



The Practical Gospel: Part 2

RTOP 2013

Personal Experience

I want to give you a personal testimony; but I want to say that I am in no way an example or a personal standard for you—only Jesus is our only example and standard! Paul says, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” In an area where he is not following Christ don’t follow him there. However, although I am still striving for the Kingdom of God and every day I have to surrender my will to Christ; every day is a Christian battle, a Christian experience I have to go through—yet I can say, Praise God, that there are areas that the Lord has helped me with; helped me to overcome, which gives me confidence that the work He has begun in me, He will complete. There should be progress in the Christian experience. This is not righteousness by works—it is righteousness by faith—but it is Christ working in us—there should be progress.

We just had a little baby; she is five and a half months old now, she drools and poops on herself and spits up all the time and she’s cute—we love her. Now parents, be honest; when your little baby drools and poops on itself and burps up, the fact is the baby is still cute. It is doing what a baby does. A slobbering baby is still cute. Then as the child gets older they develop and they grow.

Now your little baby that slobbers and poops on itself and is very cute, if that baby was ten years old, or fifteen years old, and that child still lay on the floor and defecated on himself, and drooled, and threw up—would that be considered cute? No, right away you say that something is wrong. So as Christians, God loves us, He accepts us as children—we are called babes in Christ; but if we stay that way, it is not cute in the sight of God. There should be growth and development.

When I first became a Christian I was 21 years old and I was sitting in the State Prison. It does not matter why, but I was a criminal and a bad guy, I was not a nice person. Jesus still helps me in some of those areas. I had a drinking problem; I come from a family of alcoholics. My father was a Viet-Nam veteran; he came out of the Viet Nam war in 1968, he fought in 1967 on the Tien offensive. He was in the army and part of the two man radar planes, a lot of his platoon got shot down; there was a PBS special on his platoon because they lost so many men.

He came back a Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in 1968 and started slamming heroin in his veins in the streets of New York City. He grew his hair long and grew his beard out and then travelled 3,000 miles as a big Hippie to California. Met my mother who was a drug addict as well—a Hippie, flower

children. They had a lot in common; they were war protesters and Hippies, free love and they had a lot of drugs and alcohol in common. In the midst of that unholy union they conceived me.

You have to realize that certain people struggle with hereditary tendencies to evil that some of us have no clue about. That is why, young people, it is so important to live a pure life. Not just for you, but if God guides in a future relationship, it is easier for your children to get victory if you and your spouse have also had a Christian experience from a young age. We predispose our children to certain things.

You look at your child and say, "Why do you do just what I have done," Or why do you always . . . it looks just like me." When we realize we have lived in a certain way and we see issues in our children it should cause us to be more merciful to them, and to really take it seriously to train them to be Christians because they have struggles that they don't understand. So the younger the age when they can learn to surrender their wills to Jesus the better it will be for their Christian experience.

The Greatest Testimony is not living a life of sin like I did. People say, "Oh Pastor Richards, wow, you are a tough guy, wow, you have tattoos all over your arm!" in India, the pastor that made the flyer to announce me coming, advertised, "From Prisoner to Preacher". So the very first thing they had me do when I got there was an AY program to give my testimony and that always makes me feel uncomfortable. I want to preach about Jesus, not about me, for one, and I would rather preach about righteousness than about sin. So all week long these young people are coming saying, "Can I see your tattoos?" I would say, "Let me show you something better, let's open the Bible together." As a result many of them started to do missionary work. As a matter of fact, in 2015 we are about to start a training station over there for these young missionary youth, by the grace of God.

The point I am trying to make, young people, is that the greatest testimony is not living a life of sin and then becoming a Christian, the Greatest Testimony is living a life of purity where you have never fallen! That is the greatest testimony of God's power to save. That is the testimony of John the Baptist; Daniel; and of Christ. These were the men that changed the world.

So I was 21 years old and I was sitting in this cell, and I had a problem, I had all these hereditary problems and cultivated problems as well; you make them worse when you practice them. Better to resist—don't let the devil get a claw-hold in you! If you've done it once, it is a lot easier to repeat it. Even though at 21 years old, March 28, 1998, anniversary of becoming a Christian—Praise the Lord; and this June will be anniversary of being clean and sober, by the grace of God!

That long history of drug addiction and alcohol history and things like that. I have lots of family members with that problem. One of my uncles is in his 60s and is still a heroin addict and still homeless. This runs in my blood line on both my mother's and father's side, so I did all that as well. Praise the Lord, God gave me the victory! The Question is, How does He give the victory, how do you surrender your life to Christ?

How to surrender the will

"The grace of Christ is freely to justify the sinner without merit or claim on his part. **Justification is a full, complete pardon of sin.** The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace."

Right there I can close my Bible and say, "Halleluiah"; now I am not saying it is done at that point. We are simply dealing with justification and the salvation process—how you actually give your life to Jesus.

"There is nothing in faith that makes it our saviour. Faith cannot remove our guilt. Christ is the power of God unto salvation to all them that believe. The justification comes through the merits

of Jesus Christ. He has paid the price for the sinner's redemption. Yet it is only through faith in His blood that Jesus can justify the believer.

“The sinner cannot depend upon his own good works as a means of justification. He must come to the point where he will renounce all his sin, and embrace one degree of light after another as it shines upon his pathway. . .

Now Sister White is tying in sanctification with justification.

“He simply grasps by faith the free and ample provision made in the blood of Christ. He believes the promises of God, which through Christ are made unto him sanctification and righteousness and redemption. And if he follows Jesus, he will walk humbly in the light, rejoicing in the light and diffusing that light to others.” FLB 107.

Have you heard these big theological terms, Justification, sanctification, glorification? That’s the three steps in the sanctuary. The worst thing you can do is to go and read a book of theology on it—because that is a lot of theological knowledge by people who do not have a heart experience.

Justification, plainly speaking, is accepting what Christ has done for you without your help. There is nothing that you can do to merit justification. Many people who emphasize sanctification have lots of problems with the justification part. Maybe it’s because we haven’t experienced that part. Jesus says that any person who goes up another way, not through the Door is a thief and a robber.

What is the very first thing in the sanctuary? You walk in the door and you go right to the Shekinah glory? No—the first thing you see is a bleeding victim—one that your knife had to cut the throat of. You see the cross in type in the brazen altar. The very first thing the sinner must meet is the bleeding victim and simply confess over the head of that Lamb your sins, meaning that you acknowledge that the Lamb had to die to pay the price for you. It is a substitution. There is nothing you can do—either the Lamb has to die, or you have to die to pay for the broken law. This is the justification process—the washing at the laver happens after that, but it is still in the courtyard which means it is part of the same process.

The eating of the bread, the oil and the lamp, the altar of incense, all that is found in a totally different compartment of the sanctuary, which represents Sanctification. That is the Christian experience later on. But the very first thing that you and I must do is to come to the bleeding victim and recognize that we cannot pay the price for our sins. We have to recognize that we are sinners in need of a Savior.

The Divine Person that convicts us of those things is the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Godhead, the one that Jesus called ‘He’ by the way. He will convict you of sin, righteousness and judgment. So the office of the Holy Spirit, Who is the representative of Jesus Christ—don’t ask me to explain this because I can’t—so we just go with what the Bible says, it is a He. Ellen White says it is not even necessary to explain the Holy Spirit. There is a whole ministry dedicated today to try and explain the Holy Spirit. So the Holy Spirit convicts us of sin and our need.

How it Works

On March 28 1998, I finally just gave up, I surrendered. It was either going to be all God or all nothing. I was at the point of committing suicide; life was no longer worth living, because to live in this corrupt human body with these corrupt human thoughts, these corrupt human feelings and all the anger and everything else—it was just worthless to live. I had got to that point. I praise God for it, because there was no point in living so why not just die—that is; why not just die with Jesus? Why not be crucified with Christ? If I don’t want to live any more, why not just have a new life? If I don’t want these thoughts any more, why not have new thoughts? If I am so sick of this corrupt heart, why not ask for a new one?

On March 28 1998, I finally gave up and that night after drinking alcohol in my cell, I got to the point where there was this still small voice saying, "Emiliano, if you don't give Me your life tonight, you are going to die." And I had this pounding in my head that if I didn't give my life to Christ I was going to die.

I had been reading the Bible, and I had been convicted that Jesus is the Son of God. That night I had to make a decision and I got on my knees and I just cast my helpless soul on Christ and I said, "Jesus, I am so messed up Lord! There is nothing I can do, I am filthy! Would You please forgive my sins and give me a new heart? I believe You died for me; I believe Your blood was shed for me. Lord, I can't even give You my heart I am so corrupt and filthy—please just take it Lord! I believe and accept that You died for me and I want You as my Savior. Give me a new heart, give me life. Please make me new and make me clean. Thank you for dying for my sins. I want You for my Savior, help me to grow, teach me what to do. Be my Savior. In Jesus name – Amen."

That moment—"The moment a sinner accepts Christ by faith, that moment he is pardoned. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him, and he is no more to doubt God's forgiving grace."

You know what happened? Even though I couldn't see it—but through the eye of faith when I was on my knees, do you know what Jesus did? He stepped in between me and the Father; He held up His hands and said, "Father, My blood. He's My child." Even though I could not see it, because the Bible says, "Ye shall seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart." That moment when I accepted Him as my Savior, that moment He pardoned me of everything I had done up until that point in the past.

"The great work that is wrought for the sinner who is spotted and stained by evil is the work of justification. By Him who speaketh truth he is declared righteous. The Lord imputes unto the believer the righteousness of Christ and pronounces him righteous before the universe. He transfers his sins to Jesus, the sinner's representative, substitute, and surety. Upon Christ He lays the iniquity of every soul that believeth. "He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him." 2 Corinthians 5:21. . . . FLB 112.

Some people have a false gospel and say that Jesus forgives past, present and future—that is error. How can Jesus forgive you for something you have not done yet? He died for all sin; but He can't forgive you unless you confess it. But at that moment—I had a record of sin several volumes thick—every deed; every thought; every motive; and Jesus said, "I give you a brand new clean slate to start over this very day." We have remission of sins that are past, says the book of Romans—the great Gospel book.

Some Pharisees say, "No that is not enough! The Law, the Law, works, grow!" and we pass off and pass by the brazen altar, brothers and sisters! So you are in there trying to light the candlesticks and you are filthy because you have not washed away your blood at the laver. You are trying to minister in holy things and eat the bread, eat the Word, but your hands are filthy. You are trying to offer up incense but you stink; because you have not first gone to the Blood of the Lamb.

You know the Blood was put on the horns of that incense altar. That is what is mingled with the prayers of the saints is the fragrant righteousness of Christ; that is the true incense that is mingled with the prayers of the saints.

Question: does it end there? I get up off my knees and whoa—I am a saint? Heaven did not open right there? The angels did not come down? I have a halo around my head—is that how it works? No, it doesn't work that way.

Here's what happens; it's found in Zechariah 3; Satan stands as the adversary. What does he say? "He's not sincere—this guy sincere? I know You erased Your book Lord, but I just happen to have a book of my own. I keep accurate records and look at this and This and This!" He's the prosecuting attorney.

District attorneys are playing the part of Satan. That is easy for an ex-con to say. And while he is accusing you, you have Jesus as your defense attorney. He's saying, "The Lord rebuke thee Satan! Judge, Father, I have paid the price."

And while Satan is trying to accuse you, he's saying, "If you just give me a chance I know that he will repeat the sin that he loves. He says he doesn't like it, but if I just dangle it, he'll love the smell and the taste of it—he'll love it."

So God says, "I believe that My child is sincere; I'll let you test him. But thus far shalt thou go and no farther." Every trial and temptation is measured and weighed by Jesus, we're told. The temptations are all 'Father-filtered'. Every temptation and trial is Father-filtered; it comes through the Father's fingers to you; which means it is actually from the loving hand of God. If we are faithful, that temptation can be used to condemn Satan, give us victory and give glory to God.

Now here is the problem; now I told you what my temptation was, it was alcoholism—that was the main problem even though I was doing drugs, alcohol was the gateway to everything else. First sip of alcohol I ever had was at the age of five; my mother herself was the one that gave me alcohol. Very young age; that is just ingrained in my DNA. Jesus can change your DNA! Praise the Lord!

So I get tempted, Satan says, "I know he's not sincere, if I just dangle this temptation. ." And guess what happened; I am a brand new Christian and guess what I did? I tripped and fell. Why did I fall? I was still learning how to grow. But praise God there is hope; "If we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us of all unrighteousness."

It is God's glory to do that. Satan says, "Don't confess your sin, don't do it!" but it is God's glory to forgive us and to give us victory over it. Jesus came to save us from our sins. So I had to learn this and it wasn't until June that I learned; life is a bundle of choices. That is all it is. We make choices with our will.

My testimony is this; I was struggling with this sin, and I said, "Lord I don't want to struggle with this anymore. I refuse to be a Christian if I am just going to be struggling with this issue the rest of my life. It is pointless to do it; You have to give me victory in this area. I just can't do this; it's going to destroy me."

I was not scared of the Lake of Fire, you have to understand this. I was not scared of hell. It is not hell that wins you to Christ; it is love of God that constrains you. I didn't care about that—but I cared about honoring my Savior, because He loved me; He died for me. Nailed to a cross brothers and sisters! Think about it, the Son of God had His back ripped open for us!

I said, "Jesus, I want victory!" so how does He answer that prayer? He lets you be tempted. Some of you are praying for victory and you are still getting tempted and you are not realizing that is God answering your prayer. He has to teach you to choose something different when that temptation comes and that is how He gives you strength.

How we can Overcome

In June of 1998 I was transferred somewhere else and I got this cell mate. My cell mate wasn't a Christian obviously. Many people wonder how inmates can get access to drugs and alcohol, it's because they are geniuses. There are really smart guys in there. There are artisans and craftsmen and they do some of the most beautiful artwork. They are smart guys, just misdirected.

So I had a cell mate and he was unconverted; so one night they were making person wine. They didn't make it in my cell because they knew I was a Christian, so Praise God they at least respected that. But that night they started passing it out to the different inmates. And I can't leave and go anywhere because the door is closed—it is part of being in prison, the doors are shut. I couldn't leave the

temptation. But the Bible says there has no temptation taken you but such as is common to man and God will make a way of escape. Physically I had no way of escape.

I began smelling it; nowadays I can say, Praise God that when I smell that stuff it's disgusting, it makes my stomach turn—but back then it started creating desires that were unholy. As I smelled it I started struggling and I started trying to pray; I was on my bunk reading my Bible. The other man was sitting in the corner and he was drinking. And all of a sudden all these desires started rising up—that may not be your temptation, something else may be your temptation, food or lust or something, but whatever it is, it is the same process where it seems to almost carry you away.

I started struggling and I started getting angry with God. I began praying and saying, "Why Lord, I just asked You—I don't want to be tempted anymore; why am I feeling this way? I asked You to take it away from me—Lord, make me a robot!"

Has anyone prayed that prayer before? I literally prayed, "Lord, I don't want a will anymore, I just want You to tell me what to do. I just want to be programed and that way I will never sin again."

Guess what; God can't answer that prayer because He cannot take away the power of choice. He cannot! If He could do it, there would not be any sin, there would be no Lucifer; there would be no Adam and Eve problem. He cannot, because a God of love can only have the service of choice and free love. That is the character and actual nature of God. God is not a God of force! He cannot do it, it's against His nature. All He can do is simply let you have your choice and destroy you afterwards because He is just and holy—sin cannot co-exist with Him. Sometimes He will override the choice of man or send angels to confuse people, but He can't change their choice.

Do you know what that means? ***Not all the power of earth or hell can make you, or force you to sin!*** It must appeal to choice. Even Satan—Satan might manipulate your body—Sister White talks about that some people debase themselves so much morally that Satan can manipulate their organs and things like that. There is a lot of interesting information in the Spirit of Prophecy! Even though Satan may mess up your body and make you feel certain ways, he cannot force you to choose to indulge in whatever it is. He has to get your choice. Life is a bundle of choices!

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I was faced with a choice; my choice was, am I going to drink that alcohol? And I started, "Oh Why? Lord please help me!" I was praying and I was reading my Bible and I was claiming the promises and I did not feel good at all, I felt tempted, I felt sinful, I felt filthy.

What is the difference between a Christian and a worldling? It is the difference between Faith and Feeling! Although I was feeling a certain way, I hadn't sinned yet. I was actively resisting.

Then I was praying and praying and finally it happened. My cell mate drinking, he turned to me and with the hiss of the serpent in the tree—he didn't know what power was possessing him—but I could hear that sly serpent and he turned and said; "Hey, want some?"

What am I being faced with right now? CHOICE! How am I feeling? I want to do it! I can taste it, I can smell it, I can feel it—but I have not chosen yet! I was praying and I was confused and I had all these different voices in my mind and I was praying and reading my Bible—I made an instant decision—it must have been an angel helping me to make a decision. And I looked up and I said, "No." Then I went back down and started praying, "Oh Lord, please don't let him ask me again because if he asks me again I will probably be overcome Lord, so please help me!" I was reading my Bible and Praise God he didn't ask me anymore and he drank it all and it was gone and the temptation was over and I have never, ever, had the temptation to drink ever again!

Why? Because through the power of choice—as soon as I gave God my will He gave me strength that was supernatural and He gave me His victory—that is called imparted righteousness. That is the victory of Jesus in that area given to me now. “Son, that’s yours!” It’s the righteousness of the saints it is called when they go to heaven. Now do I have every victory in every area that Jesus had? No; because every day is a new opportunity; a new challenge; and a new choice.

As long as life shall last, sanctification goes on, but justification happens when you come to the foot of the cross. When you get up from the foot of the cross and you start walking, that day is an opportunity to have a sanctified life. Just like a child grows, and Jesus gave the parable of the seed, first the blade, then the ear then the full corn in the ear when the fruit is ripe for the harvest, it is a process of growth.

Let me tell you something for hope’s sake and this is verified by the prophet herself; that is this: if we live surrendered today, even though we are still growing in our lives, but if we are surrendered today in every point of light that God has given us, if we die today, we will be saved when Jesus comes. This is called justification by faith and here is why; life is choices, the wages of many sins equals death—no—the wages sin is death—it is singular. Why? Because sin, plain and simple, equals rebellion—it is self over God. Sin equals rebellion. How many sins did Lucifer commit? One, and when he refused to be forgiven he had to be thrown out of heaven. How many sins did Adam and Eve commit? One, and yet the Son of God had to die. Why? Because sin equals rebellion; God cannot allow rebellion in heaven. Here is the issue; if I allow that sin, I say, know what, I made a mistake, I chose that sin, for that sin I will die, unless I confess it and ask Jesus to forgive me and cleanse me.

“Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness. In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action. The work of transformation must begin in the heart, and manifest its power through every faculty of the being; but man is not capable of originating such a repentance as this, and can experience it alone through Christ, who ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. “Who is desirous of becoming truly repentant? What must he do?—He must come to Jesus, just as he is, without delay. He must believe that the word of Christ is true, and, believing the promise, ask, that he may receive. When sincere desire prompts men to pray, they will not pray in vain. The Lord will fulfill His word, and will give the Holy Spirit to lead to repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. He will pray and watch, and put away his sins, making manifest his sincerity by the vigor of his endeavor to obey the commandments of God. With prayer he will mingle faith, and not only believe in but obey the precepts of the law. He will announce himself as on Christ's side of the question. He will renounce all habits and associations that tend to draw the heart from God.

“He who would become a child of God must receive the truth that repentance and forgiveness are to be obtained through nothing less than the atonement of Christ. Assured of this the sinner must put forth an effort in harmony with the work done for him, and with unwearied entreaty he must supplicate the throne of grace, that the renovating power of God may come into his soul. Christ pardons none but the penitent, but whom He pardons He first makes penitent. The provision made is complete, and the eternal righteousness of Christ is placed to the account of every believing soul. The costly, spotless robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has been provided for the repenting, believing sinner, and he may say: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness" (Isaiah 61:10).

Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin; for all heaven, with its limitless resources, has been placed at our command. We are to draw from the well of salvation. Christ is the end of law for righteousness to everyone who believeth. In ourselves we are sinners; but in Christ we are righteous. Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just, and treats us as just. He looks upon us as His dear children. Christ works against the power of sin, and where sin abounded, grace much more abounds. "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Romans 5:1, 2).

"Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Romans 3:24-26). "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God" (Ephesians 2:8). [John 1:14-16 quoted.] 1SM 393, 394.

How can I continue to grow spiritually? How do I live the Christian life?

Every day when we wake up, we have to spend time with God in prayer and reading the Bible—we have to! It is our direct lifeline to the Most High. It is like filling up the gas tank—do we fill up before our journey or after you get there? You fill up before your trip—otherwise you may not get there! If you have a little and you start your journey you will run out of gas before you reach your destination.

In your Christian experience, you 'gas up' by prayer and reading your Bible. If you are not gassed up in the morning by having personal worship, you go to the middle of the day and you break down. You start getting stressed out; you start saying things you shouldn't say; you start getting frustrated and irritated; you start yelling at your spouse—yelling at your children.

Practical Christianity 101: in the morning you do the same thing that you did with justification, for the rest of your life; you say, "Lord, today I ask You to be in my heart, I ask You to be my Savior." I had a pastor who was big on patriarchal authority and he had a little phrase—"Nobody beats me up in my home." What he meant by that was he got up early in the morning. He wasn't talking about his wife and children beating him, he was saying, "I am the first one up in my home to have my worship as the priest in my home." I am the priest in my home so I need to pray and read my Bible so I can be there to support my family.

If you are a mother, none of your children should beat you up in your home! If you are a mother you should be up first because if you do not get up early, then your children get up and the rest of the day you are running around trying to catch up. We need the peace of Christ. In the book Education Sister White says:

"Not a pause for a moment in His presence, but personal contact with Christ, to sit down in companionship with Him--this is our need. Happy will it be for the children of our homes and the students of our schools when parents and teachers shall learn in their own lives the precious experience pictured in these words from the Song of Songs:

"As the apple tree among the trees of the wood,
So is my Beloved among the sons.
I sat down under His shadow with great delight,
And His fruit was sweet to my taste.
He brought me to the banqueting house,

And His banner over me was love." Song of Solomon 2:3, 4. Ed 261.

We need to fill up in the morning; eat the Word of God—memorize the promises because the Words of God are Spirit and they are life. But you are saying, "I read the Bible and it doesn't do anything for me!" Yes, it does! You don't go on your feelings! The Word of God is creative, it is creative power, and if you just read it, you don't know it, but it is rewiring your brain! It is actually producing power in your life—not only that but when you hide His Word in your heart that you might not sin against Him, when you are tempted, the Spirit of God will bring back that scripture to your mind. That is how you do battle with Satan; "It is written, it is written, it is written"!

When you read, you fill up; when you pray, you are asking God to be in your life; and then guess what happens—you get up from your prayer and do you always have a perfect day? No; you have to get tempted and go through the trials of life. Life is life brothers and sisters—if you want to get raptured off of this planet when you become a Christian then don't be a Christian because there is no secret rapture. Secret rapture is a false doctrine!

People think they can pray they want to be a Christian and there is no more temptation—but it does not work that way. You pray and you get up and you walk through the day and you are going to get tempted. The temptation happens this way; it often times happens in a direction you are not expecting, and usually temptations come, it's back to back. Satan tempted Jesus three times—why three times in a row? So when temptation comes just roll with it—expect it. But here is the issue, when temptation comes you do not have to choose to surrender to it.

You are walking; "Praise God, having a great day!" You meet someone—"Good day to you!" then they start blowing off steam at you—or it could be your spouse, your children or your co-worker. Someone comes and steps on your foot and you say, "Hey, I never liked you anyway!"

What just happened? It is a temptation—what are you being tempted to do if someone did that to you right now? You are tempted to indulge in self. You are tempted to say, "Oh yah! Well let me just tell you something about you!"

Temptation often comes from people that are closest to you and sometimes it is unintentional. We have to all realize that we are not each other's enemy. Satan would love to have us think we are enemies with each other. That is not the case—Satan is our enemy, and he works through all of our human weaknesses to cause one defect to work on another defect. We have to look past that stuff and we have to love each other.

So when someone says that nastiness to you, you have a choice; plan A is, "Well, let me tell you something!" and we tell them off—in doing so we have just sinned. I have to die for that sin unless I repent and confess it! Praise God, we are not left alone! Jesus said, "I will send you the Comforter and when He comes, He will convict you of sin, righteousness and judgment."

What happens is; we say to ourselves; "I feel better now, got it off my chest, I told him a thing or two. Don't you know how important I am?" Then I go through my day and I start to think. What is happening? If I am a Christian I am getting convicted. Even if I am a heathen I can get convicted. Paul the apostle says that God has written His law in our conscience. I am getting convicted. What is the Holy Spirit telling me right now? He is telling me; "You sinned, you did wrong, you need to go make it up."

Now I have a choice—and this is why it is so important to have morning and evening worship. I failed, I messed up, but later on I get thinking about my day. In the evening I try to review the past day, and think where have I messed up, where could I have done better. Lord, tell me how I can grow more spiritually? That night the Lord convicts me; "You know, you really should not have said those things;

that was not right; you need to reconcile with that person. Even if you disagree with them the fact is that was not right.”

Right away I need to confess it to God and ask forgiveness and then go as soon as possible and reconcile. So I pray, “Lord, forgive me, I am sorry!” what does He do? He takes it away and he puts it on Himself, my sin Bearer, and in the heavenly sanctuary it is blotted out by His blood.

Now, even if before I reconcile, I have made a decision, I have asked forgiveness and made a choice to go and reconcile, so if I die, I am safe to take to heaven because I am not in rebellion. Anyone who dies with a sin unconfessed cannot be saved—it is not that God does not want to save us, but He cannot save us because we would reproduce the rebellion problem again.

That is why it is so important to live a surrendered life each day, because you do not know what is going to happen. People are suddenly taken ill or have accidents and their lives are snuffed out. We must live a life surrendered to Christ, because if I die today surrendered, I am safe to take to heaven.

OK—Plan A—I messed up. Now what about plan B? I come walking through my life; I ask Jesus to be with me that morning, I got up and am prayed up and I start having a great day. I meet the person, “Hi brother how are you doing?” And he tells me off to my face. Right now I am being tempted. I have a choice. I have not yielded my choice yet; do I go according to my feelings? No; because feelings are not faith—I may feel like saying something back but faith knows that Satan is talking to me in the back of my mind; “Just tell him off, given him a piece of your mind!” but on the other side of my mind the Holy Spirit is telling me; “Stay surrendered.”

These things happen instantaneously; but if you have prayed and read your Bible and you have given permission, then when the enemy comes in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord will lift up a standard against him and will bring a scripture to mind that talks about being quiet and holding your tongue, not giving way to wrath. I have a choice now, and I shoot up a prayer like Nehemiah did. “Help me, Lord, please help me!”

I look at the person and I say, “I see you are upset right now brother, so maybe we can talk later on? OK brother? God Bless! Take care.” Did I sin? No, I gave that choice to Jesus and He will replace the feelings with correct feelings. It is called righteousness through faith; this is the sanctification process. Even though I might have been feeling a certain way, by yielding my will to Christ He replaces it with love, forgiveness and maybe even pity. “My brother is going through a hard time right now.” Then later I can come to him and say, “Well Brother, what is going on? Are you OK?”

This is reflecting the life of Christ and is to enter into every phase of our experience; especially your homes; as well as the church, the community.

How do I witness to my family; my neighbors? How do I reach souls?

In order to have a practical experience we need to help others to do so also. Going out and preaching to the world is what helps us not to get off track on tangents.

“The Third Angel's Message in Verity.--Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, "It is the third angel's message in verity."-- Review and Herald, April 1, 1890. Ev 190.

It Presents an Uplifted Saviour.--This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love

for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel's message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.

The uplifted Saviour is to appear in His efficacious work as the Lamb slain, sitting upon the throne, to dispense the priceless covenant blessings, the benefits He died to purchase for every soul who should believe on Him. John could not express that love in words; it was too deep, too broad; he calls upon the human family to behold it. Christ is pleading for the church in the heavenly courts above, pleading for those for whom He paid the redemption price of His own lifeblood. Centuries, ages, can never diminish the efficacy of this atoning sacrifice. The message of the gospel of His grace was to be given to the church in clear and distinct lines, that the world should no longer say that Seventh-day Adventists talk the law, the law, but do not teach or believe Christ.

The efficacy of the blood of Christ was to be presented to the people with freshness and power, that their faith might lay hold upon its merits. . . .

For years the church has been looking to man, and expecting much from man, but not looking to Jesus, in whom our hopes of eternal life are centered. Therefore God gave to His servants a testimony that presented the truth as it is in Jesus, which is the third angel's message, in clear, distinct lines.--Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 91-93. (1896) Ev 190, 191.

Not to Hide our Message

"Seventh-day Adventists [are] to bear God's sign before the world prominently, without disguising the facts in any way. We are to voice the message of the third angel flying in the midst of heaven with the everlasting gospel to proclaim to the world. We are to bear aloft the banner on which is inscribed, "The Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus." MM 164.

"The past fifty years have not dimmed one jot or principle of our faith as we received the great and wonderful evidences that were made certain to us in 1844, after the passing of the time. The languishing souls are to be confirmed and quickened according to His Word. . . . Not a word is changed or denied. That which the Holy Spirit testified to as truth after the passing of the time, in our great disappointment, is the solid foundation of truth. [The] pillars of truth were revealed, and we accepted the foundation principles that have made us what we are--Seventh-day Adventists, keeping the commandments of God and having the faith of Jesus." UL 352.

Avoid Political Questions

"The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political scheme."

"Those who are Christians indeed will be branches of the true vine, and will bear the same fruit as the vine. They will act in harmony, in Christian fellowship. They will not wear political badges, but the badge of Christ.

"What are we to do, then?—Let political questions alone. CCh 316.

“The Lord would have His people bury political questions. On these themes silence is eloquence. Christ calls upon His followers to come into unity on the pure gospel principles which are plainly revealed in the word of God. We cannot with safety vote for political parties; for we do not know whom we are voting for. We cannot with safety take part in any political schemes. We cannot labor to please men who will use their influence to repress religious liberty, and to set in operation oppressive measures to lead or compel their fellow men to keep Sunday as the Sabbath. The first day of the week is not a day to be revered. It is a spurious sabbath, and the members of the Lord's family cannot participate with the men who exalt this day, and violate the law of God by trampling upon His Sabbath. The people of God are not to vote to place such men in office; for when they do this, they are partakers with them of the sins which they commit while in office.” FE 475.

Promote Temperance

“Use Influence for Temperance.--The advocates of temperance fail to do their whole duty unless they exert their influence by precept and example--by voice and pen and vote--in favor of prohibition and total abstinence.”--RH, Nov. 8, 1881.

“How can Christian men and women tolerate this evil? . . . There is a cause for the moral paralysis upon society. Our laws sustain an evil which is sapping their very foundations. Many deplore the wrongs which they know exist, but consider themselves free from all responsibility in the matter. This cannot be. Every individual exerts an influence in society. In our favored land, every voter has some voice in determining what laws shall control the nation. Should not that influence and that vote be cast on the side of temperance and virtue?” . . . GW 387.

Our Relationship to the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. Ellen White was especially appreciative of the work of the WCTU. She urged cooperation between our workers and theirs in this worthy cause. This principle of cooperation could be carried through in some other areas of Humanitarian work.

“The Woman's Christian Temperance Union is an organization with whose efforts for the spread of temperance principles we can heartily unite. The light has been given me that we are not to stand aloof from them, but, while there is to be no sacrifice of principle on our part, as far as possible we are to unite with them in laboring for temperance reforms. . . . We are to work with them when we can, and we can assuredly do this on the question of utterly closing the saloon.--RH, June 18, 1908.

“We need at this time to show a decided interest in the work of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union. None who claim to have a part in the work of God should lose interest in the grand object of this organization in temperance lines. It would be a good thing if at our camp meetings we should invite the members of the WCTU to take part in our exercises. This would help them to become acquainted with the reasons of our faith, and open the way for us to unite with them in the temperance work. If we do this, we shall come to see that the temperance question means more than many of us have supposed. In some matters, the workers of the WCTU are far in advance of our leaders. The Lord has in that organization precious souls, who can be a great help to us in our efforts to advance the temperance movement. And the education our people have had in Bible truth and in a knowledge of the requirements of the law of Jehovah will enable our sisters to impart to these noble temperance advocates that which will be for their spiritual welfare. Thus a union and sympathy will be created where in the past there has sometimes existed prejudice and misunderstanding.--RH, Oct. 15, 1914.

How to reach people

“There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.”--"Ministry of Healing," pages 143, 144.

“Christ’s method alone will give true success in reaching the people. [1] The Saviour mingled with men as one who desired their good. [2] He showed His sympathy for them, [3] ministered to their needs, and won their confidence. [4] Then He bade them, “Follow Me.” GW 363.

The best way to help others live a Christian life is by living it yourself; getting around them and showing them the actual benefits of being a Christian. If people don’t see the benefits in your own life, in your own marriage, in your own children, in your own home, in your own lifestyle, the way you work, the way you associate—if they don’t see it in you, then why on earth would they want what you have? If you and your spouse don’t get along; you and your children don’t get along; why would anybody want your gospel? The gospel must change you.

We began this study with a very vital quote and we will close with it as well:

“The rabbis counted their righteousness a passport to heaven; but Jesus declared it to be insufficient and unworthy. External ceremonies and a theoretical knowledge of truth constituted Pharisaical righteousness. The rabbis claimed to be holy through their own efforts in keeping the law; but their works had divorced righteousness from religion. While they were punctilious in ritual observances, their lives were immoral and debased. Their so-called righteousness could never enter the kingdom of heaven.”

“The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ’s day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists. The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God; yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy. They thought themselves the greatest religionists of the world, but their so-called orthodoxy led them to crucify the Lord of glory.”

“The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.” DA 309.