

# *“The Lord Our Righteousness”*

## *14, Part 1*

### *From Glory to Glory*



Character development is said to be the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. During the next hour, we will explore both our privilege and our responsibility to become Christ-like in character. Join us now for this powerful time of personal renewal as Pastor Stephen Wallace takes us "From Glory to Glory."

Good evening, good evening; welcome back. So good to have you with us as we continue in our seminar, our revival seminar, entitled "From Glory to Glory..." a seminar on the principles of Christian character development. We are diligently studying together the most important work ever entrusted to human beings. And what is that? Character building. If you can't answer that question by now, you're in trouble. Can you repeat from memory our key statement that we launched this series with, and that we keep bringing you back to? Education page 225? Try saying it with me by memory, okay? I see you quickly opening your books, so that you can look at the cheat-sheet there. **Education page 225; Let's try it, here we go: "Character building is the most important work ever entrusted to human beings; and never before was its diligent study so important as now."** Why so important now? Because the King is coming soon. Oh, I believe it, my dear friends, with my whole heart.

And yet we have much to do, and little time to do it in. And what is our task? It's twofold. We have **the gospel to take to every nation, kindred, tongue, people {Rev 14:6}**, and we have **our own lives to prepare {Heb 12:14}**.

But please know that the successful accomplishment of both of those tasks depends upon one and the same thing, and that is the development of a Christ-like character. Because only with a Christ-like character can we be either effective witnesses for the King or fit citizens for the Kingdom. And since the King is coming soon, my friends, I insist that there is no more important topic to diligently study than the one that we are grappling with night after night. And thank you for being willing to invest the kind of time that you have invested in this study. My prayer is that it will reap eternal dividends for you, and be a very great personal blessing. And that can and will be the case if you study God's Word with me under the influence and guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit. That's the only way the study of the Word of God can be a blessing. And the only way that I can possibly be a channel of God's blessing, is if He... is if He condescends to use me and speak through me, in spite of myself. And I solicit your prayers that He do that tonight, and I would invite you, as well, to pray for yourself. Let's begin, as is our practice, on our knees, for a few moments of silent prayer.

*Father God, in the Name of Jesus, the Lord our Righteousness, we come into Your presence this evening, first of all to thank You for the privilege of calling You Father. It is so good to be Your sons and Your daughters. We don't appreciate that privilege as we ought, but when we begin to better understand the price paid, we appreciate it all the more. We are Your blood-bought children. Thank You Father, thank You Jesus, for paying that price. And thank You, Father, that because of our Elder Brother and His worthiness, we can come into Your presence confident that You receive us, as fully and as freely as You receive Your own Son, because You choose to see us not as we are in ourself, but as we are in Him. We are accepted in the Beloved and oh, how that encourages us and gives us confidence to approach You just now and request of You that which we need above all else, and that is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Please Father, we have gathered here for the purpose of studying Your Word, but we cannot*

*possibly succeed in our quest for a life-changing knowledge of the truth unless the Spirit of Truth is here with us. Not only in the proclamation of the truth, but in the reception of it, may Your Spirit be powerfully present. And Father I would ask as well that You would create for us here a spiritual sanctuary, free from the interference of the enemy of truth. Satan knows better than any of us here tonight the power of the truth to set us free, and that's why he fears it more than anything else. And he will do anything within his power to keep us from hearing it, from understanding it, from appreciating it, and from applying it in our lives. But Father I want to claim the blood of Christ against the enemy, and I place that blood on the door of this church, and I claim this place as a safe haven. Send angels that excel in power to hold back the powers of evil. And create for us here a spiritual sanctuary where, without interference, we can hear the truth. Please grant this prayer, for I ask it in Jesus' name, amen.*

You have received your next installment of material, I trust. And we need to begin tonight on page 31, don't we? With lesson 14, entitled: **"The Lord our Righteousness."** {Jer 23:6} I love that name. That is one of my very favorite names for our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. And it is profoundly significant, as I hope we will come to discover, as we study God's Word together tonight.

We have been noting how it is that, by receiving the twofold provision of grace that we find at the foot of the cross, God's glory, or His character, may be restored in us. This twofold provision of grace is symbolized in the blood and in the water. By the blood we are justified. That gives us the foundation to build a character upon. That's the bedrock. And my dear friend, please know that a character cannot stand through the trials that are just ahead of us, unless it is built on the bedrock of righteousness by faith in the blood of Jesus. It cannot possibly stand. Any other foundation is sinking sand. And though you may be able to build a pretty fancy, white-washed sepulcher on sinking sand... hear me now! When **the rains come down, and the floods come up** {Mat 7:25}, what's going to happen to that character building? It's going to collapse. You remember the song we all used to sing in Sabbath School... about the wise man and the foolish man. The blood gives us the foundation upon which we can build.

And then the water gives us the power to build a character to the glory of Jesus Christ. The water symbolizes the Holy Spirit. And when we receive the impartation of the Spirit of Christ, remember that's Christ righteousness imparted to us, that's what sanctifies us. Christ righteousness imputed to us - that's what justifies us. But when we receive the imparted righteousness of Christ, by receiving His Spirit, we are thereby enabled to be changed... in the inner man from the inside out, **"transformed by the renewing of our minds,"** {Rom 12:2} **"changed... from glory to glory,"** as our key text for the whole seminar puts it, **"even as by the Spirit of the Lord."** {2 Cor 3:18} And from glory to glory, is simply another way of saying from one stage of character development to another. We proceed to build a character temple to the glory of God, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Now my dear friends, I must warn you at this juncture of a very, very dangerous trap that is oh, so easy to fall into when it comes to character development. Please be warned... please hear me! And I have a particular burden that you be aware of this, because I fear that many, many of my beloved fellow-Seventh-day Adventist believers have stumbled and fallen into this trap. And I don't dare say such a thing on my own authority, but I say it on the authority of the verdict of the true witness regarding the end-time church. What is the trap? Our first reference under Lesson 14: **Signs of the Times, March 27, 1893**, precisely identifies this trap. **"A genuine experience will result in the development of a Christ-like character."** Pause. What will a genuine experience result in? The development of a Christ-like character. Therefore, if there is no development of a Christ-like character, what should that tell us regarding our experience? It's not genuine. Are we all together? **"A genuine experience will result in the development of a Christ-like character. But, but..."** Here is the trap, watch out. **"Unless there is an hourly..."** There is what? **"an hourly dependence upon Christ, increasing knowledge and privileges will result in self-trust and self-righteousness. ... The soul must renounce all merit, and**

**trust wholly in the merit of Him who is too wise to err."** My dear friends, what is this deadly trap that is oh, so easy to fall into? ...as we grow in the sanctified life, as we grow from glory to glory... What is it? It's self-trust and self-righteousness. Self-trust and self-righteousness. And my dear friends, this has been a problem throughout the history of Christendom.

Paul the apostle was addressing this issue frequently wasn't he? Example, **Galatians 5:4: "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace."** They started out righteous by faith, but as they grew and matured, and learned to walk the walk, and talk the talk, they began to become what? Self-trusting and self-righteous.

And my dear friends it is oh, so easy for us to do just the same thing. This is the tendency of human nature, and we all share it in common. And what does this lead us to do? It leads us into these disgusting superiority complexes that we have in our hearts. Evidenced in the words of the Pharisee, **Luke 18:11: "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men.'"**

My dear friends, please know that there's a lot of that going on, even in this beloved church of ours. **Signs of the Times, October 21, 1897: "'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.' This prayer represents the prayers of many."** Whoa, did you hear that? This prayer represents the prayers of how many? Many! **"They think that because they perform outward religious duties, they are entitled to the approval of God. Like the Pharisee, they say, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not as other men are.' But they are self-centered and self-sufficient..."** In other words they've fallen, into this deadly trap, haven't they? They've fallen into this deadly trap. And my dear friends, you know, I have discovered that the more we know regarding what we ought to do, and ought not to do, and the more we manage to at least bring our behavior into compliance with the letter of the law, the more prone we are to fall into this trap. And we of all people have been given much light and truth. Amen? {Amen} We have been given so much light and truth, and we have, some of us consciously, some of us subconsciously, this superiority complex.

On account of all that we have, more than others, and we think ourselves to be what? Rich, increased in goods, and have need of nothing. And by the way, inspiration, just after that statement that I read quotes **Revelation 3:17: "I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing."** And who is it that says this? It's the Laodicean church. And which church is the Laodicean church? Come on now, admit it with me. It's the end-time church. Are we at the end of time? So evidently this is a problem with us. Will you acknowledge that? Evidently we too have fallen into this trap.

**Signs of the Times, May 9, 1892: "The great danger with the people who profess to believe the truth for this time..."** Who's she talking about? Us. **"The great danger with the people who profess to believe the truth for this time is that they shall feel as if they were entitled to the blessing of God because they have made this or that sacrifice, done this or that good work for the Lord."** Pause. What alone entitles us to any blessings from God? The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ - Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} The imparted righteousness does not entitle us to anything. It is only that which gives us a fitness to enjoy that which Christ has purchased for us, amen? Please don't ever let yourself begin to think that the sanctified life is meritorious in any way that it entitles you to anything - it doesn't. And it's our proneness to think that, that causes us to slip off into this trap that I'm trying to warn you about tonight. Reading again: **"The great danger with the people who profess to believe the truth for this time is that they shall feel as if they were entitled to the blessing of God because they have made this or that sacrifice, done this or that good work for the Lord. Do you imagine that because you have decided to keep the Sabbath of the Lord, God is under obligation to you, and that you have merited His blessing?"** That is an incredulous question that she's asking. **"Does the sacrifice you have made look of sufficient merit to you to entitle you to the rich gifts of God? If you**

**have an appreciation of the work that Christ has wrought out for you, you will see that there is no merit in yourself or in your work.”** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} **"You will see your lost condition and become poor in spirit. There is but one thing for the poor in spirit to do, and that is to look continually to,"** who? **"to Jesus, to believe in Him whom the Father hath sent."**

You see my dear friends, that is the only thing that will keep us from falling into this trap. It's looking continually to and depending exclusively upon the righteousness of Jesus Christ. {Amen} That alone will keep us out of this trap. When we begin to take our eyes off of Jesus and start looking at ourselves, and admiring the progress we are making. That's when we're in big, big trouble. Please be warned. **Romans 3:20 and following: "Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God..." "...the righteousness of,"** who, my friends? **"of God."** What kind of righteousness is that? Infinite... infinite righteousness. **"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed..."** Revealed where? In the person of Jesus Christ. Amen? {Amen} **"being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; for all have sinned..."** And what, my dear friends? **"and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."** You see all of us, no matter who we are, no matter how much light we've had, no matter how godly we have lived, **"All of us have sinned and,"** what? **"come short,"** Therefore all of us, to be justified, to meet the infinite standard of God's Law, which is required to be justified, must have a righteousness, better, greater, than anything we ever find in ourselves. We have to have the righteousness of God, and we find that only where? In Jesus Christ... in Jesus Christ... in Jesus Christ.

Now that little phrase: **"All have sinned and fall short..."** We've noted this before, but I've got to reiterate it in this context. The Greek verb that is translated "fall short" is in the present active tense. Remember me telling you that earlier? The present active tense: What's the present active tense? That means ongoing, continuous action, whatever the action is. In this case it's falling short. Paul is literally telling us all have sinned, transgressed the law, and all of us are what? Continually coming short of the glory of God. And remember, **God's glory is His character {ST Sept 3, 1902 par. 6} and the law is the transcript of that {COL 315.1}.** So what he's actually telling us is that all have transgressed the law, and all are coming short of the infinite standard. No wonder we must depend upon someone else's righteousness to justify us. No wonder, **"By the deeds of the law shall no flesh be justified."** Do you see this?

Who alone has a righteousness that meets the infinite standard? Who alone has the righteousness of God? Jesus Christ... Jesus Christ. **Hebrews 1:3: "Who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person..."** Jesus didn't come short of the glory, did He? We are continually coming short, but He is the brightness of His glory. Is there a difference? Yes. Jesus is the undiminished outshining of His Father's character. He had an infinitely perfect character. He is the only one who has not come short. What about all the rest of us in comparison to Him? Listen: **Mount of Blessings, page 49: "The divine beauty of the character of Christ, of whom the noblest and most gentle among men are but a faint reflection; ... was a living representation of the character of the law of God."** Wow! Did you hear that?

First of all, what was Christ's character? It was a living representation of the character of the law of God. It was divine beauty manifested. But please notice, the noblest and most gentle among men in comparison are but a what? In comparison to Christ are but a what? A faint reflection. Now that is humbling. The noblest and most gentle among men... Okay, who wants to claim tonight to be in that illustrious group? Anybody here? Good, I'm glad no one had the audacity to raise their hand. Who might be candidates for this illustrious group? ...the noblest and the most gentle among men? Name me some. Enoch, Daniel, Moses, John, Elijah, yes, you know... the heavy hitters, the godliest men of old. But even

this group, my dear friends, even this group are but a what? A faint reflection of the divine beauty of the character of Jesus Christ. No wonder, no wonder the sanctified life is never sufficient to justify us. No matter how sanctified you become, you still what? Come short... you still come short. Even Daniel! By the way, Daniel is the only one I know of, other than Jesus Christ, of whom Scripture records no fault, no mistake. He would certainly be a candidate to be in this group, the noblest and most gentle among men. But still, compared to Christ, he's but a what? A faint reflection. This is pretty humbling, isn't it? A faint reflection.

Now that only stands to reason, though. Remember **Testimonies, Volume 6, page 60?** **"...the life of Christ reveals an infinitely perfect character."** Of course the noblest and most gentle among men are going to be but a faint reflection compared to the brightness of the Father's glory. The morning watch book, **That I May Know Him, page 44: "His character was absolutely perfect." "Absolutely perfect."** Now, my dear friends, the standard that must be met in order for us to be justified is the infinite standard of God's law. Therefore, the only character perfection that will meet that standard is the infinite character perfection of Jesus Christ. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That's the only character that will meet that standard and thereby justify us. And thereby what class? Justify us. But please follow... please follow. There is a standard that God holds us accountable, by His grace, to meet in the realm of our character development. What is that standard? What is that standard?

Listen to this remarkable statement; it is so profoundly significant. **Testimonies, Volume 2, page 549: "He is our Pattern..."** Who are we talking about? Jesus Christ. **"He is a perfect and holy example given for us to imitate. We cannot equal the pattern,"** Did you hear that? I want to repeat that. We what? **"We cannot equal the pattern."** I mean that's only logical to conclude when you recognize that Christ revealed an infinitely perfect character. Does anyone here propose to reveal an infinitely perfect character? Does anyone propose here to be the brightness of the glory of God? When even sinless Adam was only in the likeness. Okay, good. **"We cannot equal the pattern."** And by the way, all of the folk over in this ditch... Remember who's in this ditch? The antinomians, the cheap grace folk. They all like what I've been saying. They're inclined to say: *"Preach it brother, amen"* And by the way, the legalists are really getting uncomfortable with what I'm saying here. Listen, I need to read on. **"We cannot equal the pattern, but we shall not be approved of God if we do not copy it, and according to the ability which God has given, resemble it."** Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} You see, that is the standard that God holds us accountable to in our own character development. He asks us to resemble, to the fullness of our capacity, the infinitely perfect pattern. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Is that fair? Yes Is it unreasonable? No. He wants us, for the love of Christ, to shine as brightly as we can, with the reflected light of His character. But He doesn't expect us to shine as bright as the sun itself. He expects us, though, to be full moons for Jesus. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} My friends, I want to repeat that. God does not expect us to shine as bright as the sun. But He does expect us to shine as bright as we can. He expect us, in other words to be, what? Full moons.

Remember in our first study when we looked at Isaiah chapter 60? Jesus is symbolized by the sun. The church is symbolized by the what? The moon. What's the only way the moon can shine? By reflecting the light of the sun. And we must learn to shine **"from glory to glory,"** from a crescent moon to a quarter moon, "to glory" - to a half moon, "to glory" - to a three-quarter moon, until finally we're what? A full moon. But even a full moon is but a what? Faint reflection of the divine beauty of the Sun of righteousness. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} But God expects us, for the love of Christ, to shine as bright as we can... ...according to two things - follow this, please understand this - All the light we have, and according to our ability to reflect that light. Those are the two qualifiers. What are the two things God holds us accountable for? The light that we have, and the capacity we have to, what? Reflect that light.

Does that vary from one person to another? Come on now, does it? Why, of course. So does God count us all responsible for the same standard? No. But He does hold us responsible for the light we've received, and the ability we have to reflect that light. And this, by the way, is precisely why we dare not go around judging each other. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Because we have different light, and we have different abilities to walk in that light, and reflect that light. And by the way, please note as well that both light and ability are always to be what? Increasing. Amen? Therefore, what might be character perfection for us today... And character perfection is really walking in all the light you have, according to all the ability you have, reflecting that light. But character perfection today will not be sufficient for when? Tomorrow, because tomorrow we receive more light. And as we reflect that light, our capacity to reflect increases. Amen? So we grow from what? Glory to glory. But at every stage we can be a full moon. Amen? Does this make sense to you? Are we communicating this clearly? At every stage we can be perfect... at every stage. But our perfection is not static, it's dynamic; we grow in perfection.

Notice how inspiration speaks to this further. **Review and Herald, November 1, 1892: "Those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their character, without a determined effort on their part, will be,"** what? **"disappointed. With our limited powers..."** Please note the language. **"With our,"** what? **"limited powers... we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere. To the extent of our ability, we are to make manifest the truth and love and excellence of the divine character, and for this reason we must draw from the living fountain."** And what flows from the living fountain? The water, which is what? The Holy Spirit, which alone can change us from glory to glory. Do you see how all fits together? **"With our limited powers, we are to be as holy in our sphere as God is holy in His sphere."** A full moon. It's as holy in it's sphere as God, the Sun of Righteousness, is holy in His sphere. Are you with me? But it's but a what? Faint reflection. Do you see how that works?

Now, Selected Messages, Volume 3, page 195: Listen to this remarkable statement, and let it humble you, dear friends. We're sharing these things because we're trying to make sure, that by the truth, we will be kept out of this deadly trap that we are oh, so prone as a people to fall into, this trap of self-righteousness. **Selected Messages, Volume 3, page 195: "Jesus loves His children, even if they err."** I know a lot of people say "air," but look it up in the dictionary, it's "err." **"Jesus loves His people, even if they make a mistake. He keeps His eye upon them, and when they do their best,"** when they do their, what? **"when they do their best, calling upon God for His help, be assured the service will be accepted, although imperfect."** Whoa, are you duly humbled? When we do our best, calling upon God for His help, the service is still what? Come on, still what? Admit it. It's still imperfect. And any of you who are really honest with yourselves, and with God, know that to be the case... you know that to be the case... your best, in the strength of God! We're talking about not in your own strength. Your spirit empowered best is still what? Imperfect. No wonder we can't rely upon the sanctified life or even Spirit-empowered obedience, to justify us. Are we all together? Because even Spirit-empowered obedience of the most sanctified life... is still what? Come on admit it! It's still imperfect... it's still imperfect.

So what's the solution? Next sentence: **"Jesus is perfect."** Do I hear an "amen"? Come on, everyone ought to say "amen"! **"Jesus is perfect."** {Amen} **"Christ's righteousness is imputed unto them,"** what class? How is Christ's righteousness given? It is what? Imputed. **"Christ's righteousness is imputed unto them, and He will say, 'Take away the filthy garments from him and clothe him with change of raiment.' Jesus makes up for our unavoidable deficiencies."** Oh, that's a significant phrase! Think about it with me. Jesus makes up for our what? **"Unavoidable deficiencies."** That is so protective. If we will understand that, that'll do an awful lot to keep us out of both ditches. Come on now, think with me on this. How does that phrase, **"unavoidable deficiencies,"** keep us out of this ditch, the ditch of legalism? When we do our best, there are still what? Deficiencies, it's still imperfect. **"Therefore by the deeds of the law shall no flesh will be justified."** {Rom 3:20} Your Spirit-

empowered, sanctified obedience still comes short, dear legalists, therefore you can never depend upon that to justify you. Are we all together?

What's in that phrase to help you folk out of your ditch? Jesus makes up for what kind of deficiencies, dear fellow-antinomians? What kind? **"Unavoidable deficiencies."** Jesus makes up for what kind of deficiencies? **"Unavoidable deficiencies."** Now, what are unavoidable deficiencies? We'll deal with that. But please, in this context, recognize a precious truth and take courage. Jesus is what? Is perfect. In Conflict And Courage, page 111. It's also found in Patriarchs and Prophets, page 480, if you want a more readily accessible reference. **Patriarchs and Prophets page 480: "Our Redeemer manifested no human weakness or imperfection..."** Do I hear an "amen"? Did Jesus have any imperfection? No. Did He come short? No, praise God. We have in Him, then, an absolute perfection that meets the infinite standard. Yes! Praise God. And listen: **Review and Herald, June 16, 1896: "Through the mysterious plan of redemption, grace has been provided, so that the imperfect work of the human agent may be accepted in the name of Jesus our Advocate."** Do I hear an "amen"? That ought to thrill you to the core, my dear friends. And if you're really honest with yourself, you know that your best comes short, and this should thrill you.

But you know who this isn't thrilling? This isn't thrilling the folk who have been convinced for a long time that they have what the law requires, and they are righteous on account of their obedience. They're not pleased with this truth because it lays the glory of man where? In the dust. And the naturally proud heart is not very pleased with the fact that they can take absolutely no credit for their right standing before God. **"Through the mysterious plan of redemption, grace has been provided, so that the imperfect work of the human agent may be accepted in the name of Jesus our Advocate."** I praise God for the name of Jesus, our Advocate. And what is that name? The Lord our Righteousness. Oh, I love that name! More on that later; I'll resist jumping to that.

**Hebrews chapter 13:20. "Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, That great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen."** How is it well pleasing in God's sight? Through whom? Through Jesus Christ. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That's the only way any of us can be well-pleasing, or anything that we ever do can be well-pleasing to God. It's as we offer it to Him through Jesus Christ. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} There's no other way you're going to be well-pleasing. He says of you, **"This is my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased"** {**Mat 3:17**} only when He doesn't see you, but sees Him. And praise God, that's what He chooses to do when we are where? In Christ. But if we are in Christ, then Christ is where? In us. And we are walking to the fullness of our ability in all the light that shines upon us because we love Jesus. Do you see how this all fits together?

Now these unavoidable deficiencies, what are they? What are they? Let's be very careful what we try to get under the heading of **"unavoidable deficiencies,"** okay? When you're really tired, and your blood sugar is low, and you lose your temper with your spouse, is that an unavoidable deficiency? No; no I'm sorry, it's not. Because you see, you could have and should have gotten adequate sleep, and could have and should have eaten correctly, and you could have and should have, by God's grace, governed your temper. It's not an unavoidable deficiency.

What is an unavoidable deficiency? Well, an unavoidable deficiency is due to two primary shortfalls. One is in our understanding of God's will, and the second is in our capacity to execute even that which we understand. First of all, our shortfall due to our inadequate understanding. What does Paul tell us in **1 Corinthians 13:12? "...now we see through a glass darkly;"** or in the New King James, **"dimly."** My dear friends, please understand that with our sin-damaged condition, we have very limited

capacities to even understand God's will for us. You see, it's an infinite standard of righteousness, and this sin-damaged human mind does not fully comprehend it, by any stretch of the imagination. And so our understanding of God's will falls short, doesn't it? Surely it does. But praise God, we can grow in knowledge every day of God's will. Correct? And the very fact that we grow every day is a clear indication that at any point, we don't know it all. We learn more and more of God's will as we grow in the sanctified life.

But remember, God doesn't hold us accountable for what we don't know. He does hold us accountable, though, for what we do know. And bless your hearts, let me qualify that: What we could've known, had we diligently sought an understanding. Please don't play games with yourself on this one. Can you be held accountable for a lower standard, simply by leaving the Bible on the shelf to collect dust? And those red books on the shelf to collect dust? Can you play games with God, and say on judgment day: *"I didn't know because I couldn't find the time to read."* Can you do that? No, my dear friends. Please know that we're accountable before God, not only for what we do know, but for what we could have known, had we diligently sought to understand His will for us. But even when we diligently seek to understand His will, we still see through a glass darkly, so that's an unavoidable deficiency.

In the realm of executing or carrying out what we do understand of God's will, there is also a shortfall, a deficiency that is unavoidable. What is it? Let me read to you a remarkable statement, from the pen of inspiration that describes this remarkably well. It's found in **Selected Messages, Volume 1, page 344. "The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary."** Pause. Think with me on this. What are we talking about? We're talking about Spirit-empowered acts of obedience and good deeds, that true believers offer God, okay? And in the proceeding paragraph, by the way, she says specifically that these things are empowered and inspired by the Holy Spirit. Back to the statement: **"The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary, but..."** But! Listen: **"...but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God."** Wow, did you hear that? Our very best Spirit-empowered acts of worship and obedience, as true believers, ascend to heaven so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. What's the cause? **"Passing through the,"** what? **"corrupt channels of humanity."** It's our sinful, fallen condition that causes this defilement.

And by the way, how long will we be corrupt channels? Until **this corruptible puts on incorruption, and this mortal puts on immortality {1 Cor 15:53}**, my dear friends. As long as we retain this corruptible nature, we are channels that defile even what the Holy Spirit does through us. Are you understanding this? I'm not making this up, I'm simply reading it to you. Listen, I read on: **"They..."** What? The religious services, the prayers, the praise, etc. **"They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor, who is at God's right hand, presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God."** It's not acceptable. **"All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption."** Pause. This statement right here speaks volumes regarding the human nature of Jesus Christ. Did Christ's prayers, did His praise ascend to the Father so defiled that unless purified by blood, they could never be accepted? Oh, my dear friends, absolutely, most emphatically, no. Why? Because He wasn't the same corrupt channel we are. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} And praise God, on account of that, He has a righteousness that meets the infinite standard for us. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen}

**"He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, then, perfumed with the**

**merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned."** I say praise God for the Intercessor! What do you say my friends? Praise God for the Intercessor! Oh, we would be in trouble without Him. And then the last paragraph. **"Oh, that all may see..."** She's crying out, **"Oh that all may see that everything in obedience..."** Everything in what class? **"obedience, in penitence, in praise and thanksgiving, must be placed upon the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ. The fragrance of this righteousness ascends like a cloud around the mercy seat."** All of our obedience, our Spirit-empowered, love-motivated obedience, as sanctified believers must be placed where? On the glowing fire of the righteousness of Christ.

Why? What does fire do? It purges, it purifies. Do you better understand why the sanctified life is never going to produce an obedience that can justify you? I mean even that obedience has to be cleansed with the blood of Christ, and have the righteousness of Christ added to it, before it's even acceptable as a thank offering. And please know that the provision of Christ as our Intercessor, His cleansing it with His blood, and adding His righteousness to it, is not done so that it thereby becomes meritorious - a thousand times no. It's done so that it thereby becomes acceptable as a thank offering. Are we all together? This laundering has to be done before our obedience can even be acceptable as a thank offering. Do you better understand why and how it is that we just don't have what it takes to justify us, when it comes to obedience. Even Spirit-empowered, love-motivated obedience, it still comes short, doesn't it? It's still imperfect, isn't it? Indeed, in the words of inspiration, it's so defiled that it itself has to be cleansed with the blood of Christ, and have His righteousness added to it. This is humbling stuff, isn't it? But bless your hearts, this lays the ax at the root of the most subtle form of legalism, that is a plague in this beloved church.

And what is the most subtle form of legalism? It's not, *"I'm righteous by my own efforts to keep the law."* No, no, no, no; I don't know any of Adventists who teach and believe that. But there's a whole lot of us who are into this very subtle deadly form of legalism that goes like this: *"Oh, I'm not righteous on the basis of my obedience, I'm righteous on the basis of the Holy Spirit obeying in and through me."* My dear friends, is that the basis upon which we are righteous in the sight of God? Is it? Come on now, is it? Is that the obedience that justifies us? Even Spirit-empowered obedience? No. Why? Because passing through the corrupt channels of humanity it's so defiled, that unless purified by blood, it can never be accepted by God. Of course that's not going to be adequate to justify us. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} And if you understand this truth you will be kept out of that deadly trap that I'm trying to warn you about tonight. As you grow in your sanctified life, always remember that when you do your best, it's still what? Imperfect, **it still comes short.** {**Rom 3:23**} It, in fact, is so defiled that it can only be accepted by God as it's cleansed by the blood and has the righteousness of the Intercessor added to it, and then it's only acceptable as a thank offering. Are we all together? And my dear friends, this is precisely why... Hear me: This is precisely why you never become, I never become so sanctified that we no longer need to pray *"in Jesus' name, amen."* Are you with me?

Did Jesus have anyone's name to pray in when He prayed to the Father? No. Is there a difference between Him and us? Yes. Praise God for the difference. Praise God there's One who isn't a corrupt channel, who didn't have defiled obedience, who's obedience didn't come short, who had absolute perfect obedience, free from every human imperfection. Praise God that there is One who has met the infinite standard, and praise God that He did it for us. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} That is our righteousness; keep your eye on that! And never count or depend upon even what the Holy Spirit and you are doing to stand you righteous in the sight of God. That is not what justifies you; that's what sanctifies you. Must you be sanctified? Yes. You must have a fitness for heaven, but that will never entitle you to heaven. Are we all together? Oh, I pray that this is clear, my dear friends. Is this Biblical? It's entirely Biblical. It's entirely Biblical.

**Exodus 28:36: "You shall also make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet: HOLINESS TO THE LORD. And you shall put it on a blue cord, that it may be on the turban; it shall be on the front of the turban. So it shall be on Aaron's forehead, that Aaron may bear the iniquity of the holy things..."** That Aaron may bear the iniquity of the what? **"the holy things which the children of Israel hallow in all their holy gifts; and it shall always be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the LORD."** Do you see it? That's the truth right there. That turban on Aaron's forehead, what is it? **"Holiness to the Lord."** Who does Aaron represent? The High Priest. And what does that **"Holiness to the Lord"** represent on the forehead? The infinitely perfect character of Jesus Christ. And it is because of that infinitely perfect character, that our gifts are acceptable to God. Do I hear an "amen"? {Amen} Praise God for the Intercessor! Let's stand for closing prayer.

*Father in Heaven, I thank you so much for helping us realize how utterly dependent we are upon the righteousness of Christ. Even as we grow from glory to glory, from grace to grace into the character likeness of Christ, we still come short. Our very best is imperfect. Indeed our Spirit-empowered acts of love and obedience, are so defiled passing through this corrupt channel, that they themselves have to be purified by blood and have the righteousness of Christ added to them before they're even acceptable as a thank offering. Oh Father, may we not forget these truths, that we may be kept from falling into that deadly trap that has caught so many of us. Help us to keep our eyes on the Lord our Righteousness. For He alone has a righteousness that can stand us infinitely perfect in Your sight. Thank you for Jesus. In His name we praise You, amen.*