

Part IV

Chapter 13 - Rejoicing in the Lord

All emphasis supplied by author

We begin this chapter with the commission: “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” Mark 16:15 If we are neglectful to spread the good news of salvation, then the very rocks¹ will cry out but we will miss the blessing.

If we do represent Christ, we shall make His service appear attractive, as it really is. Christians who gather up gloom and sadness to their souls, and murmur and complain, are giving to others a false representation of God and the Christian life. They give the impression that God is not pleased to have His children happy, and in this they bear false witness against our heavenly Father. {SC 116.1}

In this next paragraph let us notice some important points. As you read, ask yourself: What causes this “unbelief and despondency”? How do we mistrust God? Through what method does Satan misrepresent and dishonor God? How can we aid Satan in giving false impressions of our religion?

Satan is exultant when he can lead the children of God into unbelief and despondency. He delights to see us mistrusting God, doubting His willingness and power to save us. He loves to have us feel that the Lord will do us harm by His providences. It is the work of Satan to represent the Lord as lacking in compassion and pity. He misstates the truth in regard to Him. He fills the imagination with false ideas concerning God; and instead of dwelling upon the truth in regard to our heavenly Father, we too often fix our minds upon the misrepresentations of Satan and dishonor God by distrusting Him and murmuring against Him. Satan ever seeks to make the religious life one of gloom. He desires it to appear toilsome and difficult; and when the Christian presents in his own life this view of religion, he is, through his unbelief, seconding the falsehood of Satan. {SC 116.2}

Now let us answer these questions. We become depressed when we mistrust God. When we misuse the Word of God, we dishonor Him. It is very depressing to believe God cannot save us. If we really believe in the salvation Jesus offers, we would be joyous and willing to share with others. If we depend on self to overcome sin, the burden is “toilsome and difficult”. This creates a “religious life of gloom”. God, the Father, Jesus and the Holy Spirit are proving that Satan’s charge of their “lacking in compassion and pity” is absolutely false.

Many, walking along the path of life, dwell upon their mistakes and failures and disappointments, and their hearts are filled with grief and discouragement. . . . [117]
"Let the thorns alone, for they will only wound you. Gather the roses, the lilies, and the pinks." {SC 116.3}

¹ See Luke 19:40

So what does this mean? Simply this; — too many times we place ourselves in the pathway that will wound us. If we would only guard the avenue of our soul by exposing ourselves to the good instead of the evil we would aid in our salvation. How many times do we do things in which God's angels cannot attend us thus placing ourselves on Satan's ground?

Carefully read the following. It is the personal life that is here spoken of. It is not that the history of the Church is to be excluded of examination. Otherwise there is much of the Bible itself we would have to extract. History, our own particularly, is very important to review so we can avoid future mistakes. What is referred to here are those times we have had personal falls in which Satan reminds us that we are not good enough to be called the child of God. It is for this that Jesus died and that we have changed from what we were. Those past deeds have been forgiven and placed behind us.

It is not wise to gather together all the unpleasant recollections of a past life,--its iniquities and disappointments,--to talk over them and mourn over them until we are overwhelmed with discouragement. A discouraged soul is filled with darkness, shutting out the light of God from his own soul and casting a shadow upon the pathway of others. [118] {SC 117.3}

May we remember those "bright pictures" where we have been rescued and can reflect back on deliverance from Satan's power. [Ref. {SC 118.1}]

When we seem to doubt God's love and distrust His promises we dishonor Him and grieve His Holy Spirit. . . . how can our heavenly Father regard us when we distrust His love, which has led Him to give His only-begotten Son that we might have life? {SC 118.2}

There are so many ways we can "doubt God's love and distrust His promises." Perhaps we share too little of our lives with Him in trying to be too self sufficient. Our society is so geared toward self attainment that we believe everything we do is dependent on us. If this is our view, then we will fail where salvation is concerned. We need to awake in the morning with a prayer of thanksgiving for another day and ask to be led. Throughout the day we can speak with God as we would with a friend — not just when we find ourselves with a problem. Jesus' life was His example for us in our lives.

Doubt harms our own soul and invites Satan to tempt us. "If you choose to open the door to his [Satan's] suggestions, your mind will be filled with distrust and rebellious questioning." Whether we realize it or not we may be planting seeds "that will germinate and bear fruit in the life of others. . . . How important that we speak only those things that will give spiritual strength and life!" The fact that; "Angels are listening to hear what kind of report you are bearing to the world about your heavenly Master." should make us extremely cautious of what we place before others to study, read and watch/listen to. [See SC 119.1, 2]

We are instructed to cheer others with hopeful words so our influence may encourage and strengthen others. This is so they will not become discouraged but, instead of being repelled from God's Word,

they are brought into its light. When we properly examine Jesus' life we see warmth, comfort and joy brought to others. [See SC 120.1]

Our Saviour was deeply serious and intensely in earnest, but never gloomy or morose². The life of those who imitate Him will be full of earnest purpose; they will have a deep sense of personal responsibility. Levity will be repressed; there will be no [121] boisterous merriment, no rude jesting; but the religion of Jesus gives peace like a river. It does not quench the light of joy; it does not restrain cheerfulness nor cloud the sunny, smiling face. Christ came not to be ministered unto but to minister; and when His love reigns in the heart, we shall follow His example. {SC 120.4}

This statement clearly gives us insight into Jesus' behavior and an example for us to follow. A question begs to be asked here. How would Jesus view applause, for instance, at a baptism (as an example)? I'm pretty sure some would answer positively while others would answer negatively. How does a person find the correct answer? Do we follow culture or our Bibles and the Spirit of Prophecy? It's really that simple.

If we keep uppermost in our minds the unkind and unjust acts of others we shall find it impossible to love them as Christ has loved us; but if our thoughts dwell upon the wondrous love and pity of Christ for us, the same spirit will flow out to others. We should love and respect one another, notwithstanding the faults and imperfections that we cannot help seeing. Humility and self-distrust should be cultivated, and a patient tenderness with the faults of others. This will kill out all narrowing selfishness and make us large-hearted and generous. {SC 121.1}

This is one of the most difficult tasks asked of us. It is difficult to love those who treat us unkind and unjustly. Yet, we do wish them to be in Heaven, don't we? We do have a "loving Savior ready to hear all our requests and to be to us a present help in every time of need". [See SC 121.2]

No matter what "it is not the will of God that His people should be weighed down with care." {SC 122.3} Do we borrow our own trouble? Yes, at times. Is life always positive? No, it is not. When we see something amiss do we ignore it? Some would say we are negative if we point out error in the Church. If we don't we will become run over by error. To say nothing is a sin.

If God abhors one sin above another, of which his people are guilty, it is of doing nothing in a case of emergency. Indifference or neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime; and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God. {RH, September 30, 1873 par. 9}

² **Morose:** 1: having a sullen and gloomy disposition 2: marked by or expressive of gloom. [Merriam-Webster]

Should this be constantly on our minds? No. All of one venue is not wise. Even seeking happiness apart from God can be “ill-balanced”.

Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill-balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God; the Christian is not left to walk in uncertain paths; he is not left to vain regrets and disappointments. If we do not have the [125] pleasures of this life we may still be joyful in looking to the life beyond. {SC 124.2}

We cannot but look forward to new perplexities in the coming conflict, but we may look on what is past as well as on what is to come, and say, "Hitherto hath the Lord helped us." "As thy days, so shall thy strength be." Deuteronomy 33:25. The trial will not exceed the strength that shall be given us to bear it . Then let us take up our work just where we find it, believing that whatever may come, strength proportionate to the trial will be given. {SC 125.2}

A couple of items struck me here. There is a balance of both looking forward and backward. Then we will not be given that beyond which we can endure. Here is a precious promise in 1Cor 10:13.

There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God [is] faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear [it].

So sinning is not something we need to do. It is optional. We can be purified and sinless before Jesus returns. In fact, If we hang onto our sins until after probation closes we will not see salvation. See Rev. 22:11, 12. Please note the bolded portions I supplied below.

Then the redeemed will be welcomed to the home that Jesus is preparing for them. There their companions will not be the vile of earth, liars, idolaters, the impure, and unbelieving; but **they will associate with those who have overcome Satan and through divine grace have formed perfect characters. Every sinful tendency, every imperfection, that afflicts them here has been removed by the blood of Christ,** and the excellence and brightness of His glory, far exceeding the brightness of the sun, is imparted to them. And **the moral beauty, the perfection of His character, shines through them, in worth far exceeding this outward splendor. They are without fault before the great white throne, sharing the dignity and the privileges of the angels.** {SC 126.1}

In view of the glorious inheritance that may be his, "What shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" Matthew 16:26. He may be poor, yet he possesses in himself a wealth and dignity that the world could never bestow. **The soul redeemed and cleansed from sin,** with all its noble powers dedicated to the service of God, **is of**

surpassing worth; and there is joy in heaven in the presence of God and the holy angels over one soul redeemed, a joy that is expressed in songs of holy triumph. {SC 126.2}

When is this cleansing to be done? Some would say at Jesus' coming. If you wait that long you will be forever lost. During the process leading up to and passing 1844, we learned that Jesus went into the Most Holy apartment of the Heavenly Sanctuary. When we study the Earthly Day of Atonement we discover that all sin was removed from God's people. As a people we have lost sight of the fact that those translated without seeing death will be sinless. Probation for Seventh-day Adventists ends before that of the world. We are a unique people in our Last Generation Theology as taught by Elder Andreasen and our pioneers including Ellen G. White. Many have apostatized from this factual belief since our intermingling with Evangelicals especially since 1957's Question on Doctrine, our signing of the BEM³ document and accepting the Catholic introduced symbol into apostate Protestantism. Further, there are those among us that have now joined with Spiritualism making the three fold union complete.

Conclusion:

At the bottom line and to answer our beginning inquiry; is Steps to Christ the best source for "Righteousness by Faith?" It certainly is not the only one but is it the best? We have found that "Righteousness by Faith" is within its pages. If any individual wishes to say it is the best source I certainly wouldn't argue the point for it is a very good source. However, having said that, I personally believe "Desire of Ages" gives a more complete picture.

Now, how do we decide if the Seventh-day Adventist Church has been teaching it over time? "Righteousness by Faith" involves more than surface studying or preaching. We need to know what constitutes salvation, sin, overcoming life's shortcomings and related topics. So much water has been muddied because of involvement with the Evangelical community. Our people have experimented, with Willow Creek and other mega church models, trying to find a better way to evangelize. Could our copying and looking to others have affected the way we actually present our message to our own? I believe it has.

The person, at the first of this article, commented that he had exposure but still didn't understand "Righteousness by Faith". Why was that? What took so long? He expresses that exposure doesn't equate to depth of meaning within the person's own life. In part, I'd have to agree. Still, proper exposure, I believe, is the key here. He didn't have the proper exposure because it is not taught from

³ **BEM:** Baptism Eucharist Ministry - In 1982 the Seventh-day Adventist Church signed a document in effect stating we would accept any form of Baptism, the Eucharist (as taught by the Catholic church) and promised never to proselytize from other churches. Their symbol is represented by many, if not most, churches with the cross, open Bible, and flickering flame logo, as we now have on the Sandy SDA Church sign. For anyone interested there is available an in-depth study on this subject upon request.

our pulpits. If there is no teacher how can one learn? We had opportunity to learn. Dennis Priebe could have come but Sandy wasn't interested. I suggest such has been the core of the problem. Those who would and could teach the message of "Righteousness by Faith" have been prevented from teaching it. Our pastors, yes over the past 25 years, have not taught it. Hence, the delayed understanding of this person. I'd guess he still doesn't understand it even though he believes he does.

Again is it in Steps to Christ? Yes it is. However, you need to study it to discover it and many are unwilling to accept what Sister White wrote within its pages. Further, if a person really wants to know, other sources need to be sought. Those other sources are the Bible and Spirit of prophecy. Let me again mention Dennis Priebe along with others such as Pastors Steven Bohr, and Larry Kirkpatrick. Many others could be mentioned. When they present, a bountiful usage of Scripture and Spirit of prophecy are used instead of drawing from Ph.D's or evangelical authors. Many Adventists do not understand the simplicity of what constitutes sin and the difference between temptation and sin. So, how would you expect them to understand "Righteousness by Faith?" We are saved from sinning, not in sin via God's intervention.

One final thought; I promised to take a look at the question of sin earlier in this article, what it is and what it isn't. HOW sin is viewed, has a great influence on how "Righteousness by Faith" is incorporated into the life. Back in the early days after the disciples moved off the scene, the Bishop of Hippo (Augustine) incorrectly defined sin as something a human was born with. This view teaches that all a person needs to do, to be a sinner, is to be born into the human family. Have you ever wondered why or how infant baptism came into being? The idea was that if merely being born meant you were a sinner (and without baptism the person was a lost soul), then it naturally follows you have to baptize as soon after birth as possible to save the soul from damnation. So, the early church started baptizing infants.

The idea of infant baptism, although not readily accepted by Protestants, has another twist not far removed from the thinking of Catholics. That is a person is born a sinner. This has deep implications for us as Seventh-day Adventists. After the interaction with the Protestants Barnhouse and Martin, and the publishing of Questions on Doctrines, we started believing as they did about sin being a part of us at birth too. Hence, the thought that Jesus could not be like us, and that He needed another nature apart from our "sinful nature". This affects how we view "Righteousness by Faith". Although beyond this study, let it be said that Jesus did have the nature of Adam after the fall — NOT before it.

Sin may be Biblically defined as: "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." [1 John 3:4] Sin is a deliberate act, a choice we make. We are not born sinners as Augustine taught. To understand this important point we need to go back to the Garden of Eden. Carefully examine the discourse. Satan tempted before the sin was committed. The temptation is NOT the sin. However, If we listen and ponder the temptation, it will lead into sin. Jesus was tempted as we are but the Bible makes it very clear that He did not sin. "For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." [Heb 4:15]

It is a cop-out to say we were born sinners so we cannot keep from sinning. If we really believe Jesus and His example, then we are assured victory over sin. **We are not saved in sin but from sin.**

Rom 6:22 But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.

1 Peter 4:1-2 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin; That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.

True “Righteousness by Faith” believes God is able to keep us from sinning. “Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,” [Jude 24] The question is: Do we believe God or not? In 1888 they tried the self works method so “Righteousness by Faith” was not accepted. Today we have gone to the other extreme and say even God is not able to accomplish a sinless life with His power working in us. So, “Righteousness by Faith” is still not accepted by the majority of Seventh-day Adventists even today how-be-it for a different reason.

You see, to believe as Augustine taught, the nature of Christ is also tainted. I’m sure you can see if we believe as Bishop of Hippo taught, Jesus could not have our fallen nature for that would mean he was born a sinner too. Many errors come from this thinking, like the Immaculate Conception theory of Mary, that Mary was exempted from humanity also. This leads to having another intercessor between the human and Jesus, namely, Mary. The Bible is quite clear that Jesus identifies with us in His post-fall nature.

Rom 8:3 For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:

Jesus’ human post-fallen nature, what actually constitutes sin [that differs from the temptation of sin] and a whole list of interrelated subject matter is involved in how and what we believe by/in the subject of “Righteousness by Faith.” All enter into our understanding. So is it simple? If we, as humans would quit trying to muddy the water and just believe what Scripture and the Spirit of Prophecy say, it would be. Are we ready to understand and believe or will we continue to fight against the plain Words of God? It is so easy to say we adhere to something when we really don’t understand it at all. Too many times we allow our culture and the influence of others to interfere with HOW we believe, yes — even in our belief of “Righteousness by Faith.” Perhaps now you will better understand why I made the statement that for the past 25 years I have never heard, from our pulpit here at Sandy, the true message of “Righteousness by Faith.”

This concludes our study of “Righteousness by Faith in Steps to Christ.” It has been a delightful study for me and it is my prayer that you have joined me in experiencing a better relationship with Jesus.