

Is The Church Going Through?

To answer this question there are several other questions that first must be dealt with, such as how is the church defined. In defining the church one has to see, not only what the church looks like but what it should look like. What is its behavior, its theology, and its underpinnings from cultural inputs both historical and in the present day. Does the church live out their beliefs and which beliefs are they? Like secular culture the church is not immune from cultural influences. Cultures change over time and with these changes the attitudes, beliefs and behaviors tend also to morph. Certain aspects of this can be healthy or take on a life of their own outside the realm of expectation. The more time it takes the less noticeable, particularly when a new population of rapid citizen growth is experienced. Then, the passing of time seems less important to the new members of that society. The past becomes less important to the new members who may not even be aware of its existence.

Growth is often praised as a blessing, which indeed it can be. However, with growth there is responsibility in proper instruction of the newcomer with correct historical roots. Where and how did this church come into being must be addressed with the newcomer. Otherwise those same habits from their former church will be mingled with their new experience. Add to this the change agents who themselves either don't understand their underpinnings or find them distasteful, and you sustain the risk of undesirable change. This is especially true if these change agents invade leadership positions. These agents of change may well be meaningfully ignorant or deliberately implanted toward destruction of foundational principles. If this is true, then you will have serious divisions of beliefs. It is here we find ourselves today. Only those who are willing to study their historical roots will be able to make decided changes.

In view of the forgoing, what is it that makes you a Seventh-day Adventist? There are basically two groups of believers today both claiming to be the true church that is going through. Both cannot be the true church even though they may be sitting beside each other in church on any given Sabbath. The larger group believes the evangelical gospel while the smaller holds to the historical last generation theology of yesteryear. Differences in beliefs can be remarkable. For instance one is more tolerant of the LGBT community whereas the other understands how sin of any venue is viewed. God loves the sinner to which both groups would agree. However, HOW any sin is dealt with becomes the point of contention. Simply put, there is a difference in beliefs between the definition of sin and temptation. We will endeavor to examine those differences shortly with the help of inspiration.

There are thoughts and feelings suggested and aroused by Satan that annoy even the best of men; but if they are not cherished, if they are repulsed as hateful, the soul is not contaminated with guilt and no other is defiled by their influence. Ellen G. White, [That I May Know Him, p. 140.]

This would indicate that temptation is not sin. Satan tempts "but if they are not cherished" no sin has occurred. So how do we repulse them? Pray for God's strength to overcome. In the human there is not enough fortitude to overcome on your own. Notice that "they are repulsed as hateful" and there is no contamination, guilt or defilement. That's good news.

Satan knows that he cannot overcome man unless he can control his will. He can do this by deceiving man so that he will cooperate with him in transgressing the laws of nature in eating and drinking, which is transgression of the law of God. [Temperance, p. 16.]

Whose will do we surrender to? Who controls us? It is either God or Satan. Notice the word “cooperate”. We either cooperate with one of two voices when sin presents itself to us. This principle is in place for any and all temptations. Again, to be tempted is not sin. Jesus “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin”. See Heb 4:15. We see this principle again in the following.

It is not in the power of Satan to force anyone to sin. Sin is the sinner’s individual act. Before sin exists in the heart, the consent of the will must be given, and as soon as it is given, sin is triumphant, and hell rejoices. [Signs of the Times, Dec. 18, 1893.]

We have the perfect example in Jesus for He came into this world to live as we must, resisting temptation just as we need to. There is a huge disconnect between the way people view Jesus’ resistance to sin and ours. Many believe He was so unlike us as to give us a sort of excuse to sin. This is not true. He could not be our high priest, our advocate if He came in a different nature from us. Satan would have called foul. This is why Mary and the saints were made as connecting links between us and Jesus. The Catholic church believed Jesus was so different from us that He could not have totally accepted humanity. This is one of the differences between Evangelical Adventists and Historic Adventists. The former believes as do the Catholic and apostate Protestants, that Jesus came in a different nature than we are forced to possess. The latter correctly believe Jesus was so like us as to lead the perfect example for us to follow, tempted but choosing not to sin. Again, we see the principle that being tempted is not the same as sinning.

The light of life is freely proffered to all. Every one who will may be guided by the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Christ is the great remedy for sin. None can plead their circumstances, their education, or their temperament as an excuse for living in rebellion against God. Sinners are such by their own deliberate choice. [From the Heart, p. 151.]

Choice is THE deciding factor. The will is to be placed in God’s care. Jesus did this while in His sojourn on this earth.

As we see the condition of mankind today, the question arises in the minds of some, “Is man by nature totally and wholly depraved?” Is he hopelessly ruined? No, he is not. The Lord Jesus left the royal courts and, taking our human nature, lived such a life as everyone may live in humanity, through following His example. We may perfect a life in this world which is an example of righteousness, and overcome as Christ has given us an example in His life, revealing that humanity may conquer as He, the great Pattern conquered. [Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, p. 238.]

If there were any question in anyone's mind about Jesus' human nature the foregoing quote should put that to rest. It was the Augustinian teaching that gave Jesus a nature different from ours. He claimed sin was our very nature instead of the choices we make. This is a critical point in which sin can either be hidden in the heart or expunged from it. We have history to blame for this division of thought being taught in the Seventh-day Adventist denomination today. Those who wished to please Barnhouse and Martin, the evangelicals of the 1950's, are to blame for the great misunderstanding written into Questions on Doctrine to supposedly keep our name out of their book of the cults. We sold our birthright for a pot of porridge and many change agents use this as a stepping stone to allow for sinful practices in the church.

How long will this fight for the control of our wills be before us? Our next quote will answer this question and further show us how the battle is to be won.

Appetite and passion must be brought under the control of the Holy Spirit. There is no end to the warfare this side of eternity. [White, Counsels to Teachers, p. 20.]

One notable author quoted that "It is easier to be saved than lost," and this has been the theme of many thereafter. But is this true? Each person must search his/her own heart to answer this question. How strong is the battle being waged in your own personal life? Are you gaining victory over sin or finding yourself consistently falling for Satan's deceptive arguments toward excusing sin? I find the following quotes as lessons for learning. The question is; how long will the conflict exist whether becoming easier or more difficult? Note particularly the words "guarding", "firm purpose", "secure except", "rely upon", "life hidden", "watchfulness and prayer", "safeguards of purity".

So long as life shall last, there will be need of guarding the affections and the passions with a firm purpose. Not one moment can we be secure except as we rely upon God, the life hidden with Christ. Watchfulness and prayer are the safeguards of purity. [Prophets and Kings, p. 84.] [emphasis supplied]

Notice how knowing the principle between temptation and sin, in the following quote, is of the utmost importance. As soon as the temptation is presented we must go to Jesus in prayer. If we toy with it, it will likely take over. There is no security in our own strength.

Just as long as Satan urges his temptations upon us, the battle for self-conquest will have to be fought over and over again; but by obedience, the truth will sanctify the soul. [From the Heart, p. 297.]

Jesus gained the victory over sin as we must, leaving us His perfect example. If He did not live in our human nature He could not be our perfect example. Those who believe the other gospel are doomed to failure in overcoming sin, simply because they don't believe it possible to overcome this side of the Second Advent which makes the Bible a liar. Because as it states in Revelation 22:11-12, there is no sinning for those who will be going to heaven after probation closes. Notice the timing. First the proclamation then Jesus comes.

Rev 22:11-12 [11] He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. [12] **And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.**

Further timing is stated here:

Rev 15:8 And the temple was filled with smoke from the glory of God, and from his power; and no man was able to enter into the temple, till the seven plagues of the seven angels were fulfilled.

If there is no sin taken into the temple, there is no forgiveness. At this point in time final decisions will have been made either for God or against Him. No sinning will occur right up to the time of the Second Advent. Neither the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy teach of salvation for those who continue to sin. We, as Seventh-day Adventists, have a message unique in this regard. I know of no other church that teaches our Sanctuary message and that of the Three Angels or the correct understanding of Jesus' human nature. Many of our brothers and sisters are either ignorant of, or ignoring this gospel message that we should be sharing with the world.

It is on these principles there has come a division within our church. It is the difference on the basic understanding of HOW sin and salvation is accomplished. The Christian world, by and large, does not understand and we didn't want to have the stigma of being different so we gave way to a false gospel whether we wish to admit it or not. So the one sitting beside you in church may be the "true church" going through while the one sitting on your other side will not. Is it the "organization" or the believer going through to the end? THAT is the question. Will the "organized" church once again take up the banner and uphold the truths given us or will it fail to fulfill its truth filled mission? Only truth will prevail. Do we have the fortitude to stimulate revival enough to cause reformation? That will make all the difference in the outcome of answering our question as to what the church going through will look like.

The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out--the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place.--2SM 380 (1886). {LDE 180.5

Also, one has to realize the timing of this last quote. It takes place after the Sunday law. The implications are notable. Will there even be an organized church then? If so what will the organization look like? Assuming you are on the correct path, and there is an organization, will the one sitting on your left or right be absent from your physical church one day? How does one account for those Historic Adventists who were asked to leave because they believed the true gospel? Are they the true church? Maybe they will come back after the purging? What is it going to take for the larger evangelical church body to wake up or will they? Can there continue to be two churches each believing they are going through to the end? We have The Parable of the Ten Virgins. Perhaps it would be well to understand this discourse at this juncture in our church's history.

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