



Victory over the Sins of the Flesh

The most majestic subject in the universe is the subject of Jesus and how He overcame the sinful nature for us. He came here as a man and elevated the human race by His perfection of character to the position in heaven that Satan and the fallen angels once occupied. Even in heaven we will never be able to thank Jesus enough for making this sacrifice for us. But in order to avail ourselves of the privilege of being sons and daughters of God throughout eternity, we must understand the mystery of overcoming as He overcame.

The first question that we will address is, was His human nature exactly like ours, or did He have an advantage over us in fighting the battle with sin? In some ways He was not exactly like us, for He was the divine Son of God from eternity, and when He came to earth He did not give up His divinity. Unlike us, He was fully divine and fully human. This is a mystery which is beyond our comprehension and personal experience. But He was like us in that He never used His divinity to advantage Himself in any way, or to relieve Himself from suffering. In some ways this was a disadvantage, for His perfect nature allowed Him to suffer more keenly the emotions He felt as a result of being one with us. So let's go back to the beginning when the Father and the Son were still together and facing the challenge caused by the rebellion of Lucifer and a third of the angels in heaven.

"God had a knowledge of the events of the future, even before the creation of the world. He did not make His purposes to fit circumstances, but He allowed matters to develop and work out. He did not work to bring about a certain condition of things, but He knew that such a condition would exist. The plan that should be carried out upon the defection of any of the high intelligences of heaven – this is the secret, the mystery which has been hidden from ages. And an offering was prepared in the eternal purposes to do the very work which God has done for fallen humanity." 6 BC 1082.

"The Incarnation of Christ is a mystery. The union of divinity with humanity is a mystery indeed, hidden with God, 'even the mystery which has been hid from ages.' It was kept in eternal silence by Jehovah, and was first revealed in Eden by the prophecy that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head, and that he should bruise His heel.

"To present to the world this mystery that God kept in silence for eternal ages before the world was created, before man was created, was the part that Christ was to act in the work He entered upon when He came to this earth. And this wonderful mystery, the incarnation of Christ and the atonement that He made, must be declared to every son and daughter of Adam.... The incarnation of Christ is the mystery of all mysteries." 6 BC 1082.

But even though there are heights and depths of the subject of the incarnation of Christ that are beyond our comprehension, there is much that is revealed, and even more to be understood by the final generation who will be cleansed from all sin and receive the seal of God and the latter rain. Rev. 7:3, 4. It is these who are called "blameless" in Revelation 14:5, and who follow the Lamb wherever He goes (vs. 4), for they have received His character and reflect His image perfectly. They are the elect from the church of Laodicea who have followed the counsel of Jesus, the True Witness, and have overcome as He overcame. Rev. 3:21.

But how did Jesus overcome? In order to receive the cleansing of heart that we need to reflect the image of Jesus perfectly, the understanding of His victory over sin is imperative. Some people believe that if Jesus is to be our Savior, He had to feel all the same feelings of the sinful nature that we do, but resisted them at their inception, and did not respond to any sinful urges or thoughts that came from the fallen nature that He had taken upon Himself when He came into this world. But although He took our human nature as it was after four thousand years of sin had transpired, He did not take the morally corrupt patterns of thinking and feeling that are inherent in the mind of mankind. How do we know this? Here are some texts and spirit of prophecy quotations to guide our study:

"Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require. Then I said, 'Here I am, I have come—it is written about me in the scroll. I desire to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.'" Ps. 40:6-8.

Paul expands on this theme in Hebrews 10:4-7:

"It is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins. Therefore, when Christ came into the world, he said: 'Sacrifice and offering you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me.'...Then I said, 'Here I am—it is written about me in the scroll—I have come to do your will, O God.'...

"The Holy Spirit also testifies to us about this. First he says: 'This is the covenant I will make with them after that time,' says the Lord. 'I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds.' Then he adds; 'Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more.'"

Here we see a reference to the new covenant which is promised in Jeremiah 31:32-34:

"The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah....

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor or a man his brother saying, 'Know the Lord,' because they will all know me from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and I will remember their sins no more.'"

It is significant to notice that when God puts His law in our hearts and our minds, we will know the Lord so completely that we will cease to sin. To put it another way, sin is a result of not knowing the Lord. Every son and daughter since the fall of Adam and Eve has been born under the sentence of death. Every generation has passed on the seeds of sin and death to their posterity. But there will be a generation at the close of time who will experience an increase of knowledge concerning Christ's work in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary which will permit them to understand how to cooperate with Christ in the cleansing of their lives from sin.

"But thou, O, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." Dan. 12:4. KJV.

When in the history of mankind will this increased knowledge be given?

"The apostle Paul warned the church not to look for the coming of Christ in his day. 'That day shall not come,' he says, 'except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed.'... The 'man of sin'...represents the papacy.... This period ended in 1798. It is this side of that time that the message of Christ's second coming is to be proclaimed." GC 356.

And what is the increased knowledge that will be understood in the time of the end?

"I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, 'My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?' He replied, 'Go your way, Daniel, because the words are closed up and sealed until the time of the end. Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.'" Dan. 12:9, 10.

Although we know that increased knowledge of all types of science was given by God to mankind after the papal period, this is not the knowledge that Daniel is referring to in the text above, but spiritual knowledge of how to be purified, made spotless and refined, which only the wise will understand.

This reminds us of the parable of the ten virgins which Jesus told His disciples as a prophecy of the condition of His church just preceding the coming of the bridegroom. Five were wise, and five were foolish. All had lamps, representing the Bible; and oil, representing the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. But they grew weary while they waited, and when the announcement came that the bridegroom was on his way, there was a significant difference between the two groups of virgins. The wise had taken extra oil, and when they trimmed their lamps and put into them the extra oil, their lamps burned brightly all the way to the marriage feast. The foolish hurried away to buy more oil, but when they returned, the door to the bridegroom's home was shut.

Several warnings are tucked away in this significant parable concerning the condition of God's true church immediately preceding the coming of Jesus. At the time of the writing of this article, there is a growing number of church members, including leaders, who are discarding the writings Ellen White, and professing that they can discover the truth from the Bible and the Bible only. The problem with this theory is that when God has a special movement for a special

time in history, it is often the case that He also raises up a prophet to guide the people to the truths that are significant for their time in history. All the writers of the Bible were chosen for a specific time, and a specific purpose for the people of their day. To refuse the special light given by God to these prophets meant disaster or death.

The question then becomes, what is the extra oil that the wise virgins had brought with them? And what was the oil that the foolish virgins received when they went to buy from the surrounding vendors? It is clear that the wise virgins represent the 144,000 who will be ready when Jesus comes to go with Him into His kingdom. Notice that they had extra oil with them along with their lamps:

"The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps." Matt. 25:4.

When Jesus came to earth the first time, God raised up the prophet John the Baptist to announce to the people that the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah were fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Likewise, just before Jesus comes the second time, the final remnant church will have the spirit of prophecy given to them to help them prepare for His coming. They will have the precious light to help them prepare for the wedding. But when the time of preparation for Jesus coming arrives, the foolish virgins go to other sources outside of the remnant church to augment their beliefs. Too late they discover that they have been drinking from broken cisterns, and the Lord announces to them the awful words, "I never knew you."

Now I want to introduce to you a subject that is vital for those who want to be prepared to live until Jesus comes and be ready to meet Him. I believe that this subject and understanding is at least a large part of the "extra oil" that is needed to have pure and holy characters at the coming of Christ. This topic concerns the need for cleansing, not only for our sins and character defects that we are daily aware of, but also for those that we are not conscious of because we are conditioned to our own feelings and behavior, and lack discernment that our character is not cleansed and in harmony with the mind of Christ.

"The class represented by the foolish virgins... have not...permitted their old nature to be broken up.... They have been content with a superficial work. They do not know God. They have not studied His character; they have not held communion with Him; therefore they do not know how to trust, how to look and live. Their service to God degenerates into a form." COL 4:11.

In addition, the cleansing of the final generation includes hereditary sins and character defects that we have received by our inheritance and are still practicing these things in our lives.

"If they cherish hereditary and cultivated traits of character, while professing to be His disciples, they are represented by the foolish virgins." 4 BC 1179.

"It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all

hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church." DA 671.

These principles are scattered throughout the Bible. But unless the Holy Spirit gathers them up and presents them to us in a way that will make them clear to our minds, the impact upon us will not be perceived. The Holy Spirit has done this for the final generation through the spirit of prophecy. Otherwise we will be blind to these principles and susceptible to the beliefs and teachings of other denominations, who have a limited concept of the problem of sin, and God's purpose for His children to be completely cleansed back to the third and fourth generation, and even back to the principles of sin that have been passed on to us through the fall of Adam and Eve.

Here are a few texts that emphasize the principle that we are responsible to be aware of and confess the sins that have been passed on to us from our forefathers:

"I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments." Ex. 20:5, 6.

"Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment." Lam. 5:7.

"The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation." Num. 14:17, 18.

However, this generational principal is abrogated if we confess our sins and do not repeat the sins of the generations that have gone before us:

"The word of the Lord came to me: 'What do you people mean by quoting this proverb about the land of Israel:

"The fathers eat sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge?"

"'As surely as I live,' declares the Sovereign Lord, 'you will no longer quote this proverb in Israel. For every living soul belongs to me, the father as well as the son—both alike belong to me. The soul who sins is the one who will die.' Eze. 18:1-4.

But the laws of heredity often mean that the sins and tendencies of our ancestors are passed on to us, and they are therefore a necessary part of our cleansing.

"It is inevitable that children should suffer from the consequences of parental wrongdoing, but they are not punished for the parents' guilt, except as they participate in their sins. It is usually the case, however, that children walk in the steps of their parents. By inheritance and example the sons become partakers of the father's sin. Wrong tendencies, perverted appetites, and debased morals, as well as physical disease and degeneracy, are transmitted as a legacy from

father to son, to the third and fourth generation. This fearful truth should have a solemn power to restrain men from following a course of sin." PP 306.

This passing on of the defects of our parents is now proven by science:

"When you are pregnant, your baby is exposed to everything you experience. This includes the sounds in the environment, the air you breathe, the food you eat and the emotions you feel.

"When you feel happy and calm, it allows your baby to develop in a happy, calm environment. However, emotions like stress and anxiety can increase particular hormones in your body, which can affect your baby's developing body and brain.

"From birth, the interactions you have with your baby helps to shape the way he or she will think, feel and behave later in life. These interactions also help to form an important emotional bond between you and your child." HealthyWA: Department of Health, Government of Western Australia.

https://healthywa.wa.gov.au/Articles/A_E/Emotional-health-for-parents-during-pregnancy-and-after-the-birth

Ellen White also gives us information about these early influences:

"What the parents are, that, to a great extent, the children will be. The physical conditions of the parents, their dispositions and appetites, their mental and moral tendencies, are, to a greater or less degree, reproduced in their children....

"Even before the birth of the child, the preparation should begin that will enable it to fight successfully the battle against evil. Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character....

"The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it....

"The well-being of the child will be affected by the habits of the mother. Her appetites and passions are to be controlled by principle.... If before the birth of her child she is self-indulgence, if she is selfish, impatient, and exacting, these traits will be reflected in the disposition of the child. Thus many children have received as a birthright almost unconquerable tendencies to evil....

"But if the mother unswervingly adheres to right principles, if she is temperate and self-denying, if she is kind, gentle, and unselfish, she may give her child these same precious traits of character....

"The mother should cultivate a cheerful, contented, happy disposition. Every effort in this direction will be abundantly repaid in both the physical well-being and the moral character of her children....

"Let the husband aid his wife by his sympathy and unfailing affection. If he wishes to keep her fresh and gladsome so that she will be as sunshine in the home, let him help her bear her burdens. His kindness and loving courtesy will be to her a precious encouragement, and the happiness he imparts will bring joy and peace to his own heart.

"The husband and father who is morose, selfish, and overbearing, is not only unhappy himself, but he casts gloom upon all the inmates of his home. He will reap the result in seeing his wife dispirited and sickly, and his children marred with his own unlovely temper." MH 371-4.

Can we now see how important it is to understand and participate in the final cleansing of our characters before Jesus has finished His work in the most holy place? This cleansing of our unhealthy childhood roots is predicted in Malachi 4:1, 2; 5, 6:

"Surely the day is coming; it will burn like a furnace. All the arrogant and every evildoer will be stubble, and that day that is coming will set them on fire,' says the Lord Almighty. 'Not a root or a branch will be left to them. But for you who revere my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings.'...

"See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers; or else I will come and strike the land with a curse."

Many feel that this work of cleansing in the celestial judgment will go on in secret, and we will not know the outcome until we find ourselves on one side or the other after the close of probation and the seven last plagues fall upon the guilty. But this is not the case, for "The Lord does nothing without our cooperation." 2 SM 236. If we are walking with Jesus, He will allow us to go through trials that will bring our character defects to our attention. Then as we go to Him in prayer and contrition, He will reason with us and guide us and give us His perfect character in exchange for our imperfections.

To better comprehend this cleansing process, we need to understand that "the thoughts and feelings combined make up the moral character." 5T 310. Many Christians focus on behavior as the goal which will give them an entrance into heaven. But God's goal for us is Christlikeness in our thoughts and feelings as well as our behavior. This is why the cleansing that God requires for an entrance into heaven includes the deepest levels of our mind and heart. The Holy Spirit must have full control of every aspect of our nature in order to finish the process of writing the law of God upon our mind and heart.

Now perhaps it is easier to understand how the life of Jesus Christ when He was upon earth differed from ours. The goal of our sanctification is to have our lives cleansed of everything, including what we have inherited, that is not in harmony with God and His law. But Jesus came

from the bosom of His Father with the law already written upon His heart, and He was filled with the Holy Spirit from His conception. He had no inclination to sin as we do, but herein is our certainty of salvation, for the victory which He had in human flesh is exactly what He can give us as we participate with Him in the cleansing of sin from our lives. Not only is the perfect life He lived in our humanity our example, but it also is the gift that He gives us through the Holy Spirit as we participate with Him in the cleansing process. It is His goal to give us His mind, His feelings, His emotions, His hatred for sin, and His victory over every temptation that Satan brought upon Him.

When Jesus was to be born, the angel Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God." Luke 1:35.

Ellen White states, "Holiness is agreement with God." 5T 743. And Paul warns us that "Without holiness no one will see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. By this we can know that when Jesus was born, He was in complete agreement with His Father through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and the inclinations of His mind and heart were in harmony with God's law. How then can He empathize with us and understand those of us who are born with a bent toward sin from birth? He can, because His human nature was that of every human being since the fall of Adam and Eve, and in that nature He would receive strength from His Father to bear up under loneliness, abuse, rejection, disappointment, and all the temptations that we have to bear. As a result, He gave to human nature a new inheritance of victory over every temptation and sin. And through connection with Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit, we can have as our inheritance the victory that He won for us.

The seal of Christ's righteousness is contained in the blood that He shed for us on Calvary. And the victory that He obtained for us is written in the mind of the Holy Spirit who dwelt in Christ. We will receive the outpouring of the latter rain when we receive from Jesus the completed work of His life through the same Holy Spirit that dwelt in Christ and gave Him perfect victory over the flesh. Jesus said, "Do not work for food that spoils, but for food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. On him God the Father has placed his seal of approval." John 6:27. So also God's people in the end will receive God's seal of approval when they reflect the image of Jesus perfectly.

"The seal of the living God will be placed upon those only who bear a likeness to Christ in character." 7 BC 970.

It is time now for the work of Jesus to be completed in His people. Unless we make the effort to spend the time with Jesus that He spent with His Father, we will not be able to assimilate His character. But when we make Jesus the daily, moment-by-moment priority of our lives, His character will be formed within us. Then the Holy Spirit will recognize the likeness of our character to that of our precious Lord, and the latter rain will fall upon us.

"If all those that handle the word of God, ministering to people, cleanse their hearts from all iniquity and all defilement, and shall come to God with clean purpose of heart, as little children,

they shall see of the salvation of God. Jesus will walk in our midst. We have now the invitation of mercy to become vessels unto honor, and then we do not need to worry about the latter rain, all we have to do is to keep the vessel clean and prepared and right side up, for the reception of the heavenly rain, and keep praying, 'Let the rain come into my vessel. Let the light of the glorious angel which unites with the third angel, shine upon me; give me a part in the work, let me sound the proclamation, let me be a colaborer with Jesus Christ.'" Ms. 35, Sept. 26, 1891.

Thus the new covenant promise which is found in Jeremiah will come to pass, and the work of God will be finished in our generation.

"The days are coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will plant the house of Israel and the house of Judah with the offspring of men and of animals. Just as I watched over them to uproot and tear down, and to overthrow, destroy and bring disaster, so I will watch over them to build and to plant,' declares the Lord. 'In those days people will no longer say, "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge."...

"The time is coming,' declares the Lord, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.... This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the Lord. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God and they will be my people. No longer will a man teach his neighbor, or a man his brother, saying, "Know the Lord," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the Lord. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'" Jer.31:27-34.

The completion of the work of Jesus in the most holy place will occur when He finishes cleansing and blotting out the sins in the lives of His people. This is a result of the judgment of the living:

"As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of all who have believed on Jesus come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation and closes with the living....

"All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had pardon entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life." GC 483.

"The divine Intercessor presents the plea that all who have overcome through faith in His blood be forgiven their transgressions, that they be restored to their Eden home, and crowned as joint heirs with Himself to the first dominion. Satan, in his efforts to deceive and tempt our race, had thought to frustrate the divine plan in man's creation; but Christ now asks that this plan be carried into effect, as if man had never fallen. He asks for His people not only pardon and justification, full and complete, but a share in His glory and a seat upon His throne....

"Thus will be realized the complete fulfillment of the new covenant promise, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. In those days and in that time, saith the Lord, the iniquity of Israel shall be sought for, and there shall be none; and the sins of Judah, and they shall not be found....

"When the investigative judgment closes, Christ will come, and His reward will be with Him to give to every man as His work shall be." GC 484, 485.

"Come now, let us reason together, says the Lord. Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool." Isa. 1;18.

May each of us participate fully in the cleansing work that Jesus is doing in our lives right now, that our sins may be blotted out and remembered no more.

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