

The Path of the Just

By Fred Wright

From *The Messenger of Living Righteousness*, March 1972

This article discusses some of the early history of the unfolding of the message of Living Righteousness, and how with each advance truth that was shown, new questions arose which required faith and patience for the answers to be revealed.

It is now just about seventeen years since the re-discovery of the essential heart of the message of living righteousness as a personal experience of salvation from the indwelling power of sin. Those years have not been years of merely going over and over what we first learned back there in early 1955, but of steady advance and continual development of understanding. There has been no standing still at any point, but rather a steady growth in knowledge and in experience along the way.

Wise and Foolish Virgins

During all this period of time there have been men and women who have come into the message to stay and there are those who have come and gone again. There have been those who have proved themselves to be wise virgins and those who have shown themselves to be foolish. The former class have kept pace with the advancing light by making the message brought to them their very own by searching into it diligently and prayerfully and then by applying the lessons to their own life experience. They have not tried to get a message of their own but have accepted the message which the Lord in His great mercy has sent to them despite the fact that the channels used are those of weak, erring mortals.

The foolish virgins on the other hand, while they have listened with gladness to the preaching of the message and have contributed many good works to the furtherance of the message have failed to make the experience of it their very own.

Either they have allowed the cares of this life to crowd out the essential study and prayer life, necessary for such personal confirmation in the truth for this time, or they have felt that they could go to the Lord and get a message of their own independently of the agencies which the Lord has chosen to use for this time. One way or the other, these foolish ones either realize the peril of the position which they have taken and make frank confession of it, or they continue in their own ways and as surely go out from the movement never to return.

Those of us who have been with this message right from the time when it came through once again as the restoration of the message once offered to the people of God in 1888, through Elders Waggoner and Jones, have learned some very valuable lessons along the way, lessons which those who have come into the message in more recent times have not had the time or the opportunity to learn as thoroughly.

Because of this, and so that all might become solidly established in the truth for their own salvation's sake and for the sake of the finishing of the work of God in the earth, we would do well to look back in retrospect on the development of the message. In doing so we shall see that a certain pattern attends the revelation of this truth, a pattern which is yet to be repeated over and again as each new revelation of advanced truth is given to us as a people.

Every such advance step is a very real test of faith for the believers in the message, and represents a point where they can achieve a decided victory of faith or where they can fail very badly even to the point where they can never recover themselves.

Romans 14

²³ Whatsoever is not of faith is sin.

This is a principle to remember so that when we manifest a lack of faith at an advancing point in the unfolding of the

message, then that is sin on the part of the unbeliever. We are not to be surprised if then our influence casts a cloud over the message and causes difficulties and threatened divisions.

Neither should we be discouraged and disheartened if we do find that we have manifested a lack of faith. Rather let us frankly acknowledge and confess this, receive the forgiveness offered by the Lord and go on with valuable lessons learned for the future. It is to be remembered that the test of a man's character does not lie in the fact that he makes mistakes, for everyone of us does that. The real test lies in what we do about the mistakes when we become aware of them.

A Test of Faith

The point has been made above that each new step in the understanding of the message is a test of faith. This has been true in the past and it will be true in the future as well. In fact the test of faith will grow more and more severe as time goes by so that we do well to learn the lessons which are there to be learned in the present and past experiences. We shall turn now to a discussion as to how it is a test of faith to the believers.

Neither for the angels in heaven in their perfect state in a perfect environment nor for the sons of men upon this earth in their very imperfect state in an equally imperfect environment, is the process of learning an instantaneous affair. Learning is a process involving time and a great deal of it. In fact when we arrive in heaven, we shall certainly not have arrived so far as all knowledge is concerned, for throughout eternity we shall go on studying and learning.

There never will come a time when we ever will have learned all that there is to be learned. One may think of this in terms of the sciences and think that in short time we would have understood all that there is to understand in regard to the message of justification by faith, but in this we would be

mistaken. It will require all of an unending eternity to study this subject and yet there would still be new wonders to be understood in respect to it.

If this is so then we must recognize the fact that today we have as yet but the faintest understandings of this great and wondrous theme. Yet it is true that what we do have is very great light and sufficient to be very effective in the bringing to us of deliverance from the power of sin.

But as surely as there is a great deal yet to be learned there must as surely be unanswered questions before our minds. What is more some of these questions will remain unanswered for a long time. Some of them may not even be answered until we reach the heavenly shores. We are not to regard this as abnormal, but we are to learn by faith to leave with the Lord the questions He has not chosen to answer as yet.

Unanswerable Objections

But a severer trial still is the fact that there comes a time when there arises a question based on undeniable facts which had not been seen before, which seems to overthrow all that we have received so far in the message. Up to this point we had learned and taught certain clear cut truths with confidence, authority and vigor. Now comes along certain arguments which to all appearances totally deny all that, thus making it appear that we have been in serious error. Not only at this point of time are we without an answer to the problem, but it appears that there never could be an answer to it at all.

Now the human reaction to this is to lose faith in that which has come to us in the past and to declare that we all have been in serious error, but the wise virgins do not do this, being those who are found

The Great Controversy, p. 394:

...patiently waiting till clearer light should be given.

This waiting patiently does not mean that they sit back in complacency but that they do study and seek earnestly and carefully to find the answer to the questions before them. But in all this there is an absence of unrest and unease, an absence of agitation and of a spirit of fear. Instead there is the quiet abiding trust in the divine leadership of the message. There is a sense of peace and security in the knowledge that while we do not as yet have the answer, the Lord of Heaven has, and that He who has led us so certainly and effectively in the past will give us the answer in His own good time.

In the meantime, they know that the answer is safe in the Lord's hands and that He will not permit us to be seriously embarrassed by the lack of an answer.

The Example of 1844

An excellent example from history is found in the experience of the wise and the foolish virgins in the first fulfillment of the parable back in 1844. The light of the judgment hour message as received in the initial stages of the movement was sufficient to enable them to understand that the two thousand three hundred days were to end somewhere between March 1843 and March 1844. They had not learned the full facts in regard to the point of time when the decree went forth and while the message which they carried was basically correct, the conclusion drawn in this respect was faulty. Thus they were destined to their first disappointment. The Lord did not come within the time they expected him.

When this happened a great number of those who had stood strongly for the first angel's message, lost their faith in the leading of the Lord and went right back to the churches from which they had come out, never again to walk with the people of God. They lost their eternal life, not because they had gone into error, but because they had lost faith in the message which the Lord had sent, because they were not prepared to wait patiently till clearer light should be given. They

rashly denied the light sent to them so far and it went out leaving them forever in darkness.

But the wise virgins reviewed very carefully the pathway over which the Lord had led them and they knew that they had not been led astray. They knew the change which had taken place in them as a result of the receiving of the message could be nothing less than the working of the mighty power of the God of heaven. They saw too the opposition to the message was nothing less than Satanic, and they could not and they would not go back to the churches.

They had no answer to the confident charges leveled against them by the church, the world, and even by those who had been their former companions in the message. Neither did the answer come for months, but they did not lose faith, nor declare their former positions to be in error. They put their trust in the Lord, searched the Scriptures daily for light and patiently waited till it should be given. In due time it was, and then they were rewarded as the movement took another step forward toward final victory.

The 1888 Message Revival

So it has been in the history of this movement and message. Seventeen years ago, there came to us the light of the message of living righteousness. We recognized it at once as being the glorious restoration of the message delivered to the people of God back in 1888 through God's chosen servants, Elders Waggoner and Jones.

But the Lord did not, because He could not, give to us all the light at the outset. What we received then was truth, glorious, saving truth, but it was only lesson number one in a long and protracted schooling designed to unlock the deeper mysteries of salvation to us. Gladly we accepted this as treasure to our souls and great and wonderful was the deliverance experienced.

Naturally we thought that the church would as gladly receive such wonderful rays of light which had been so long hidden as a result of the rejection by the majority in 1888 of the most precious message sent from heaven then. But instead we found that the church had no more love for the message then than it had back in 1888. Instead we found ourselves the object of attack and of persecution which at first was so mystifying and inexplicable to us.

But most trying of all was the fact that our enemies could and did level at us many questions and statements, all of which seemed to completely overthrow the message for which we stood and which had so marvelously transformed our lives.

Some among us, because they could not answer these charges, lost their faith and went right back into the church again. They lost the experience they had gained and have never again walked with us until this day. They lost their eternal life, not because they went into error but because they lost their faith in the message and called error that which they had once rejoiced in as the truth.

But there were just the tiny little few of us who took a different stand from this. We stated quite openly and honestly that we knew that we did not have the answers to all the questions and statements brought to us. We were only beginners in this light and could not hope to know all things as yet. But we did know that the first lessons we had been taught in the message were the truth, that it had changed, wonderfully changed our lives, and that we would stand by that and not abandon it for all the arguments leveled at us.

Thus we stood and in a little time there came answers to some of the questions which were so clear and convincing that we could rejoice in the simplicity and the clarity of it. Then we understood better the truth of the words of Jesus when He said,

John 7

¹⁷ If any man will do His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself.

Light Brings Responsibilities

This Scripture makes it clear that there comes to the individual a measure of light from above which light is attended with certain responsibilities. It is the duty of the person to step out and fulfill those responsibilities even though he does not have the answer to all the questions and objections which may be leveled against him.

On the contrary, human nature desires to have all the answers to the question before we step out in obedience. But this is not the way of faith, and the person who does this will never discover the answers to any of his questions for it is to those who step out by faith on what has already been revealed, making that their own life experience, that the answers are given. They are the ones who will know of the doctrine as Jesus declared and promised.

This principle is further stated here:

Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 290:

Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears, and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, "Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;" but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things.

The truth of this, those who have been with this message from the very beginning, have learned.

The very fact that we are still with the message is evidence that we have learned it, for those who did not and would not learn it have long since fallen away to walk with us no more.

From those early beginnings the light has shone more and more brightly answering questions and objections which in

the beginning appeared to be so unanswerable. We know that not yet have we seen all there is to see for,

Proverbs 4

¹⁸ The path of the just is as a shining light, that shines more and more unto the perfect day.

First Light

The message of deliverance from bondage began with the revelation of the fact that sin is not merely what I do, but it is what I am,—a state of being. We saw back then that it is an indwelling power which holds the individual as a slave to its desires and intentions.

In the Bible we found that this slave master is described as the carnal mind in *Romans* 8:7, and that there is given to us illustration after illustration of its working. The slave master of Egypt, the evil tree, and the indwelling presence of the disease, all revealed the fact that anyone who is held in the grip of sin is a slave and must do the will of the slave master.

We were able to see the clear distinction between the man who is of the world and in the world who had no conscience to obey the word of God, and the man of *Romans* seven, who, having been converted in the intellectual mind, loved the truth in the mind and really desired to obey the will of God, but found that this was an impossibility because of the indwelling presence of the sin master.

How clearly and plainly the predicament of the man in *Romans* seven is illustrated by the experience of the Israelitish slave in Egypt who longed for freedom and the joy of serving God, but who had to build up the kingdom of Satan day by day, and of the man at the pool of Bethesda who desired nothing more than to be able to get up and walk and work like any other human being, but who could not because his life was dictated by the ruling power of the disease within him.

Then there was the picture of the gardener who desired to

have a crop of good fruit produced in his garden but had only a thorn bush growing there. It was evident that there was no hope of his producing any good fruit while his garden was occupied by an evil tree.

Thus the light sent to us revealed for the first time the real nature of the problem we faced in our earnest desire to live righteously. Hitherto our attention and effort had been concentrated on doing the right thing with no awareness of the impossibility of this unless we first had become righteous in ourselves though certainly not of ourselves.

Once the problem was clearly revealed and seen, it was but a natural step to see the solution to it, a solution which certainly was not to be found in any effort to compel the carnal mind, the old slave master, the evil tree to bring forth good fruit for this was an utter impossibility. No truth could be more clearly or more emphatically stated than

Romans 8

⁷ The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

This, to turn to the illustration provided in nature, is the same as to say,

“The thorn bush is not subject to the law of producing good fruit neither indeed can be.”

This then left but the one alternative as the solution to the problem of the sin nature, and that was to be delivered from its very presence and power in the life. We saw that it was “not by trying but by dying” that the victory comes. Just as the old thorn bush must be dug up by the roots and replaced with the good tree before there can be any good fruit at all; just as Jesus dispelled the disease from the body of the man at the pool of Bethesda and from the lepers who came to Him; just as the slave master was slain in the land of Egypt; so the old man of sin must be eradicated from the individual and a new life altogether take its place.

Precious indeed became the promises of what God would do for us. We knew that God was speaking to us individually and personally when He declared

Ezekiel 11

¹⁸ And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within you; and I will take the stony heart out of their flesh, and will give them a heart of flesh:

¹⁹ That they may walk in my statutes, and keep my ordinance and do them: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

We saw that this, as outlined for us in *Romans* six, meant that we personally entered into the experience of crucifixion and resurrection. It meant that we had to die literally and actually and that a new life must take the place of the old. As we accepted this truth by living faith and entered into the power of the experience of it, we knew

Romans 6

⁶ ...that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.

A State of Being

No one had any difficulty in understanding that when one has the indwelling presence of the sin master then he is sinful. To say that one is sinful is to describe his state of being. It followed therefore and quite correctly too, that when the sin master was removed, then the sinfulness that comprised the sin master, was removed, so the believer now ceased to have the state of being which he had before.

But the Lord does not leave us thus, but puts into us a new life in the place of the old. This new life is His righteousness so that he who has ceased to have the sinful state of being now has the new state of being which is the righteousness of God in him. Now that he has become a good tree then he is able at last to do the good he wanted to do, but could never

accomplish.

As this truth unfolded to our minds, the promises of God were still the precious food for our hungry souls. We read:

2 Corinthians 5

¹⁷ If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

This Scripture so plainly declares that it is the believer who becomes the new creation. It is not that someone else is a new creation in place of the believer as an accounted state of being, but that *he* is the new creation. There has been an actual, literal recreation in the man himself as a result of his grasping by faith the precious promise of God to do that very thing for him.

Inasmuch as the creative works of God are perfect, then it follows that the nature now created in the man is a sinless and holy nature. The realization of this was very precious and wonderful, and the truth of it was further attested to by such statements as these:

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 419-420:

The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. It means divine illumination, rejoicing in God. It means a heart emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ.

When Christ reigns in the soul there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life. The acceptance of the Saviour brings a glow of perfect peace, perfect love, perfect assurance, The beauty and fragrance of the character of Christ revealed in the life testifies that God has indeed sent His Son into the world to be its Saviour.

Christ's Object Lessons, p. 163:

As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus. Holiness finds that it has nothing

more to require.

These statements are not speaking of a work to be done in the life at some future time, but of a work that is done at the very outset of the Christian life. These statements leave no room for any idea that the old sinful nature remains in us after conversion.

Rather, inasmuch as at this point “Holiness finds that it has nothing more to require,” we must conclude that the believer now has a perfectly sinless nature. All this we believed, understood and taught in the earlier days of this movement and message, and in doing so we taught nothing else but the plain truth on the matter, though by no means all the truth for there was much yet to be learned. Furthermore some of that which had yet to be learned would seem to completely deny what we had held previously, as we shall shortly describe.

Sinless or Sinful

Our experience has shown us that there is nothing more objectionable to the mind of those opposed to this message than the teaching that a person actually becomes sinless in nature in himself. How quickly then they pointed us to statements of which the following are excellent examples:

Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 160:

None of the apostles or prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honoured with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their own nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ. So will it be with all who behold Christ.

Along side of this could be put the words of the apostle John when he said,

1 John 1

⁸ If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

Again, we were confronted with this:

The Review and Herald, May 30, 1882:

We can never see our Lord in peace, unless our souls are spotless. We must bear the perfect image of Christ. Every thought must be brought into subjection to the will of Christ. As expressed by the great apostle, we must come “unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

We shall never attain to this condition without earnest effort. We must strive daily against outward evil and inward sin, if we would reach the perfection of Christian character.

How totally contradictory these statements appear to be to the ones quoted above from *Christ's Object Lessons* and from the Bible. These statements appeared to completely overthrow the very positions on which this message was built.

Worse still, it seemed that there was no hope in the world of ever finding an answer which would reconcile the two apparently conflicting declarations. Our enemies pressed us for an answer, confident that they had weapons here that would destroy our faith and our position, and there were some among us who did lose their way because they were not prepared to wait till clearer light should be given.

On the other hand, those of us who had been long along the road did not regard the situation as being in any way abnormal. We had long since learned that all apparent contradictions were never real but always only apparent, and that if the true child of God in simple trusting faith waited for the Lord to give the answer that in due time it would come. In the meantime the waiting period was simply a test of faith and a means of sifting the ranks to keep them relatively clean.

Waiting in faith is not an experience of idleness but of patient trusting study, and as we did this our understanding enlarged until we began to realize that the fallen, sinful flesh of

man is a very real factor and problem in the warfare against the evil one. The mystery of the incarnation of Christ took on fuller and broader meaning, for we saw Him as the One who

Medical Ministry, p. 181:

...took, upon His sinless nature, our sinful nature.

While upon this earth, He was God in the flesh. This is another way of saying that the incarnation was divinity dwelling in humanity. The divinity was a perfect sinless nature in which there was no trace of hatred, malice, bitterness, pride or such like, but the humanity in which that perfection dwelt was by no means sinless but rather sinful in the sense that every tendency of that flesh was to run in the pathway of sin.

This then could only mean that Christ had two natures. One, the divine, was perfect and sinless and the other, the human, was imperfect and sinful. Inasmuch as the experience of the true Christian born from above is that of one placed upon the same vantage ground as was Jesus, then he too must have in this life two natures, the one sinless and holy, the other sinful and unholy.

This does not mean that the Christian therefore will of necessity be committing sin in his Christian life. There is a difference between having a sinful nature and a sinning nature. Christ had the former but certainly at no time did He have the latter. In other words, because He had the divine nature and because His mind was always steadfast and quick to make the decision for the right, then the tendency of the flesh was never allowed to appear at all. It was always kept under the most perfect subjugation.

A Dual Problem

Thus the Lord was opening to our minds the nature of the second problem we had to deal with in our quest for ultimate holiness.

The first problem, and it had to be the first, was the recognition and eradication of the carnal mind, the indwelling power of the sin master. While that was there as a power that was enmity against God and could not by any means be made to be subject to the law of God, there was not a hope in the world of keeping the flesh in subjection to the higher Powers of the mind. Therefore there was no real point in trying to deal with the sinful flesh as problem number one. That had to be the second problem to be dealt with once the problem of the carnal mind had been dealt with.

It was for what is now a very obvious reason that the Lord revealed to us the first problem first, and then when once that was clear, our minds were led on to see and to understand the problem of the flesh and the way in which the divine mind in union with the right action of the will, and both together in constant dependence upon the power of God from above, could and would keep the flesh always under subjection.

Thus it was that we came to see that while we had been delivered from the indwelling presence of the sin master, we had not been delivered from the fallen sinful human nature, nor would be until the appearance of the Lord in the clouds of heaven.

We recognized that when the Inspired Word spoke of the fact that at the point of conversion “the heart is emptied of self, and blessed with the abiding presence of Christ,” that, “holiness finds that it has nothing more to require,” it most certainly was not speaking of the fallen, sinful, human nature which every Christian still has. It was not speaking either of the whole man but of that divine nature which is now in him and which is holy and perfect.

At this point of course, holiness does have a great deal more to require of the whole man, for there are habits, practices, theories and ideas which must still be gotten rid of, before ultimate perfection is reached.

As these truths emerged, then we saw that we had not been in error when we believed and taught that the old sin master had to be eradicated and that a new life take its place, so that the believer had become in himself a righteous person.

At the same time, together with all the prophets and the apostles, we could and did confess the sinfulness of our own natures when we thought of the fallen sinful flesh with which we are still encumbered.

But in no sense of the word did they or we confess any sinfulness in respect to the new nature which we have from above, for that would be to make God a liar and to make His life an unholy life. This we cannot do.

A Further Problem

Thus the message was taking on a new balance. This balance as best we understood it then is set forth in the book *Living Righteously*, especially in the chapters entitled, "Human versus Carnal", "Weak Sinful Flesh", "I Die Daily" and "Our Own Diligent Effort".

But despite the clarity of this light, believers still did not understand the full role of the sinful, fallen nature, so that when they found themselves beset by certain frailties, desires and shortcomings, they were sorely tempted with the thought that they had either lost the gift of the divine nature or worse still, that they had never really received it in the first case.

Yet at the same time when questioned about their problems, they could definitely recall a wonderful change in their lives in so many respects, leaving no doubt that the Holy Spirit had done a mighty work in their lives. But at the same time, there was no doubt but that they had a sin problem and a serious one too.

Once again an answer was needed, and it had to be an answer which was to be found, not in speculation, nor in the juggling of the message already received, but in the plainly

written Word of the Living God. The serious implications of not being able to find the answer were very apparent, involving the loss of faith and experience in the lives of many and in turn thus the loss of eternal life.

The fact of this was easily seen. Having experienced the power of the gospel to take away many of the problems of life and then to find that things which we never thought could ever appear in the life, were appearing in the life, made one suspect that the original experience was not genuine after all.

The result was that there was a tendency to go back and get a more thorough new birth experience but this did not prove to be of any help either for reasons we were soon to learn. If after repeated attempts to get rid of the problem in this way, no real and lasting success was achieved then it would be very natural to doubt the message and in the end to reject it as false.

Revival and Reformation

Once again the Lord was not caught by surprise by the appearance of this added need in the experience of the believers in the message and He had the answer ready for us to find through patient, trusting search and study. Thus it was that there opened up to our minds the beautiful truth on "Revival and Reformation". We came to see that the work of revival or the giving to us of a new life in the place of the old was the work of the moment at the very beginning of the Christian experience, while the work of reformation was one which went on over a long period of time subsequent to conversion.

Revival was signified by the Passover service of the Old Testament, and by the service of the Baptism in the New Testament era, while reformation was signified by the daily services of the Old Testament Sanctuary, while in the New Testament this work is symbolized by the service of Foot Washing. We saw that the Passover was to be a service once only in the

year and at the beginning of the year, just as baptism is to be a once-for-all-time service of cleansing at the very beginning of the Christian experience.

Those who had experienced this initial cleansing work, were however to come again and again for a second work of cleansing as figured by the daily services and by the oft-repeated foot-washing service. This then could only be understood to mean that the first cleansing as signified by the once-at-the-beginning service of baptism, was complete and final so far as what it was intended to do was concerned. Its task was to eradicate the indwelling presence of the sin-master, heretofore identified as the carnal mind of *Romans* 8:7. It is intended to deal with the first problem which we have, that of bondage or slavery to the ruling power of an indwelling sin presence.

But it did not deal with the second problem, the sinful, fallen, human nature, nor is it designed to deal with this problem. This is to be dealt with in the work of reformation as signified by the foot-washing. Therefore there was no value or purpose in taking back to the work of the initial cleansing as signified by baptism, a sin problem which could only be dealt with in the work of reformation. Yet this is the very thing which we were doing. We kept trying to get a firmer, deeper new birth experience when what was needed was a thorough work of reformation.

Because we were taking our problem to the wrong place, so that we were seeking to have it solved in the wrong way, we were not meeting with the success which the message led us to expect. This was puzzling and for some quite discouraging, but once again those who knew their Lord did not lose faith but patiently waited till the clearer light should come.

The dual nature of the work to be done is well set forth in this statement:

The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2, p. 241:

Miracles of goodness and mercy marked His life; but while He healed the afflicted, and cast out the demons that persecuted men, He left to themselves the work of correcting the evils of their natures.

This statement shows the two distinct works to be done in the whole matter of salvation. The first is the deliverance from the bondage of sin, the indwelling presence of the demons. This is a work which Christ alone can do, and He does it once and for all time at the beginning of the Christian experience.

But then there is the work of the correcting of the fallen, sinful, human nature and in this work we have a large part to do. The statement above must not be understood to mean that we are left alone to do the work of correcting the evils of our natures, as so much written elsewhere makes it plain that Christ is a mighty and a very present Helper in this work. But it does show the distinction between the first work of revival and the second work of reformation. In the first cleansing, Christ alone does the work, while in the second we work with Him, so that

The Great Controversy, p. 425:

...by the grace of God and our own diligent effort, [we become] conquerors in the battle with evil.

The Experience of Peter

At this point, great help and encouragement was gained from the study of the experience of Peter and the other apostles at the first service of the foot washing there in the upper room. We saw from the evidence available in the Word of God that these men were indeed truly born again Christians who had been delivered from the bondage of sin.

In brief this evidence was that they had been appointed by Christ to be ministers of the gospel and it is very clear that Jesus would never appoint a man as a minister if he did not have the gospel which is the power of God to save from sin.

Then we have the plain words of Christ to Peter at the time when Peter was requesting rebaptism by asking for the washing of all of him instead of just the feet. Christ declined the request and stated that

John 13

¹⁰ ...he that is washed needs not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit.

By this Jesus declared that Peter had been washed and that he did not need to go back to baptism the second time to solve the problem which he faced at this moment. This fact that the disciples were converted men is further attested to by these words:

The Desire of Ages, p. 646:

So Peter and his brethren had been washed in the great fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. Christ acknowledged them as His.

Some, of course, pointed to the statement of Jesus, which He said to Peter, just after this experience:

Luke 22

³² And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren.

They thought this was clear proof that the experience of conversion was still something in the future for Peter. What is overlooked in this objection is the fact that there are at least three different conversions.

The first is the converting of the intellectual mind to the truth, the second is that which most folk think of as being conversion, the eradication of the carnal mind, and the third is the day by day conversions form all the evil drawings of the flesh to the things of the Spirit.

The conversion which Peter needed here was a conversion from his ideas of the coming kingdom, to the true concept of the kingdom. There was no hope of his strengthening his brethren while his concept of the kingdom caused him to

strive for a place above them.

There is no question about the fact that Peter sinned and sinned grievously on the night of the last supper and the betrayal in the Garden of Gethsemane. Equally clear is the fact that he did not have the old carnal mind which is the enmity against God.

Therefore, the sins which he committed that night did not spring from the presence of the carnal mind, because he no longer had one. His sins that night were caused because of his very incorrect ideas of the coming kingdom, and were an evidence that the work of reformation needed to be carried quite a giant step forward before he could be free from the power of these temptations.

It was now very plainly evident that the presence of these problems in his life was not an evidence that the carnal mind had returned. Therefore he had not passed back under Satan's control, had not returned into the camp of the evil one, "Christ acknowledged them as His."

The whole point of the lesson to be learned from the experience of these men is set forth in the plainest of terms:

Steps to Christ, p. 64:

There are those who have known the pardoning love of Christ and who really desire to be children of God, yet they realize that their character is imperfect, their life faulty, and they are ready to doubt whether their hearts have been renewed by the Holy Spirit.

Now this had been exactly the experience of so many of us. We could point back, it was true, to wonderful and extensive changes in our lives, to sins which had left us never to return. But at the same time we were still troubled by certain weaknesses and deficiencies, with the result that we doubted if we had ever been truly born again, exactly as described above.

To those of us who were in this situation came the encouraging message framed in the words following directly on in

the statement being quoted.

Steps to Christ, p. 64:

To such I would say, Do not draw back in despair. We shall often have to bow down and weep at the feet of Jesus because of our shortcomings and mistakes, but we are not to be discouraged. Even if we are overcome by the enemy, we are not cast off, not forsaken and rejected of God. No, Christ is at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

We did not at first quote this statement, even though we taught exactly what it said, and there were some, who, not understanding the message being presented, drew the conclusion that we were making excuse for certain classes of sin, and teaching that certain sins could be knowingly committed and yet we still have eternal life.

Any who would draw the conclusion that this is what we were teaching must draw the same conclusion from the above statement from *Steps to Christ*. The facts are though that in both cases they would have missed the essential point of the message being presented. In no sense of the word was there any making excuse for sin, but rather a clarifying of the problem of sin, so that the believer could the more decidedly and positively gain the victory over it.

Nor were we teaching that one could commit certain kinds of sins, and at the same time be in the kingdom unless those sins were thoroughly repented of and forsaken. At the same time however, when a person who has been delivered from Satan's camp, is tempted into sin as Peter was, he does not pass back into the family of Satan, but still remains a child of God. He has not lost his new birth experience, but he certainly will if he does not repent of the sin committed.

Those who did understand the essential point of this further truth, were able to face the battle with the evil one with greater courage, clearer understanding and a much firmer faith in the saving power of God and in the wisdom of God.

Far from finding in it an excuse for sin, we found in it the open door to far more extensive and positive victories in the area which previously had been puzzling and difficult for us.

Another Hard One

Throughout this study we have been seeking to show that the message is ever unfolding, ever growing, that we do not get all the answers at the one time. Every advance step is made by faith and that which makes the test of faith the more severe is the fact that once a new field of truth is opened up to us there appears some statement or argument which seemingly negates all that we have learned, and for which one could hardly imagine there ever being any possibility of an answer which would reconcile the situation.

So it was that it was not long before we became aware that on the night of the last supper, Peter was declared in *The Desire of Ages* to have had alienation, jealousy and pride in him:

The Desire of Ages, p. 646:

When Jesus girded Himself with a towel to wash the dust from their feet, He desired by that very act to wash the alienation, jealousy and pride from their hearts...Pride and self-seeking create dissension and hatred, but all this Jesus washed away in washing their feet.

Now here indeed was a problem. The plain truth of the Word of God had taught us that the carnal mind is eradicated at the new birth experience. The carnal mind is enmity against God. Therefore it is a state of being, and its state of being is all that is described in the condition of enmity against God and that is hatred, bitterness, malice, pride, jealousy and such like.

Now, if the carnal mind is taken away at conversion and there is no doubt but that it is, then that which the carnal mind is, is likewise taken away, so that the Christian is delivered from the hatred, pride, bitterness, malice and so forth of the carnal mind. In the place of it he will have the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, humility and such like.

Our position on this is stated in *Living Righteously*, in the chapter “Human versus Carnal”:

Therefore, the fact that the Christian no longer has the evil responses of the carnal nature which can be categorized as hatred, bitterness, wrath, lust, pride, envy and such like, nor the fierce and burning appetites for such things as nicotine and alcohol, is not to be understood that he can no longer be tempted of the devil.

This statement represents the best light we had on the matter at the time when the book went into print and as far as it goes it is the truth and we still hold and believe just what that sentence declares.

It is to be noted as to what the sentence does say and as to what it does not say. It does *not* say only that the Christian cannot have the evil responses of hatred and so on. *It does not say that*. It says that he will not have the evil responses *of the carnal nature*. It is to be understood here that the expression, carnal nature is referring to that which *Romans 8:7* is called the carnal mind, which is the enmity against God.

At conversion this carnal mind is taken away and if it is taken away, then how can the Christian possibly experience still the evil responses of it which are categorized as hatred pride and so forth? The simple answer is that he could not!

There was nothing which could be plainer than this but here was the situation where Peter, who was unquestionably converted and thus delivered of the carnal mind, had pride, hatred and envy in him.

This was indeed a test of faith, for it seemed to be an unanswerable contradiction of the very message we had stood for and preached so earnestly and effectively. Had we been led astray by cunningly devised fables? Was our experience a delusion after all? Was there need for a complete reversal of our position?

The implications were rather serious. If we did after all retain the evil characteristics of the carnal mind, then those who had opposed us right along were correct and we were wrong in the very fundamental heart and foundation of the message.

The very point which above all else had made us to be the movement we are, separate and distinct from all other movements and churches, would have been in error and we would be proved to be a false movement and would have no honest recourse but to disband and join again with the church from which we had come or go out into the world altogether.

We did not ignore the possibility of this and were prepared to accept it if it was proved to be true. But there was so much evidence which could not be ignored that we did not make any hasty moves. We remembered the experiences of the past, how that we had been confronted by questions which seemed to be quite insoluble, how that the answers never came at once but only in response to faithful, patient waiting and searching for the truth.

Come the answer did, as it has always come before. When it came, it was so simple and clear that we wondered as to how we had never before seen it. In coming it showed that we had not been in error in the teachings of the past, even though by a failure to thoroughly grasp and experience what we had been taught in the past, some drew some wrong conclusions from the message. However this did not make the message itself wrong.

The Doctrine of Christ

The doctrine of Christ is the teaching that Jesus came in the same flesh and blood as the children whom He came to save. This teaching is set forth by John in his first and second epistles, wherein he makes it clear that this is the message we have to bring to the needy and the perishing and that only

those who do, have the Father and the Son. The doctrine of Christ is the gospel of Christ, and every answer to every question of salvation is found in this doctrine.

So it was that we came in our searching upon the following statement:

The Desire of Ages, p. 507:

Looking upon Him in His humiliation, as He walked as a man among men, they had not understood the mystery of His incarnation, the dual character of His nature. Their eyes were holden, so that they did not fully recognize divinity in humanity.

That brief clause in the sentence, “the dual character of His nature”, was the key which unlocked the mystery. We know that Christ had two natures for

Medical Ministry, p. 181:

He took upon His sinless nature, our sinful nature.

The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 5, p. 1113:

Was the human nature of the Son of Mary changed into the divine nature of the Son of God? No; the two natures were mysteriously blended in the one person—the man Christ Jesus.

Now we learn that both of these natures had a distinct character of their own for we have to learn and to understand “the dual character of His nature.” The word dual means twofold. They may be identical or they may be opposite. In this case we know that they are quite opposite for one was sinless and the other was sinful.

Now it is written that each had a character of its own. It follows then that the character of each must be according to the nature of each.

The character of the one, that is the divine nature,—must be the sum of the attributes of divinity which are love, joy, peace, gentleness, humility and such like. This character we receive in the place of the old carnal mind which had all the

evil characteristics of sin which are hatred, pride, and such like.

But after we have been delivered from the carnal mind we still retain the fleshly nature and will do so right through until the advent of Christ to give us immortality. This fleshly nature has its own character and this character is sinful. What are the characteristics of a sinful nature? The answer is very simply that of hatred, pride, self-love and such like. We do not have holy flesh and therefore in our flesh are all the unholy possibilities imaginable.

This then is to say that while we have been delivered from the carnal mind and all the hatred pride, malice, bitterness and such like which are the characteristics of the carnal mind, we have not been delivered from the flesh with all its hatred, pride and self love. Therefore, the Christian is to understand that he is not safe from the possibility of these evil things appearing in his life.

Once again there is the danger that some will misunderstand these truths and find them confusing, but those who are careful, thoughtful, and prayerful students of the message will understand this perfectly. There is nothing strange about the fact that the Christian is still in danger of these things rising in his flesh. The simplest and clearest proof of this is revealed in the experience of Lucifer who had a perfect mind in a perfect body and actually dwelt in the very presence of God. Yet we find that pride rose up in his heart and led him into sin. If pride could and in fact did rise in a perfect and a sinless being then, how much more certainly is there the risk of its rising in a being still encumbered with sinful flesh today.

One may ask then as to what the difference is between the man who has been delivered of the hatred, pride and envy of the carnal mind yet still has the sinful character in the flesh. The answer is simply as follows. When we had the carnal mind, we had in us a spirit of hateful rebellion against God

which entirely enslaved and dominated us so that the evil characteristics of hatred and pride were the controlling elements in the life. They were very much alive and in power. We had no hope of behaving in any other way but that dictated by our hate-filled hearts.

But the evil character of the flesh is not the dominant factor in the life of a true Christian. The possibility for hate to rise is there, but it absolutely need not if we are faithful to obey the Lord in every hour of temptation. The sinfulness there is in the nature of a potential rather than its being actual, and there is no change in the truth that the believer never needs to sin at all.

We have long understood that the sinful flesh in the life of the Christian, just as in the lives of the unconverted, tends always in the direction of sin. It clamors for self-gratification and ease. The carnal mind in the unregenerate serves the flesh and works to provide it with its every desire. More than this it stirs it to further intensities of evil desire beyond its natural levels.

But while the tendency of the flesh toward sin is always there, it need not be allowed to appear at all. While it will ever be a sinful nature, it need never become a sinning nature. But in order for it not to become a sinning nature we have to have two things:

1. The divine nature in the place of the carnal mind;
2. An intellectual mind which is so thoroughly educated in the principles of the kingdom and aware of the wiles of Satan, that it can detect the right from the wrong in every hour of temptation and resolutely say no to the evil thing. Such awareness is maintained only by steadfast prayer and watchfulness. Without that we can never be strong to resist the temptations of the evil one.

It is to be understood then that when the mind is bewildered or confused, that the flesh cannot be successfully con-

trolled, but will come to the fore and dominate so that the evil characteristics of the flesh will manifest themselves in spite of the fact that we are no longer the slaves to sin.

This was exactly Peter's problem on the night when he betrayed his Lord. He was bewildered as to the nature of the kingdom and unable to understand the nature of the temptations being urged upon him. Furthermore he had slept when he should have been watching unto prayer. The result was that the essential element of the will without which the power of the divine mind cannot operate to keep the flesh under perfect control, was missing so that there was nothing to stop the flesh from rising and manifesting itself.

Thus it was that pride, alienation and jealousy were manifest in the life of Peter. So it will too in the life of any converted Christian if we do not maintain a careful and thorough prayer life, and if we allow the minds to become confused as to what the issues of our temptations are.

Perversion

All this is the more easily understood when we realize that all sin is but a perversion of that which was good in the first place.

For some time we have been teaching that Satan is not the sin master but that he himself is a slave to sin. This is proven by the fact that he has to deceive the world into following him.

But whence came the power of sin which controls him and every other sinner? It came from God for He is the Author and the Creator of all Power. To say that the power of sin came from a different source than God is to admit the presence of a second creator and this we can never do, for this is a power which God alone has.

This is not to be understood as saying on the other hand that God actually created sin. Far from it. All the power which

God gave to Lucifer in the first case was good and intended only to do good but the devil allowed those powers to become perverted into an evil thing so that

Romans 7

¹⁰ ...which was ordained to life, [is] found to be unto death.

This then means that all that is sinful today was once good. Remember that to say otherwise is to say that sin was created. That in turn is to admit of another Creator for God certainly never created sin.

Now if all that is sinful today was once good then we know that sin is a perversion of righteousness. This means then that if we have righteousness today then the risk of that being perverted into sin is still there. In other words the very gifts of God in us are those things from which sin was first made, and can be made from them again in us if we are not careful. Fire is a good servant but a terrible master.

For instance, God has put into us the beautiful bond of natural affection, but perverted it becomes lust. The joyous satisfaction of accomplishment, perverted, becomes the evil thing of pride. It is a God-given virtue to hate sin, but how human it is to hate the sinner instead. Human nature with its strongly inbuilt law of self-preservation hates to see its security cut off and it is natural to make the one who takes away our security the object of that hatred.

If we understand these things; if we have in us the power of the new divine nature; if the mind is educated to know what decision we should make in every hour of temptation so that we recognize the unholy clamors of the flesh; if we are strengthening the will by watching unto prayer, then the evil tendencies of the flesh need never appear at all in any place or at any time, and we may live the same sinless life in sinful flesh which Jesus lived while here upon this earth.

To bring believers to the place where this is actual fact in

their experience, is the whole point and purpose of this message and the very reason as to why the Lord has brought it to us in this very time in the history of the world.

In Conclusion

There is a great deal more that we might say by way of a more detailed explanation of these things and these will be brought out in future publications. But in conclusion we say with rejoicing that the message still stands. It has not been a false message and there has been no need to change that which the Lord has given to us in the past. Those positions we have not had to modify or alter at all.

What we did have in the past, left some points a little obscure but the light is shining more and more unto the perfect day and, as surely as it does, more and more areas become clearer and plainer. Thus while the message is not changed, it certainly is greatly extended and clarified and for this we are thankful.

Let every believer learn the lesson that we have not yet come to the place where every question has been raised and answered. There will come times again when it will appear that we have come face to face with a point which cannot be answered and that all that we have taught in the past is negated by this new objection.

When that time comes, the truly wise virgins will remember the lessons of the past and will wait patiently till the clearer light shall be given. They will reveal real and solid faith in the Lord, and in the day of Christ's return will be thoroughly and truly rewarded.

May the Lord lead us into a living experience of full victory over sin today and to such faith that we shall be able to weather every storm that comes.

The truth goes marching on and it is up to us to keep pace with the advancing light or we shall be left behind in the

darkness never to recover ourselves and the fault will be our own.