure gospel. We present this article as a foundation for the following two articles by McGregor Wright and Dale Ratzlaff on Colossians 2 and Galatians 2 respectively. We disobey the Lord Jesus and oppose Scripture when we do not understand and teach the truth about the gospel as it was handed down to us once for all through the life of Jesus and the words of the apostles.

Introduction

There is nothing new under the sun—so said Solomon almost 3000 years ago. In few areas is this more true than in area of false teaching. False teachings seem to be almost endlessly recycled. The changes are so minor that they serve only as faint distinguishing marks that ultimately confirm Solomon's pessimism regarding innovation. False teachers also bear striking similarity to one another, practicing with minor variation an all-too-familiar theme of intellectual and moral license.

The good news, of course, is that the thoughtful student of Scripture and church history is well equipped to discern false teaching because it is almost never new. An eye to the past—both in

Scripture and history—guides one remarkably well in the present. In what follows, I will take a quick look at a biblical example of discerning the error of false teaching. It comes from the book of Jude, and its ancient wisdom remains very instructive to us today.

Jude 3-4

The author of the book of Jude writes:

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints. For certain people have crept in unnoticed who long ago were designated for this condemnation, ungodly people, who pervert the grace of our God into sensuality and deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ. (ESV)

This passage contains a sort of mission statement regarding doctrinal orthodoxy as well as two practical guidelines for pursuing that mission. Let us consider each of these in turn.

The mission of orthodox belief

Regarding the "mission statement," Jude writes that we are to "contend for the faith once for all delivered to the saints." Our mission, it would seem, attaches to "a faith" that has been delivered to the saints. It is not the product of the community of faith; it is a gift

to the community of faith. We are the recipients and guardians of this faith; we are not its inventors. We have received a gift by the grace of God, and we are to pass it on to others as a gracious gift.

This faith was delivered “once for all.” Apparently Jude viewed this faith as having been delivered to the church by the original apostles. The idea that sits behind Jude’s thought is not unlike what Paul says when he states that no foundation can be laid other than the one that has been laid (1 Cor 3:11). This is not meant by Paul, and presumably not meant here by Jude, to mean that there is to be no further reflection or learning about “the faith.” Although “the faith” is something that is finished, final, complete and delivered once-for-all to the Church, as members of the Church our understanding of it is progressive. Indeed, Paul portrays himself as engaged in a building process—adding to the work of God by the ministry he carried out. The point, rather, is that no other foundation can be laid. Additional building must be done upon that one and only foundation that has already been laid—by the work of the person of Christ as delivered in the proclamation of the apostles of Christ. Any message that proclaims a new foundation, or even a message that pretends to lay an adjacent foundation, must be rejected. The foundation has been laid once for all.

Surely one implication must be a suspicion of new teaching, new revelation, and new Scripture. Especially suspect is revelation that displaces the original message, either by supplanting explicitly or by arguing that the original message has been hopelessly muddled and can only be rendered authoritative by a cleansing and purifying process. This process is generally accomplished by the “new revelation.” The claim is, in effect, that the faith was once delivered, was then lost, and is now being delivered again by the cleansing wisdom of the new prophet. Notice when this happens, one is effectively claiming that the faith may once have been delivered to the saints, but not “once for all.”

A broader examination of the New Testament is a helpful cautionary at this point. It is clear as we read more broadly that a faith once for all delivered to the saints does not eliminate all controversy. There is still room in this faith for the saints who jointly possess it to disagree among themselves on specific points of application. Indeed, Paul cautions strongly against dividing the unity of the body of Christ because of things like what we drink, or what we eat, or when and how we worship. A distinction must be made between the theological core which must be preserved and the diversity of expression of this core in matters of conscience and practice. The mission is clearly to purify the church of heresy not to purify the church of diversity.

Jude also gives two guidelines for identifying heresy which must be purified. Though his theological rule of thumbs for orthodoxy is brief and general, they have proven to be remarkably enduring and relevant all the way down to the modern day.

His signs of departure from the faith come in two distinctly different categories: moral departures and theological departures.

The moral signs of departure

In Jude, the moral indicator that one has departed from the faith “once for all delivered” is the perversion of grace into moral license or “sensuality.” The false teachers are marked by moral failure. They

have engaged in sensuality which Jude feels can be appropriately likened to the sin of Sodom and Gomorrah (Jude 7). He is not necessarily implying homosexual sin, but rather unrestrained and unrepentant rebellion. There was an unwillingness to limit their desires by moral restraint or respect for any external authority.

Reading more broadly in the New Testament will reveal that there is a second and equally pernicious moral failure which is characteristic of those who have departed from the faith once for all delivered to the saints: moral legalism. This legalism is a constant tension between Jesus and the Pharisees in the Gospels. It does not matter if the issue is how to keep the Sabbath, how to wash one’s hands, or with whom one should eat. It is clear that Jesus reserves His harshest words of condemnation for the legalism of Pharisees. This tension becomes even clearer in the Epistles. Paul is outraged that the Galatians have returned to a Jewish legalism that he deems to be equivalent to departing from the Gospel. In Galatians, Paul wishes the legalistic circumcision party would “mutilate themselves.” In Colossians, Romans, and Corinthians Paul gives strong cautions against legalistic judgments regarding what people are eating, the holiness of one day versus another, and celebrating festivals. Such legalism is as much a perversion of God’s grace as is moral license, and it is equally imperiling to a person’s soul.

The theological signs of departure

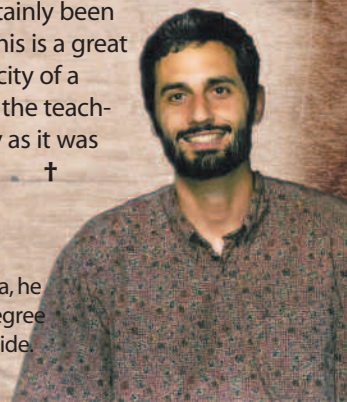
Regarding the theological departure, Jude observes that the false teachers are denying “Jesus Christ, our only Master and Lord.” Though we do not know the exact nature of the denial, it would be safe to assume it entailed denying the deity of Christ since he uses the somewhat unusual phrase Master and Lord. Such a denial is used elsewhere in the New Testament to identify heretical departure from the faith (1 Cor 12:3). This theological departure is probably the root of the moral departure from the faith. Because they have denied Jesus His role as Lord, they do not feel compelled to obey His moral teaching. The theological error plows the field and allows the moral error to grow.

Once more, a broader reading of the New Testament would indicate that other equally problematic errors are possible—specifically, the denial of the humanity of Christ. In 1 John 4, John exhorts his readers to test to see whether spirits are from God. What are the marks of an authentic spirit? A spirit that is from God affirms that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh (1 Jn 4:2). On the other hand, those who deny this truth are not from God (1 Jn 4:3). Heretical theology departs from orthodox theology in either of two ways: by denying the deity of Christ or by denying the humanity of Christ. This notion was firmly entrenched in the mind of early Christians by the closing of the canon—long before it was formally expressed by phrases like “fully God and fully man.”

In this short passage, Jude gives a remarkably insightful and durable test for orthodox Christian belief. Though much more could be said, and though there have certainly been other sorts of departures from the faith, this is a great starting point for evaluating the authenticity of a denomination, church, or teacher. Testing the teaching is a mission that is as important today as it was 2000 years ago!

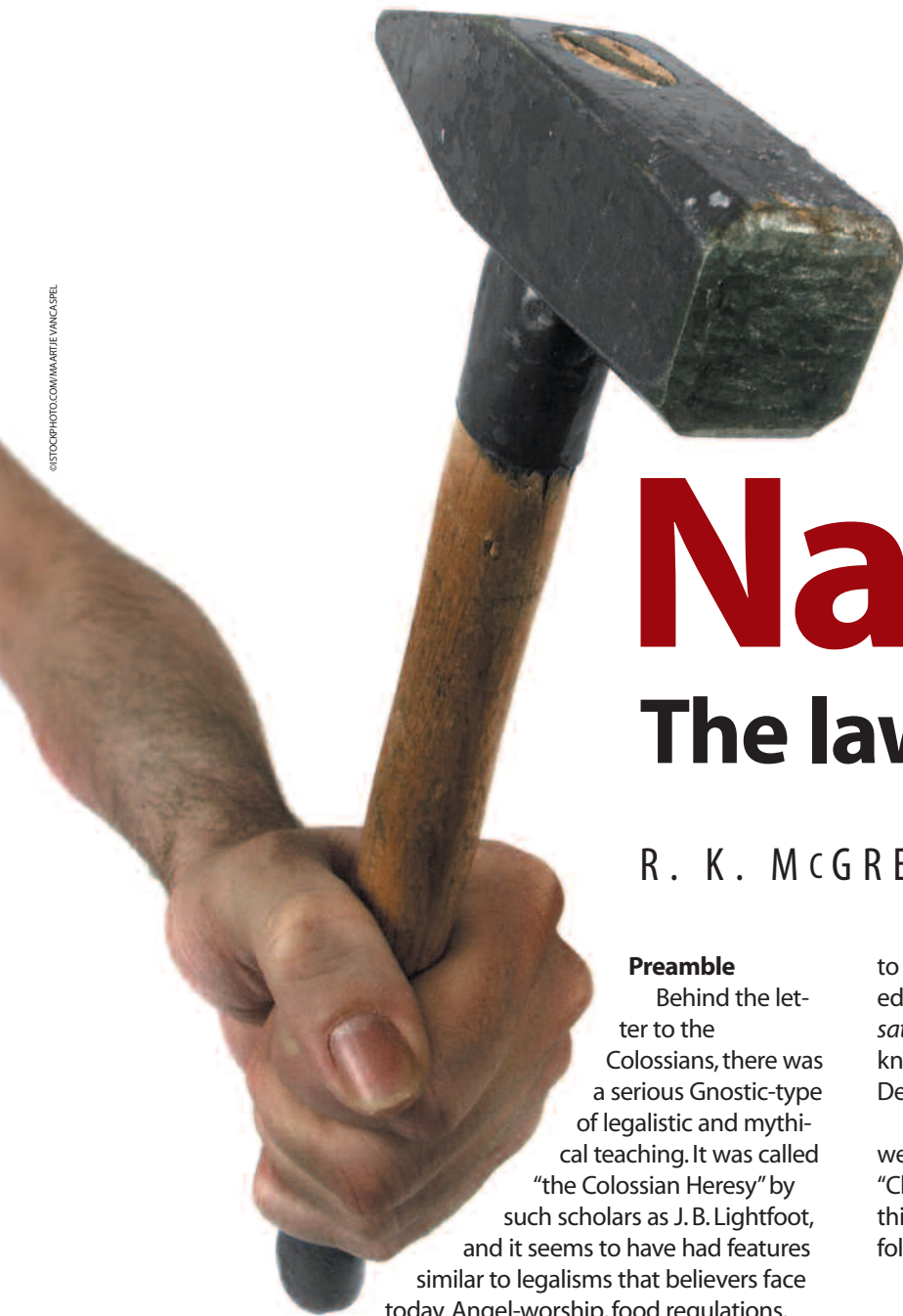
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Rick Langer is an Associate Professor in the Biblical Studies and Theology Department at Biola University. Prior to coming to Biola, he served for over twenty years as a pastor at Trinity Evangelical Free Church in Redlands, California. Rick holds an undergraduate degree in chemistry from Colorado State University, and MDiv from Talbot Seminary, and an MA and a PhD in Philosophy from UC Riverside. He and his wife Shari live in Redlands; they have two children: Crystal, 20, and Mark, 18.





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Nailed!

The law in Col. 2:10-23

R. K. MCGREGOR WRIGHT

Preamble

Behind the letter to the Colossians, there was a serious Gnostic-type of legalistic and mythical teaching. It was called "the Colossian Heresy" by such scholars as J. B. Lightfoot, and it seems to have had features similar to legalisms that believers face today. Angel-worship, food regulations, and the keeping of Jewish holy days and festivals from the old (Mosaic) covenant were being imposed on Christians by these false teachers. Paul appeals to the work of the cross to explain why those observances are not relevant for us under the new covenant today. By the middle of the second century, these ideas Paul opposed had evolved into the full-blown sects called Gnosticism, but Paul already had to combat their beginnings in his own day.

The first seven verses of the chapter state the preeminence of Christ over all merely human philosophies and life-styles. The Christian life is to be lived on the very same principle on which it was entered, by faith in Christ alone (v. 6). We received him by faith, and we must "walk in him" (live our lives) likewise by faith, by trusting the One whom we know has spoken truth

to us. It is Christ who is the Source of all wisdom and knowledge. The Incarnate Logos Himself is the final exegesis (*exegeta*, Jn 1:18) of all God's truth because, in the words of a well-known statement of the Incarnation, the complete fullness of Deity dwells in Jesus "bodily" (v. 9a).

Paul is now going to expound the Source of the eternal life we have received, which is emphatically not the law, but "Christ, who is our life" (3:4). There are very good reasons for this perspective, as Paul will now tell us. Open your Bible and follow along through the comments.

Verse 10: ...and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

Jesus is himself the fullness of the Godhead, and we, too, receive our fullness of spiritual life from Him. He is the true source of "all rule and authority." The term *kephale* (KJV head) here means "source," not "boss," as its use in verse 19 shows clearly enough. Gnostic demons and archons have no authority with Jesus, and they cannot provide a true revelation from God.

Verse 11: and in Him you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ;

All "in Christ" have been circumcised with the divine and supernatural circumcision of the heart Jeremiah predicted for

all those who are in the new covenant, having come to “know the Lord” (Jeremiah 31:33-34). This “Christian circumcision” is “without hands,” a phrase borrowed from Daniel 2:45 where it describes the coming kingdom of Christ. Paul stated in Colossians 1:13 that believers have already been translated into God’s kingdom, and in this verse we learn how: by regeneration—the new birth. This new birth ends the rule and reign of “the body of flesh,” or the body of sin, which is described and condemned by the old covenant Law (v. 14).

Verse 12: having been buried with Him in baptism, in which you were also raised up with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.

This transition from the old to the new covenant was symbolized visibly by our water-baptism, which Peter says presupposes we are believers with a cleansed conscience (1 Pet 3:21). Baptism combines the significance of three components of our transfer into the new covenant: God’s judgment, our testimony to our new faith, and our cleansing from the corruption of sin. Just as circumcision in Israel pointed forward to believers’ hearts being circumcised and cleansed from sin by acceptance of Christ’s eventual death and resurrection, so on this side of the cross, baptism looks back to what God has done for the individual in Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection. The visible act of baptism also depicts our being raised spiritually with Christ and points forward also to our final bodily resurrection. Just as God raised Christ from the dead, so also He raises us to a newness of life “by faith,” or trust, in the work that God has done in saving us. Our salvation is just as much a miracle of God’s sovereignty as Jesus’ own resurrection was.

Verse 13: When you were dead in your transgressions and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He made you alive together with Him, having forgiven us all our transgressions,

Baptism represents something else, too; we start out “dead in transgressions and sins,” (as Paul has already said in Ephesians 2:1), and must be “made alive,” (regenerated), a blessing also found “in Him.” This blessing results in complete forgiveness, not just of past sins, but of “all our transgressions,” all our large and petty failures, now and in the future, to meet the standard of God’s own righteousness. The phrase “buried with him in baptism” is probably an allusion to Christ’s own baptism, which was a public testimony announcing his Messiahship to Israel (John 1:31). Our baptism is likewise a public testimony to our belonging to Him and announces our discipleship. Moreover, Jesus called his death a “baptism” in Matthew 20:22-23. Further, Jesus’ own resurrection life is the real source of our regenerate life. Both Jesus’ resurrection and our regeneration are equally God’s work, not ours, and when we obey the promptings of the Spirit Who regenerates us, good works follow to manifest our faith (Eph 2:10). The faith which alone saves is never alone, as James makes clear in 2:14, and Paul in Galatians 5:6.

In the same instant that Jesus died as my substitute (see Matthew 20:28), the new covenant was also substituted for the old, wholly replacing it as the believers’ rule of life.

Verse 14: having canceled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross.

Our forgiveness is based on the fact that the handwriting of the law which condemned us (“which was hostile to us”), God himself removed from the equation, nailing it to the cross. This removal of the law—the entire Mosaic law including the Decalogue—literally occurred as a public testimony to the passing of the old covenant, when Jesus the Incarnate Torah took his perfect obedience to the cross and was nailed there in the very same body in which resided “the fullness of the Godhead bodily” (verse 9). Thus the dying of Jesus terminated the old law completely, and his resurrection proclaimed a new day under the new covenant. In the same instant that Jesus died as my substitute (see Matthew 20:28), the new covenant was also substituted for the old, wholly replacing it as the believers’ rule of life. Further, just as the old covenant was replaced by the new, so when we are born again, Christ’s resurrection life replaces our old life which God has set aside as worthless.

Just as the old covenant could never sanctify the sinner, so our fleshly body of sin cannot generate a justifying righteousness, “for no flesh shall be justified (declared righteous) by the law.” Jesus’ own “active and passive obedience” literally is the white robe of righteousness in which He clothes us when we are regenerated. Without this robe of Jesus’ own obedience covering us, nobody could be saved, because even after we are born again, we do not achieve moral perfection in this life. The law’s job was merely to identify (Romans 2:20) and to increase sin (Romans 5:20) and to point toward the dying Messiah (as in Isaiah 53). Now, on this side of the cross, our debt is cancelled—a debt that an eternity in hell could never pay. As Isaiah says, (Isaiah 53:11), “He shall see the travail of his soul and will be satisfied.”

The Old Testament text is still the inerrant word of God under the new covenant. The Old Testament law, typology, and promises still point to Christ, as they always did. In fact, they are the means by which we know that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Under the new covenant, however, we preach the Torah as embodied in Jesus, and His righteousness is imputed

Food laws and Sabbaths were mere shadows of the real things to come, and we now have the real things. Jesus Himself is the substance of those shadows.

to us in our justification. The law has been abolished as a requirement of obedience. “Cast out the bondwoman and her son” (Galatians 4:30) does not mean, “Give her a separate bedroom and keep her on; she’ll be useful for defending ourselves against the antinomians.” Rather, it means the old covenant has no place in the new covenant household of God.

Verse 15: When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

The fulfillment of the long-promised redeeming atonement in space-time history by Jesus’ death vindicated God’s sovereignty in the salvation of believers. Against all the machinations of the devil and his minions, in the most public way possible, God defeated the powers of evil by the death of his Son. The cross didn’t kill Jesus, for He was not on it long enough. Rather, His death was a voluntary act; He “gave up His spirit,” having cried, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Verse 16: Therefore no one is to act as your judge in regard to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath day—

THEREFORE. This important copulative must not be glossed over. The whole point of the passing from the old to the new covenant by means of Jesus’ taking the Torah to the cross in His flesh is about to be revealed! Therefore, nobody may judge the Christian for not obeying the details of the Mosaic law. The law has been “put out of the way” by God Himself. Even the Sabbath is abolished—all of them! (*sabbatyn*, Sabbaths plural).

Verse 17: things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Christ.

Food laws and Sabbaths were mere shadows of the real things to come, and we now have the real things. Jesus Himself is the substance of those shadows. Further, the Body of Christ is the present reality, since we no longer have Jesus bodily with us (2 Corinthians 5:16). Instead, His resurrection life is lived out through the Church as the Body of Christ, through which He acts now in the world. His body encompasses both Gentiles and Jews (whom the Mosaic food laws were meant to separate), and His body also

enjoys the perpetual Sabbath-rest promised for God’s people who believe (Hebrews 4:7, 9-10).

Verse 18: Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind,

Don’t let anyone trick you (seduce you) into schemes of sanctification by law-keeping. The “mystery religions” of those days had all sorts of occult techniques of approaching the unseen world through legalism, asceticism, the worship of angels, and occult speculations here condemned. Observers of those mystery religions pompously imagined that through those things they could enter the unseen world! The “mind of the flesh” contains no glimmer of the true Light, which finally entered the world with Jesus (John 1:8-13).

Verse 19: and not holding fast to the head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God.

The “Colossian heretics” did not “grasp the Source” of their spiritual growth. Instead of spiritual growth being accelerated by occult techniques or special knowledge and observances, the Source of growth is the risen Christ, the Head (Source) from which the body is fed and nourished. All the body’s parts (each Christian) receive gifts from God (1 Corinthians 12:7 and following) with which to serve the body as a whole. Thus, the growth of the body in grace is “of God.” The work of sanctification is not just for the purpose of individual growth but is also for the health of the whole body.

Verses 20-22: If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, “Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!” (which all refer to things destined to perish with use)—in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men?

The Greek word for “rudiments” (*stoicheia*) is deliberately ambiguous. It commonly meant not only the “elements” of nature, but also the axioms or basic structural principles of a philosophy of life. Similarly, this word applied to the law as a pattern of living. Christ frees us from the erroneous philosophies of the world (verse 8), with their false and enslaving presuppositions, the *stoicheia* (basic principles or axioms) of the Greek philosophers. Likewise, we are freed from the earth-bound principles of the law. This is remarkably negative language for a Jew! It shows how strongly Paul felt about the complete passing of the old covenant, and how personally he knew the seductive power of legalism in any form. As a highly-committed Pharisee, he had trod that tiresome path himself and wanted to save the Colossian believers from going that way.

The verse also contains a warning against dependence on “the traditions of men,” a subject which became a big issue between Rome and the Reformers in the Reformation era. Romanist salvationism has been highly legalistic since the early Middle Ages. In that system, the believer is required to “merit the merits of Christ” through the sacraments and by obedience to the hierarchy from the Pope down. When Jesus died as our representative and substitute, however, we died also in Him to the law. Why then, should we submit to traditionalist legalisms? This question cannot be answered affirmatively from the Bible; in fact, we shouldn’t submit to them.

Verse 23: These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.

Following these “teachings of men” provides an outward show of wisdom and humility, of “self-made religion” (NASB) and abuse of our bodies by ascetic practices. Paul, however, is explicitly clear about these things: they have no value and cannot protect us against fleshly indulgence. In fact, they may be demonic (1 Tim 4:1-5).

Conclusion

The law tells us what sin is, that it is “exceedingly sinful” (Romans 7:13), and that it is repugnant in God’s sight. That’s the bad news. The law also pointed to Christ, leading like those slaves who led children to school in the Greek world (the *paidagogoi* of Gal 3:24). Today it continues to stand as the witness of Christ, identifying Him as the only One who completely fulfilled all its righteous requirements.

Now, however, we live under a very different covenant, and this new covenant is “not like” the old (Heb 8:9), which could be “broken” by the sinners with which it was made. This new covenant is based on “two unchangeable things,” God’s oath and God’s promise only, and He will never break His word, as Jesus said in John 10:35. Paul confirms this fact in 2 Timothy 2:13, for “He cannot contradict himself.” Jesus Himself guarantees the new covenant. That’s the good news of the Gospel.

In their determination to show how the law is still “relevant” to the believer, the Puritans of the 15-1600s often preached a “third use of the law” which reestablished it as the rule of life for the Christian. This preaching was a disastrous move and led to the theory today called *theonomy* which brings all of life once more under the curse of the law. Either Jesus took this curse upon himself, or it still rests on every believer, and nobody is saved. But no theonomist could have written the

highly negative evaluation of the Mosaic law we find in Hebrews 8:13 and 7:18; “When he said ‘a new covenant’ he has made the first obsolete. But whatever is becoming obsolete and growing old, is ready to disappear.” And “there is a setting aside of the former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness, for the Law made nothing perfect....”

Attentive readers will draw their own conclusions.

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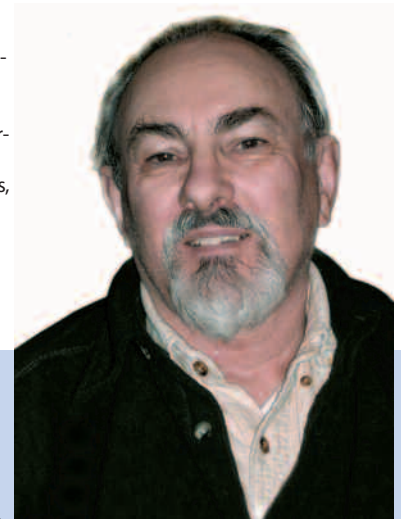
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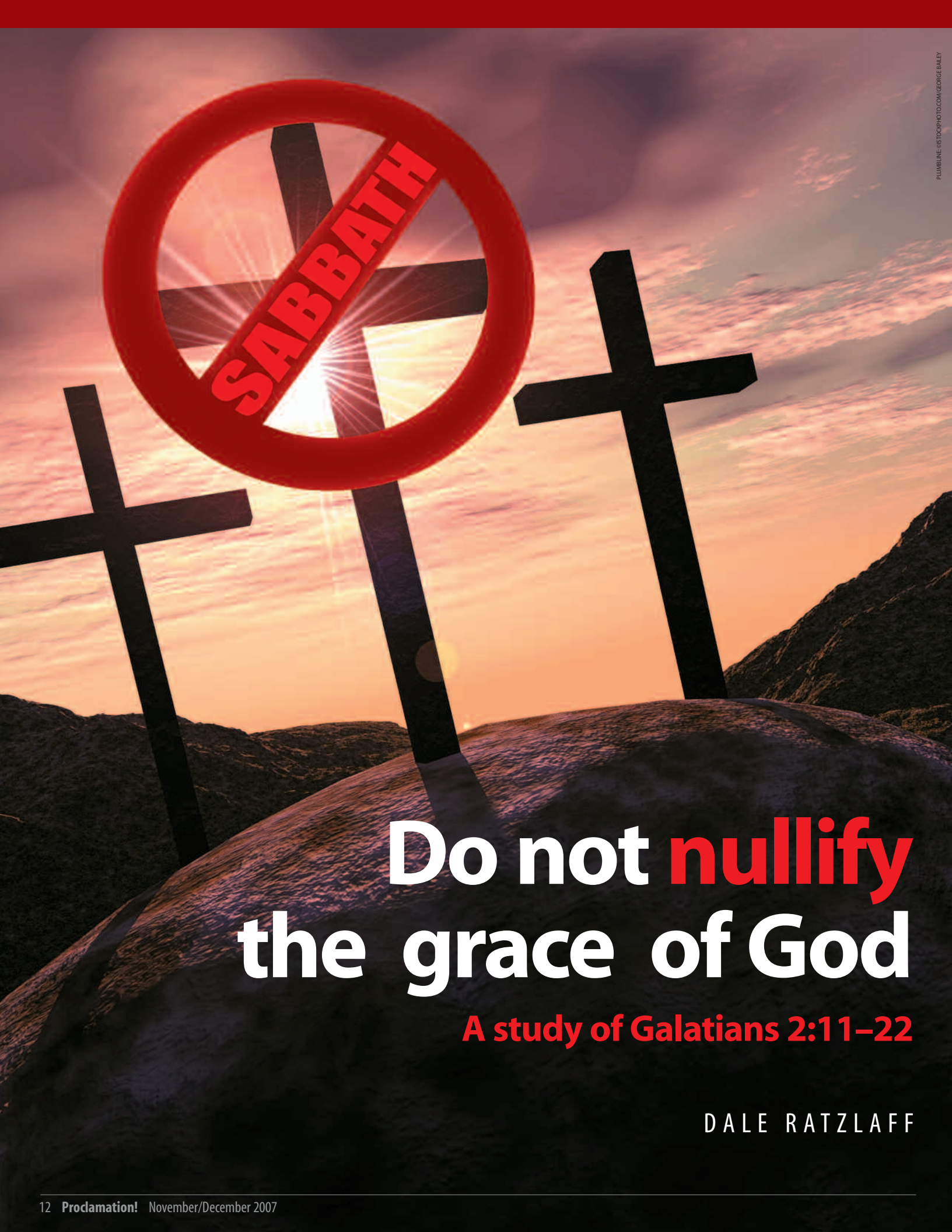
Readers are also directed to the fullest and most accurate account from the 1800s of the doctrine of Atonement in the New Testament, the superb study

by Thomas Crawford, *The Scripture Doctrine of The Atonement*. My copy is the fifth edition of 1888, but it has been reprinted since. It is effectively a commentary on every verse dealing with the nature of Christ’s atoning death. Unusually helpful. The best book on the NT terminology for the Atonement is Leon Morris’ *The Apostolic Preaching Of The Cross* (Eerdmans, Third Edn., 1965).

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Do not **nullify** the grace of God

A study of Galatians 2:11–22

DALE RATZLAFF



was working on a study guide for the Phoenix Former Adventist Fellowship when the deeper meaning of Galatians 2:21 impressed itself upon my mind. I like to teach by asking questions so I started asking myself a number of questions in preparation for asking those who would come for the study. I found that the more questions I asked, the more this verse divulged its meaning. As my study continued searching for clues in the wider context, I began to see the serious implications this verse has for those who continue to require obedience to law, especially old covenant law.

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal. 2:21).

What does it mean to nullify the grace of God? How serious is it to nullify the grace of God? How does one nullify the grace of God? What are the implications? I did not expect this verse to carry so much weight. When I finished the full contextual study, I understood the tonnage this verse carried.

Background

The Judaizers told the Christians in Galatia that Paul was preaching a watered down version of the gospel. They implied that the church at Jerusalem required the Christians to keep the law. In essence, they said that Paul was teaching “cheap grace” by not instructing the Gentiles to keep the law. In effect, the Judaizers were pitting Peter against Paul, implying that Paul was not really an Apostle and did not teach the Galatians the whole gospel as was taught in Jerusalem. In Galatians 1 through 2:11, Paul proved that: (1) he was a true Apostle, (2) the Jerusalem leaders recognized his Apostleship, (3) the gospel Paul proclaimed was identical to the gospel taught by Peter and John.¹ Now in Galatians 2:12-22 Paul is going to show that while some of the Jewish believers in the Jerusalem church (the Judaizers) were enforcing the law on Gentile Christians;² it was the Jewish Christians who needed clarification on the gospel and not Paul.

Paul confronts Peter

I tried to imagine how significant an event it was for Paul publicly to confront Peter. Peter had walked with Christ for about three and a half years, and Christ had commissioned Peter to be the leader of the early church.³ Peter preached on the Day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit filled and empowered the believing Christians, resulting in the conversion of 3,000 Jews.⁴ Further, it was the ministry of Peter and John that resulted in the Samaritans receiving the Holy Spirit.⁵ Moreover, the angel directed Cornelius to call for Peter, and when Peter proclaimed the simple gospel, “through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins,” the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles. Not only must these facts have been daunting, but there was the Scriptural admonition to correct a brother in private.⁶

We must ask ourselves why Paul chose to correct Peter publicly. The answer is both simple and profound. Peter was living in duplicity. It is clear that Peter knew the gospel. Here is what happened.

But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy (Gal. 2:11–13).

That same Peter who denied Christ around the warming fire at the arrest of Christ⁷ was now again compromising his integrity for the sake of reputation. He was acting like a chameleon. When in the company of the Gentiles he lived like the Gentiles (i.e. not under the law and associating freely with them), but when the “party of the circumcision” arrived, he pretended he did not associate with the Gentiles, and he shunned them in their own presence as well as that of the Jews. He pretended to be living in obedience to the law which did not allow Jews to associate with Gentiles (Acts 10:29; 11:3).

Paul apparently did not rush to confront Peter. The record says that in time even Barnabas, Paul’s companion in ministry, was carried away by Peter’s example. Note carefully the crux of the matter:

But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, “If you, being a Jew, live like the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?” (Gal. 2:14)

Peter was not being straightforward about the truth of the gospel. That event impelled Paul to confront Peter publicly. In the next few verses, Paul shows that even Jews—who see themselves as righteous and not as Gentile sinners⁸—are “justified by faith in Christ and not by works of law; since by the works of law no flesh will be justified.⁹ The next two verses really influenced my thinking.

But if, while seeking to be justified in Christ, we ourselves have also been found sinners, is Christ then a minister of sin? May it never be! For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor (Gal. 2:17, 18).

I meditated and prayed over these verses a long time. What was Paul saying? Then it became clear. Paul had destroyed the whole concept of attaining righteousness by obedience to the law.¹⁰ The Judaizers were saying, “Yes, have faith in Christ, but then you must also keep the law and distance yourself from the Gentiles as the law demands.” To this concept Paul responded:

For if I rebuild what I have once destroyed, I prove myself to be a transgressor (Gal. 2:18).

Paul is saying that if someone tries to add the “righteousness of the law” to “the righteousness of faith,” he makes

himself a transgressor, and he makes Christ a minister of sin. How is this? When one starts to rely on any law-keeping to improve his righteousness, he is demonstrating two things.

First, he demonstrates that the “righteousness of God”¹¹ that is imputed to the Christian the moment he believes in Christ is not sufficient for his ongoing Christian life.

Second, the Judaizers said that faith in Christ was not enough for Jews, even though it might be enough for the second-class Gentiles. This in effect made two classes of “righteousness.” The Jewish/Christian righteousness was “righteousness by faith” plus the “righteousness of the law” which gave them—they thought—a superior standing.

and delivered Himself up for me (Gal. 2:20).

With this background we are ready to unpack what it means to “nullify the grace of God”:

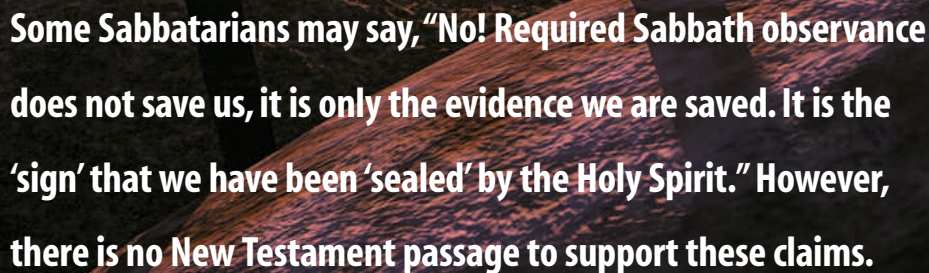
Nullifying the Grace of God

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal. 2:21).

How does one nullify the grace of God? Contextually, there is only one answer: required adherence to law for righteousness. The “righteousness of faith” which is the very “righteousness of God” cannot be improved upon whether it is for justifying or sanctifying righteousness.

How serious is it to nullify the grace of God by requiring obedience to law? In the context of Galatians, we find these answers:

- You desert Christ for a false gospel.¹³
- You sever yourself from Christ.¹⁴
- You fall from grace.¹⁵
- You put yourself back into bondage.¹⁶
- You put yourself back under the curse of the law.¹⁷
- You enslave yourself all over again.¹⁸
- You are bewitched.¹⁹
- You are subject again to the yoke of slavery.²⁰



Some Sabbatarians may say, “No! Required Sabbath observance does not save us, it is only the evidence we are saved. It is the ‘sign’ that we have been ‘sealed’ by the Holy Spirit.” However, there is no New Testament passage to support these claims.

The evidence of salvation is not something that can be required.

They saw Gentile righteousness as inferior. The Judaizers with their hybrid righteousness continued to “look down” on Gentile Christians and often continued to call them “sinners.”¹² However, Paul showed that this kind of theology would, in essence, make Christ a “minister of sin”. If Christ accepted the Gentiles with their inferior righteousness and non-observance of the law, then by so doing he was a “minister to sin”. Paul reacted violently to the thought, “May it never be!” Paul continues,

For through law I died to law, that I might live to God (Gal. 2:19).

In Greek, “law” is without the article indicating it refers to the law in general or the whole concept of law. Paul states that “through the law” he “died to the law”. Living under law makes one give up all hope in the law for two reasons. First, one never knows when his obedience is good enough. Why? It never is! Second, there are things that need reconciliation that are completely outside of the realm of law.

And through Him everyone who believes is freed from all things, from which you could not be freed through the Law of Moses (Acts 13:30).

Paul drives home the fact that those who have become true believers are completely free from law because Christ is not only one’s substitute, but He is also one’s representative.

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me,

Within the context of Galatians, there are three areas of law observance that the Judaizers were promoting: (1) circumcision;²¹ (2) no table fellowship with the Gentiles who did not observe the Jewish dietary laws;²² and (3) observance of the Jewish days of worship.

You desire to be enslaved all over again? You observe days [Sabbaths] and months [new moon celebrations] and seasons [annual feasts] and years [Sabbatical years]. I fear for you, that perhaps I have labored over you in vain (Gal. 4:9-11).

Could it be that required Sabbath observance is really something that “nullifies the grace of God”?

The Adventist baptismal vows include the following statement:

Is it your purpose by the power of the indwelling Christ to keep this law [10 Commandments], including the fourth commandment, which *requires* (emphasis supplied) the observance of the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath of the Lord and the memorial of Creation?

It seems clear that this is a requirement to keep the law and according to Paul, places one back under law for added righteousness. Some Sabbatarians may say, “No! Required Sabbath observance does not save us, it is only the evidence we are saved. It is the ‘sign’ that we have been ‘sealed’ by the Holy Spirit.” However, there is no New Testament passage to support these claims. The evidence of salvation is not something that can be required. Any legalist can fake such required evidence as the Pharisees did. Rather, the true evidence of salvation springs naturally from our new life in

Christ,²³ and the true evidence is the manifestation of the fruit of the Spirit, not Sabbath keeping.²⁴ Further, a Christian can be perfectly right with God with little or no developed fruit of the Spirit.²⁵

In Adventism, Sabbath observance, for all practical purposes, is an addition to the righteousness of faith without which one will not be saved. They teach that Sabbath observance is necessary in order to pass the investigative judgment. They teach that Sabbath observance is the “seal of God” which will keep them from getting the mark of the beast. Note the following references of Ellen White:

The Sabbath will be the great test of loyalty, for it is the point of truth especially controverted. When the final test shall be brought to bear upon men, then the line of distinction will be drawn between those who serve God and those who serve Him not. Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 605.

The sign, or seal, of God is revealed in the observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, the Lord’s memorial of creation... The mark of the beast is the opposite—the observance of the first day of the week...” Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 117.

I saw that the holy Sabbath is, and will be, the separating wall between the true Israel of God and unbelievers. Ellen G. White, *Early Writings*, p. 33, 85.

At all times and in all places God requires us to prove our loyalty to Him by honoring the Sabbath. Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, Vol. 8, p. 360.

God requires that His holy day be as sacredly observed now as in the time of Israel. The command given to the Hebrews should be regarded by all Christians as an injunction from Jehovah to them. Ellen G. White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 296.

A careful reading of the above quotes clearly shows that Ellen White is placing Christians under the Sabbath law of the old covenant. No Adventist keeps all these laws.²⁶

Carried to its logical conclusion, if Sabbath observance is accepted as the “sign” or “evidence” of true Christian living, then that same Sabbath keeping actually undermines that very claim for two important reasons: first, because Sabbath keepers do not keep all the biblical Sabbath laws or even the Sabbath laws taught by Ellen White,²⁷ therefore their imperfect Sabbath “keeping” only proves their Sabbath “breaking.”

Second, such so-called “evidence” moves the focus from Christ’s perfect righteousness to the imperfect “righteousness of the law.” For these reasons Paul who had achieved “the righteousness which is in the Law” considered his “law righteousness” nothing but “rubbish” when contrasted with “the righteousness of God” that comes by faith.²⁸

The parallel to the perverted gospel that was being promoted in Galatia to the gospel of Adventism is striking.

We must, then, recognize the full impact of Paul’s teaching.

I do not nullify the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the Law, then Christ died needlessly (Gal. 2:21).

But even though we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so I say again now, if any man is preaching to you a gospel contrary to that which you received, let him be accursed (Gal. 1:8, 9).

Do not nullify the grace of God. Accept the righteousness that comes freely from the Lord Jesus. †

Endnotes

1. See Gal. 2:1-9; Acts 15:11
2. But certain ones of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed, stood up, saying, “It is necessary to circumcise them, and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses.” Acts 15:5
3. Mt. 16:18; Jn. 21:15-17.
4. Acts 2.
5. Acts 8:14-17
6. Mt. 18:15.
7. Lk. 22:51-55.
8. “Gentile sinners” was a common expression of the Jews.
9. Gal. 2:16.
10. Rom. 3:20, 28; Rom. 4:13; 10:4, 5, Gal. 2:16; 3:11, 24; 5:4; Phil. 3:9.
11. Rom. 1:17; 3:5, 21, 22; 10:3; 2 Cor. 5:21, Jam. 1:20.
12. Gal. 2:15.
13. Gal. 1:6.
14. Gal. 5:4.
15. Gal. 5:4.
16. Gal. 2:4.
17. Gal. 3:10.
18. Gal. 4:9.
19. Gal. 3:1.
20. Gal. 5:
21. Gal. Gal. 5:2,3.
22. Gal. 2:12; 1 Cor. 10:25-27, Mk. 7:14-23.
23. Gal. 2:20.
24. Gal. 5:16, 22-26.
25. If it did, then Peter would not have been a true Christian when he compromised the gospel as mentioned in Gal. 2:11-22. Remember the woman of Samaria, the thief on the cross, the Corinthians and their problems who are yet “saints in Christ!”
26. See *Sabbath in Christ*, p. 71-74 for a list of the many Sabbath commands and prohibitions.
27. For a partial list of Ellen White’s Sabbath laws, see *Sabbath in Christ*, p. 388-392.
28. Phil. 3:6-9)



Dale Ratzlaff is the founder of Life Assurance Ministries, Inc, and owns LAM Publications, LLC. He served as an Adventist pastor for 13 years, seven of which were at Monterey Bay Academy where he taught Bible. He and his wife Carolyn left the Adventist church in 1981 when he realized he could no longer teach the investigative judgment in clear conscience. He has authored, *Sabbath in Christ*, *The Cultic Doctrine of Seventh-day Adventists*, *The Truth About Seventh-day Adventist “Truth”* and *Adventist to Christian*. These are available through his website, LifeAssuranceMinistries.com.



An appeal to Adventists:

Are you submitting to the **plumbline?**

JOSEPH RIVER *

I have spent several years in a careful, fair, and non-judgmental study of Seventh-day Adventism without the benefit of outside help or advice. I commenced this study because I have daily association with a fairly large number of Adventists whom I have come to love, and I dared not be persuaded what to think about their beliefs by anyone, lest I do an injustice to my associates and to their church.

I studied each phase of Adventist doctrine using the Bible alone as my guide with the Holy Spirit as my teacher.

I studied the investigative judgment, soul sleep, the Sabbath, the health message, and other lesser facets of Adventism. I painstakingly searched the Scriptures, spending time on this task daily, seven days a week. I wanted to know whether or not their doctrines were correct; if they were biblical, I would have to accept them.

At the end of four years of this intensive study, I submitted my final analysis to someone whom I considered an expert on the teachings of Adventism. I wanted an honest evaluation of my conclusions because I did not want to risk being unfair and unjust to the Adventists I knew.

The response from the man who read my paper was that my analysis was both correct and graced with the Holy Spirit.

After receiving affirmation of my analysis, I delved even deeper into the lives and experiences of Adventists and former Adventists, spending many hours over the past year-and-a-half in conversations, both in person and on line via the internet, with a wide variety of people who are or have been Adventists. I have concluded that the Adventist road is paved with outright heresy as its base and its covering.

I am not a formal theologian, but I am an avid student of Scripture and am involved both in teaching and in writing about the Bible and the Christian life. My peers might even say I can become quite passionate in some areas of my basic beliefs and will rise to defend truth and the Lord Jesus and the sufficiency of His word.

A plumbline

That aside, one morning as is my habit, I opened my Bible to read. Anguished over the state of my Adventist friends in the light of what the Bible actually teaches, I said, "Lord, surely You will somehow accept those people?" My eyes lit on a Scripture, and my heart was pulled to it. It seemed to jump off the page as I read it:

"Thus he showed me: and, behold, the Lord stood upon a wall made by a plumbline, with a plumbline in his hand.

"And the LORD said unto me, Amos, what seest thou? And I said, A plumbline. Then said the Lord, Behold, I will set a plumbline in the midst of my people Israel: I will not again pass by them any more" (Amos 7:7-8, KJV).

The Holy Spirit came upon me as I read this passage, and He said "River, what do you see in my word?" And I answered with tears, "Lord I see a plumbline."

Weeping overtook me as I realized what God was speaking into my spirit. We must take His word seriously regardless of how we feel about individual human beings. We must look into His word with all seriousness and accept it as the truth regardless of what any church's doctrines may be. God's plumbline is His word, not a person's sincerity.

Known by God

One morning I was thinking about the different beliefs flourishing in the world, and the Lord led me to this Scripture verse: "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish; neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one" (John 10:27-30, KJV).

I thought about this passage a while, and I said, "And what about those that do not hear You because their church teachings obscure Your word?"

God immediately led me to this Scripture, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy

name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (Matthew 7:22-23, KJV).

Another time I was thinking about the word of God and I came to this text, "And if any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-48, KJV).

His word that He has already spoken will judge heresy; it will divide heresy from truth. His Word is truth, and heresy will not stand in the Day of Judgment. Even if people sincerely believe heresy, thinking it is supported by the word of God because their church teaches that it is, their sincerity will not justify them. The truth God has already spoken in His word will judge them.

I make my appeal to my Adventist friends and their families; I realize that many of you are third and fourth—even

Even if people sincerely believe heresy, thinking it is supported by the word of God because their church teaches that it is, their sincerity will not justify them. The truth God has already spoken in His word will judge them.

fifth—generation Adventists, and most of you have been raised in Adventism from childhood. I appeal to you to set aside your teachings and to look into the word of God, and it alone. Don't just "read the Bible from cover to cover". Instead, set aside all your E.G. White books and ask God to direct your reading and to teach you what the Bible really says without your Adventist interpretations coloring your understanding. I set aside my teachings of 35 years for your sakes to study your doctrine; surely you can set aside your own doctrine for your own sake and that of your families to seriously study the plumbline of God's word. God's word that He has already spoken will finally judge us all.

My desire is for you and your families to be saved and to have full confidence in the finished work of our Lord on the cross for our righteousness and our salvation. †

***Joseph River** is a pseudonym. He has been a Christian for about 35 years, and attends an Assemblies of God church. He is 66 years old and a father of five children: 4 boys and a girl. His wife and he were saved at the same time and have been married 45 years. River is involved in ministry to Seventh-day Adventists in his home town and on the internet.

Sabbath pride drained FROM BACK PAGE

my entire family in a fatal car accident. I think today that the mourning would likely have been less if the tragedies had happened. Today, however, my joy has been restored by an understanding and new appreciation of the new covenant. I recognize the validity of God's law, and I can say with the Psalmist, "I will delight myself in Your commandments" (Ps. 119:47). However, I acknowledge that God's law is mediated by the new covenant and supremely by Christ. Christ's prescription for a satisfied life is not to keep the Sabbath, but to "bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ." †

Endnotes

1. All Scriptural references are from the New King James Version.
2. The notion that the account of the Sabbath in Gen. 2:1-3 was written in antici-

tion of the giving of the law needs to be further explored. Much of the material in Genesis was written with the law in mind. For example, the unclean animals went into the ark two by two; whereas, the clean animals went into the ark by sevens (Gen. 6:19-20; 7:2,9, 15). Yet following the flood, God instructed Noah that "every moving thing that lives shall be food" (Gen. 9:3). The distinction between clean and unclean animals was given in anticipation of a ceremonial law that would prohibit the eating of unclean animals. Similarly, the seventh day at creation was blessed and set apart in anticipation of the giving of the Sabbath law. God is recorded as having rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:3), but there is no proof that Adam and Eve kept the Sabbath nor is there any pre-mosaic command that Israel was required to observe the seventh day. Apparently, the Sabbath commandment (Ex. 20:11) was instituted because of what God had done, not because of any antediluvian law. It is, nevertheless, reasonable to think that Adam and Eve did enter into the Sabbath rest, but not by way of a command, but by way of enjoying God's presence. However, this bliss was soon interrupted, possibly on the Sabbath, and so their rest became a ceaseless restlessness, a restlessness that will remain for all until they find their Sabbath in Christ.

Victoria's journey FROM PAGE 5

ices; her quotes had not been so evident before. In fact, I had never read anything she wrote, and I was informed it was time I started.

I have a great love for Jesus, and I heard that one of her books, *The Desire of Ages*, was touted as the best book ever written about His life. I got the book and began to read—and thus began my exodus from membership in the Seventh-day Adventist church. What I was reading did not agree with the Bible, and I found her book diminished Jesus. I soon had many questions the pastor and elders could not answer to my satisfaction. Further, I did not feel the same Spirit when I attended church that I had experienced before my illness. Most times I came away empty.

I returned to personal Bible study using the Bible only.

My cancer returned twice more and required chemo or radiation treatments. During my treatment and recovery, I was mostly housebound, so my husband bought me my first computer. I started researching the Seventh-day Adventist church and Ellen G. White. I spent hours at the computer, and as I read, my eyes were opened. As I learned the truth about Ellen White's false claims and about the Adventist church, I experienced roller-coaster emotions. I felt deceived, angry, ashamed. One night while lying in bed, I found that I could not pray. I sensed heavy darkness around me, and it seemed my prayers could not get through. Very frightened, I called out, "Jesus, help me!" And He was there! The next morning I gathered all the research notes and put them away in a file, and I stopped reading EGW materials.

Not alone

I had grown close to many people at church and felt torn and confused about what to do. After what I had discovered, however, I felt that I could not be true to Jesus and my promise to Him and stay in the Adventist church.

About this time I followed an online link that led me to the Former Adventist Fellowship Forum. There I found that I was not alone. I spent many hours reading the posts and stories of people who had left Adventism and found the strength and courage to write a letter to have my name removed from the church books. It

was not an easy letter to write. Most of my friends were church members.

To make matters worse, cancer had raised its ugly head again, and I was back in treatment. This time the effects of the treatment were the worst ever. The pastor e-mailed me that he did not want to bother me until I was finished with my treatments (as I was at this time obviously not thinking straight), but he wanted very much to meet later and answer any questions I might have. He even offered me a book by Clifford Goldstein which he thought would put my mind at rest.

I e-mailed him back that my questions had been answered by my research, and I had no interest in the book. I further told him that my reading for the next while would be the Bible only.

Besides the pastor's email, I received separate calls from two ladies wanting to know if I was giving up the Sabbath. Other than those three contacts, one friend still keeps in touch and visits me.

I am apostate. At first I felt resentful, but I now realize that most of them are third or fourth-generation Adventists. By leaving, I was questioning their whole lifestyle. They in their small church had not deceived me, but they are themselves being deceived. I pray for them, but I am very happy that God led me out of there.

Awesome God

I have climbed some mountains in my life and have had some real mountain top experiences, such as the day my twin grandsons, only a few hours old, were placed in my arms, and I gave thanks to God for the blessing of those small miracles. At times like that I feel close to God, and I am so grateful for His presence.

I have also gone through valleys. It may sound odd, but I am even more grateful for the valleys than the mountains, because it is there that I feel Him close to me. There He enabled me to face my giants. There He showed me His faithfulness.

I am in treatment again, for the 5th time. This is one more valley to cross. But I am not afraid, as I know He is with me, and that He will never let me walk alone. As a 'cyber friend' of mind likes to say, "Our God Is Awesome." †

The Gift of all gifts



DALE RATZLAFF

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6).

One cannot read these timeless words from the "Gospel Prophet," without the inspiring rendition of Handel's Messiah playing in the sacred halls of memory. Although this ancient verse was penned some 2,700 years ago it speaks a timeless message of good news to us today.

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given

This Child is for us! He is heaven's gift to us! The incarnate Christ is a gift from the Father to us. He is our Child, our Son." For God so loved the world that He gave. . . ."¹ He did not loan Him to us, He gave Him. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine."²

Like any gift this Child must be received.

"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God" (Jn. 1:12).

The reception of this Gift unites us to the infinite God.

"That they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us" (Jn. 17:21).

Packaged with the Gift of this Son are the other "good gifts" of grace: the Holy Spirit,³ rest,⁴ eternal life,⁵ glory,⁶ authority⁷ the kingdom,⁸ and all the promises of God's Word.⁹

Wonderful Counselor

He is Wonderful and He is a wonderful Counselor. How wonderful it is to have a Counselor who guides us into all truth and prepares our way before us.

"In Him also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:10, 11).

When following His counsel we are safe. He knows the end from the beginning. In Him "are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."¹⁰

The mighty God, The everlasting Father

When we realize that this Son is also the "mighty God, the everlasting Father," we long for the day when we can see Him face to face and not be overwhelmed by the brightness of the revelation as was this Gospel Prophet.

"Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts" (Isa. 6:5).

The revelation that this Son given to us is indeed the Mighty God, the Everlasting Father who could say, "He who has seen me has seen the Father"¹¹ is a necessary confession of the Christian faith.

"I am from above; you are of this world, I am not of this world. Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for unless you believe that I am He, you will die in your sins" (Jn. 8:23, 24).

Couple this verse with John 8:58 where Jesus says, "Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am." Here Jesus declared in no uncertain terms that He is the "I AM," the self-existent One. How important then, that we not compromise the full deity of Christ.

The Prince of Peace

As I write this short article, the news is filled with anxious uncertainties: the worsening international relationships, Sudan calling for the execution of a teacher who allowed her class of children to name a teddy bear "Mohamed." Yet in spite of appearances, our Son is the Prince of Peace!

"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world" (Jn. 16:33).

"Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful" (Jn. 14:27).

How the world needs this ancient message! May God impel us to proclaim the simple gospel—the unsearchable riches of Christ—the only hope for a world in desperate need of the good news of this Son who was given to us. †

Footnotes

1. Jn. 3:16.
2. Sos. 6:3.
3. Lk. 11:13.
4. Mt. 11:28.
5. Jn. 10:28; 17:2.
6. Jn. 17:22.
7. Lk. 10:19.
8. Lk. 12:32.
9. 1 Cor. 1:20.
10. Col. 3:2.
11. Jn. 14:9.

All things are possible!



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There was no humanly possible way for us to have done what was accomplished in 2007. We praise God for what He did.

Advances during 2007

- Our mailing list increased from 10,000 to nearly 35,000 addresses.
- *Proclamation!* magazine was redesigned and moved to full-color printing.
- Contracted staff increased from one person to four: Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff, Richard and Colleen Tinker.
- Our ministry expenses almost tripled.
- Updating of website including all back *Proclamation!* issues placed online.
- Doors opened for new opportunities to reach people for Jesus.

A large donation near the end of 2006 launched this year's expansion, but it did not cover all the year's expenses. But God Himself impressed readers to help.

Some months the Ratzlaffs and the Tinkers did not receive their stipends, using the money instead to get *Proclamation!* printed. Sometimes the amount of money needed for the printing or

for the cost of mailing the magazine arrived the day before the checks were due. But it was always clear—God keeps His promises. He has provided all we have needed.

Second year of expanded mailings

More and more people are discovering the gospel of the Lord Jesus and emerging from the darkness of a false gospel. We thank God for revealing Himself and the truth of the gospel, and we invite you to join us in the work of declaring this truth to those who don't yet understand it.

This issue of *Proclamation!* marks the beginning of our second year of mailing to the expanded mailing list. In addition, new ministry projects are before us.

If you have been helped through Life Assurance Ministries, why not help others through your prayers and regular monthly support?

We praise God for being faithful to keep His promises to supply all we need when we seek the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:31-33). Further, we are trusting Him to continue providing as we enter another year of growing ministry.

What you can do to help

- **Remember to pray** for this work every day. We "fight not against flesh and blood."
- **Monthly donations** to Life Assurance Ministries, PO Box 905, Redlands, CA 92373.
- **Credit card donations** call 800-355-7073 or online at www.LifeAssuranceMinistries.com.
- **Major gifts** to underwrite new outreach projects. Please contact us: 909-794-9804.
- **Your will.** Listing Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. in your will. Leaving a gift through your will is easy. Just ask your attorney to include a statement similar to this in your will:
"I give to Life Assurance Ministries, Inc. of P.O. Box 11587, Glendale, AZ 85318, the sum of [dollar amount] or [percentage] of the residue of my estate so others can learn to trust fully in Jesus."

LIFE  ASSURANCE
MINISTRIES

Now former Adventists



September/October 2007 issue
Back issues are available at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

Thank you for such a quality and helpful publication. The short article on the back page of the September/October 2007 issue, "Adventists questions my faith", was so insightful and stunning in its brevity. I so identify with Philemon Aroni. I have received your publication since its inception and

have always found an article that seemed to address issues I was "wrestling" with at the time I received the publication. I do not know whom to thank for placing my name on the subscription list; all I can say is, Thank you.

Within the last month since receiving this last issue, my wife and I now call ourselves "former Adventists." We have enrolled for the third annual Former Adventist Fellowship Weekend.

I am requesting that you add the enclosed names to your subscription list.
CERES, CA

Bunch of crybabies

I am a third generation Seventh-day Adventist, and my wife has been an Adventist for 39 1/2 years. We are very happy being members of God's true church.

Just because someone in the church has

ticked you off or said something to you that you did not like, seems like you ran and started your own little religion.

You and your following are disgruntled with the Adventist church—suck it up and go on with your life. Leave members of the true faith and Mrs. White alone and quit trying to prove "my" faith and Mrs. White wrong.

You know better; you know the Adventist church is the truth and Mrs. White is a true prophet from God.

When I saw an advertisement in your unsolicited magazine for a Former Adventist Fellowship weekend, it assured me all I said above is true. You did not get your way in the true church, the Adventist church, and now you are a bunch of crybabies.

I would really hate to be any of you on Judgment Day. I am an Adventist for life, and

Adventism, Jehovah's Witnesses and the true Jesus

Thank you for your article "Discovering the Adventist Jesus" (May/June, 2007), but the enclosed booklet [a pamphlet published by the Watchtower Society] has now confused me. Could you explain Jesus' role? So many of us are puzzled. I am 74 years old and a very disappointed Seventh-day Adventist. *Proclamation!* is an eye-opener, and we look forward eagerly to receiving it. Thanks and may God continually bless your ministry.
PEMBROKE PINES, FL



May/June 2007 article

Back issues are available at LifeAssuranceMinistries.org.

Editor's response

In order to address your question which seems to stem from the contents of a tract published by the Watchtower Society, I need briefly to address the Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching regarding the identity of Jesus.

According to the Christian Apologetics & Research Ministry (www.carm.org), Jehovah's Witnesses do not believe in the Trinity, considering it to be a demonic doctrine. They believe "God is a single person, not a Trinity, who does not know all things and is not everywhere. He first created Michael the Archangel through whom He created all 'other things,' including the universe, the earth, Adam and Eve, etc."

Further, they teach that salvation would require Jesus the Messiah to be crucified. Consequently, "When it came time for the savior to be born, Michael the Archangel became a human, in the form of Jesus. Jesus grew and kept all the laws of God and never sinned. Finally, when Jesus died, it was not on a cross, but on a torture stake, where he bore the sins of mankind—but this did not include Adam's sins. Jesus rose from the dead as a spirit, not physically (his body was dissolved and taken by God) and during his visitations to people on earth, he manifested a temporary physical body for them to see and touch." (<http://www.carm.org/jw/nutshell.htm>)

It is possible that the Jehovah's Witnesses' teaching about Jesus seemed compelling to you partly because Adventists also claim that Michael the Archangel is Jesus. In fact, however, the Bible teaches that Jesus is eternally God—the second person of the Trinity. John 1:1-3 identifies Him this way: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with

God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being." He was never an angel. In fact, Hebrews 1 clarifies that Jesus is greater than all the angels, and Jesus identifies Himself as the "I Am" whom all the Jews understood to be God (John 8:58).

Jesus, the eternal Son of God, came in the flesh (Philippians 2:5-7; 1 Timothy 3:16; 1 John 4:2). He became a curse for us (Galatians 3:13) and became our sin so that we might become the righteousness of God (2 Corinthians 5:21). He reconciled all things in heaven and on earth by the blood of His cross (Colossians 1:20) and disarmed Satan and all demonic powers by nailing the law and its curse to the cross in His body (Colossians 2:14-15). He broke down the barrier between Jews and Gentiles "by abolishing in His flesh" the law with its commandments and ordinances, making one new person in Himself out of the two who had previously been kept separate by means of the law (Ephesians 2:14-15).

Jesus opened "a new and living way" into the presence of the Father (Hebrews 10:20) and "put away sin" by His own sacrifice (Hebrews 9:26). He is the one Mediator between God and man who gave Himself as a ransom for all (1 Timothy 2:5-6).

He died and rose again on the third day—and He rose with a physical body that could be touched and which bore the marks of His crucifixion (Luke 24:38-40; John 20:27) and ascended to the Father in this same body in the same way He will return again (Acts 1:9-11). He is now our eternal high priest who saves us forever when we "draw near to God through Him" (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Jesus is the eternal Son of God who became human and carried our sins to the cross where He died in order to offer forgiveness to all who embrace Him as their Savior. He was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead, conquering death, defeating Satan, and providing eternal life for all who place their faith in Him. He is the eternal high priest who intercedes for us. We are eternally secure because of His blood of the eternal covenant (Hebrews 13:20-21).

Jesus is our Savior, our Substitute, our eternal High Priest whose blood ensures that all who believe in Him will have eternal life.

there is nothing you can say or send me that will ever change my mind. Therefore, take my name off your mailing list...

All this reminds me of a statement Mrs. White made about some people that left the church in her day and were doing exactly what you are doing—all against the church and her, making false statements about her. She states, "They want to leave the church, but they still cling on to the edges." You know who these men were.

GREENVILLE, SC

Articles good

It has been well over a year since I last contacted your Former Adventist website—I don't have a computer anymore—yet *Proclamation!* faithfully arrives at my home.

The articles are very good, but some of the letters to the editor show me many Adventists are still held captive by another spirit and another gospel (2 Corinthians 11:1-4). Adventism teaches a salvation message and then corrupts it with the "gospel" of the 10 Commandments—one of many false teachings.

My prayer for the Adventists is that the stronghold of the spirit of error be pulled down from their minds (1 John 4:6) in the name of Jesus!

Stand firm in the Lord Jesus.
BUHL, ID

Satan couldn't be happier

Let's hope and pray that people like Dale Ratzlaff and Colleen Tinker are having their fun now. Satan himself could never be happier. Satan is the winner when people are drawn into his fold instead of Christ's. How stupid can anyone in their right mind be to follow after people like Dale and Colleen? Anyone who thinks that God's prophet E.G. White or God Himself is wrong had better do some soul-searching.

Life Assurance Ministries, Inc

MISSION

To proclaim the good news of the new covenant gospel of grace in Christ and to combat the errors of legalism and false religion.

MOTTO

Truth needs no other foundation than honest investigation under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and a willingness to follow truth when it is revealed.

MESSAGE

"For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not of works, that no one should boast." Ephesians 2:8,9

I'm very surprised that God don't (sic) strike you both down dead. If He did it would be well-deserved. But He won't for the same reason He didn't kill Satan in the Garden of Eden. He has to let sin run its course. Just remember, Dale and Colleen, when Christ comes in the clouds of glory, your evil teachings and evil lifestyles will be brought to a halt. Right now you both can sit back and laugh just like the people did at Noah. But when the water reached their chins, then the laughing faded away.

WADENA, MN

Grace defined

I just got my September/October [2007] *Proclamation!* several minutes ago and eagerly turned to the Adventist "glossary". I looked for the word "grace"; but you didn't include it, so here it is.

Grace (Adventist): A Christian who has never heard the Adventist "truth" is under grace by virtue of his Christianity. However, once this Christian learns the Adventist "truth", grace only can continue if he/she becomes a member of the Seventh-day Adventist organization. Having become a member of Adventism, grace only can continue as long as the member stays loyal to the Adventist denomination and true to the weekly Sabbath. If, however, this person strays from the Adventist denomination yet still is true to the Sabbath (by becoming a Seventh Day Baptist, for example), they enter a state of semi-grace.

Grace (Christian): The state we as sinners are in when we accept the free gift of salvation. See the entire book of Ephesians, especially Ephesians 2:8-9, which says, "For it is by God's grace you have been saved through faith. It is not the result of your own efforts, but God's gift, so that no one can boast about it" (TEV).

GROVER BEACH, CA

Happy Adventist

Please remove my name from your mailing list. I am a very happy Adventist and there isn't anything you could offer me.

KATY, TX

Love it

We love your wonderful magazine. Please send it to our friend.

BELLAIRE, OH

Come back to the family

I am praying for you, that you will not let pride or whatever else is driving you to be accusers of the brethren to keep you from coming back to the family. I am a member of the Adventist church, and I'm praying for you and all other offshoots that drain the strength of God's church. Remember, Satan has always been successful at dividing and conquering.

HARTLAND, WI

Dangerous situation

God's commands are for our happiness. He knows what is best for us. When we love God and appreciate salvation through Christ, to obey Him in everything is a JOY! It is not a burden.

You have become deluded into believing that you can actually have assurance of salvation, while breaking God's Holy Sabbath day. May God have mercy on you and show you your plight—and what a dangerous situation you have drifted into!

EMAIL

Affirming

Proclamation! continues to affirm my new understanding of the Bible. God bless your entire staff. It is absolutely amazing to see how the Holy Spirit will lead to an understanding of truth as opposed to perpetuated tradition.

MAPEL GROVE, MN

God-send

I want to thank you for all the work you do. I so appreciate your magazine *Proclamation!* It is beautiful, thoughtful, inspiring, challenging, and a God-send to me. Please keep up the wonderful work you do. I have a more meaningful relationship with Jesus because of you. Thank you!

HUNTINGTON BEACH, CA

Best years of our lives

A good friend sent *Proclamation!* to us about four years ago. They've been the best years of our lives! Since then, we've come to rest in Jesus' full and finished atonement. God has given us peace! It's like coming out of a cave! Please pray for our parents.

GRAND TERRACE, CA

Historical issue

I have enclosed a check [for an amount] which is about as much as I can give at this time. Lari Mobley's article on "Sanctification: It's Who You Know" and Colleen Tinker's article, "In Adam or In Christ: Where Are You?"

(July/August, 2006) were exceptionally well-written and thought provoking. In some ways, that entire issue was historical, for I cannot recall any other former Adventist publication proclaiming boldly the security of the believer. This emphasis is what makes your ministry unique and biblically on target.

LAKE ELSINORE, CA

MAIL LETTERS TO THE EDITOR TO:

Editor, *Proclamation!* Magazine
P.O. Box 905
Redlands, CA 92373

OR EMAIL EDITOR: proclamation@gmail.com

2006 2007 2008

THIRD ANNUAL FORMER ADVENTIST FELLOWSHIP WEEKEND

For the Glory of God

**FEBRUARY 15-17, 2008
REDLANDS, CALIFORNIA**



- Participants include Mark and Leslie Martin, Dale and Carolyn Ratzlaff, Greg and Paula Taylor, Joan Yorba-Gray, and John Rittenhouse and testimonies from some who have left Adventism.
- Breakout sessions addressing issues former Adventists must face.
- Food and fellowship time, and sales area featuring books and videos by former Adventists.

SCHEDULE

- Friday, February 15, 2008, 6:00 to 7:00 PM • Arrival and registration
- Meetings and breakout sessions Friday through Saturday evening
- Plan to stay for worship service with Trinity Church (our host church) on Sunday morning and then enjoy a lunch hosted by the Redlands Former Adventist Fellowship.

TO REGISTER (SPACE LIMITED TO THE FIRST 150)

- \$65 per person, must register before January 25, 2008
- Sign up online or use coupon below.
- Fee includes cost of sessions, handouts, three meals on Saturday, and snacks. Scholarships are available!
- You must make your own lodging/transportation arrangements. A limited number of local church member's homes are available for those with limited financial resources. Call for more information.

TO SIGNUP ONLINE

Go to www.FormerAdventist.com and follow the links.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Phone toll free (877)-349-6984

YES, I WANT TO REGISTER for the Former Adventist Fellowship weekend at Trinity Church in Redlands, California, February 15-17, 2008. (Does not include transportation or lodging.)

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Number attending _____ X \$65 (each person) = Total amount enclosed \$ _____

Vegetarian? YES # _____ NO # _____

Please return with check or money order in included envelope *before* January 25, 2008.

LIFE ASSURANCE MINISTRIES, PO BOX 905, REDLANDS, CA 92373



will make a personal confession. I came to Westminster Theological Seminary, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with a little bit of pride—actually, a whole lot of pride wrapped up in the law. That pride was the thought that I was theologically correct with regard to the major doctrines of the Christian faith. Since I was well-grounded in the Sabbath from teachers at Union College, Lincoln, Nebraska, and from a course in Sabbath philosophy taught by instructors at the Seventh Day Baptist headquarters, I felt that nothing could shake my Sabbath convictions. Then Dr. Verne Poythress, in a course in hermeneutics, started talking about *theonomy*. I realized I might be in serious trouble with the law of God, for I was bending the Sabbath to fit my worldview. I was cooking on the Sabbath, an act which violated the principle laid down in Exodus 35:3, “You shall kindle no fire throughout your dwellings on the Sabbath day.”¹ Besides this inconsistency, I was overlooking the discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments. In hopes of holding onto my Sabbath theology, I wrote a thesis on the Sabbath (“The Seventh Day in Genesis 2:1-3: A Study of Sabbath Theology”), and my typist wrote that the International Date Line is a crooked line arbitrarily determined by man and therefore we do not really know which day is actually the Sabbath in certain parts of the world. In writing my thesis, I found that Sabbath theology was

bankrupt, and resorting to sophistry to boost up my viewpoint was not my style. I avoided the anti-Sabbatarian passages in my thesis, and this avoidance was my failing, for had I pursued them further, I would have emphasized how Christ is our Sabbath rest and that Christians are under a new covenant that does not obligate the keeping of the seventh day. Had I been more careful in my research, I would have seen how Sabbath and circumcision are signs of the old covenant (Gen. 17:10-27;

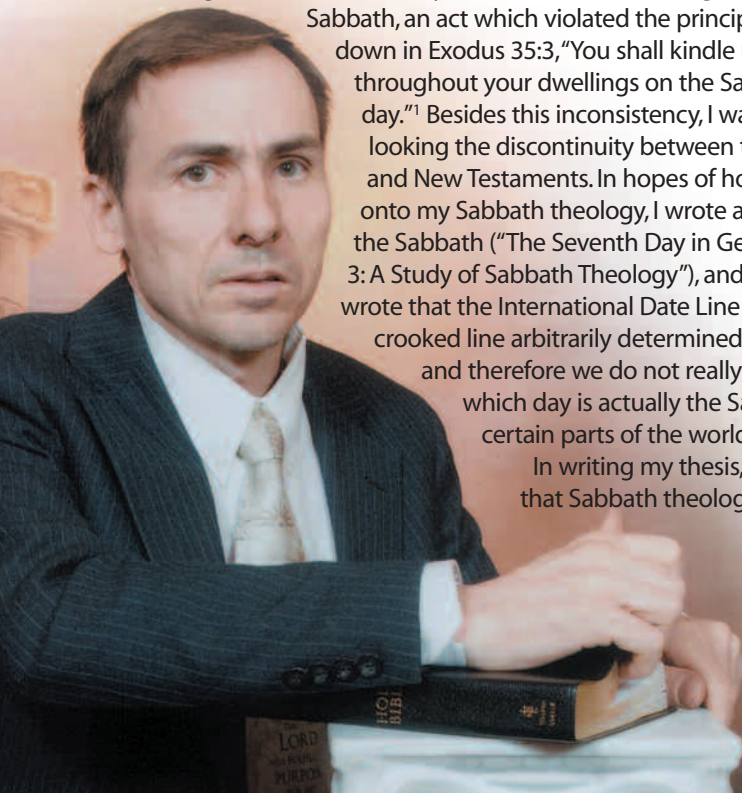
Acts 7:8; Rom. 4:11; Ex. 4:26; 31:16; Lev. 24:8; Is. 56:4-7), but I wanted to keep a little bit of self-esteem, so these thoughts which did cross my mind were erased by pride.²

Although externally everything seemed to be fine, I was getting tired of eating cold sandwiches on the Sabbath in obedience to the law in Exodus. I began to suspect that something was wrong, and in time I would fall asleep pondering over the difficult Sabbath passages, viz., Col. 2:16-17 and Romans 14. Eventually, I was losing sleep. The ideas I learned in my class in hermeneutics were beginning to bite me like an adder. My Sabbath theology was off target! I started reading a book authored by my professor, V. Poythress, *The Shadow of Christ in the Law of Moses* (Brentwood, TN: Wolgemuth and Hyatt, 1991), and gradually I came to the realization that the radical nature of the old covenant and the newness of the new covenant were inconsistent with my conviction that the Sabbath was a mandate for all of humanity.

The pride drained out of me, and I mourned over the loss of my Sabbath conviction like I had lost my best friend at sea or

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Dennis Palmer grew up in the Christian Church but converted to Adventism in his teens. He attended Union College, a Seventh-day Adventist school in Lincoln Nebraska, where he majored in theology. In 1978, just before he graduated from Union College, he became a Seventh Day Baptist. He is currently the pastor of the Seventh Day Baptist Church in Lake Elsinore, California. Dennis has notified his denominational leaders that he has plans to leave the denomination because of his conviction that the New Testament teaches that Sabbath rest is found and fulfilled in Jesus.



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