

## 5. Graveyard Religion

“Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?” Romans 6:3. Most Christians who have been baptized by immersion are fully aware of being baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But all too few are aware of the fact that baptism is into Christ’s death.

Paul says, “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4.

Baptism symbolizes a death experience that already should have taken place in the believer’s life. The death here spoken of is the death of the nature we were born with. That incorrigible old nature is fit only for death. The natural result of death is burial from which there would be no resurrection. In fact, Paul states that “. . . our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin.” Romans 6:6.

“Undoubtedly the great difficulty with the majority of believers is that they are trying to live Christ’s life without first having died Christ’s death. They seem to have the notion that Christ died so that we need not die, and so through faith in Christ they hope to live without dying. Paul said, ‘They that are in the flesh cannot please God’ Romans 8:8, and ‘They that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh.’” Galatians 5:24.<sup>1</sup>

A clear understanding of the importance of this fact is absolutely necessary if we are to have a successful walk with the Lord.

“The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ.”<sup>2</sup>

The foregoing statement was written in 1897. Undoubtedly it would be equally true today. Paul states further, “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: (creation) old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17.

Why is it necessary for the old nature to die? Jesus answers, “For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” Matthew 16:25. Apparently there is nothing that can be done to cure the old sinful nature of man. It just simply must die. If there is to be a new life, the old must pass away.

Meade MacGuire, in his book, His Cross and Mine gives us an insight that is very helpful.

“There is a great difference between sins and sin. Many find serious difficulty in their Christian life because they do not understand this distinction. Beneath all our acts of transgression is the principle of sin from which they spring. Though all our evil deeds were pardoned, we would still go on sinning. Something more must be done for us than simply pardon our sins.”<sup>3</sup>

MacGuire continues:

“Here it is necessary to consider the distinction between sin and sins. Sins, acts of disobedience, transgressions of the divine law, God is always ready to forgive, through the merits of Christ, in response to the prayer of penitence and faith. But sin God cannot forgive.

Sin is the nature which leads us to disobey God’s law. The nature with which we come into the world does not change, as we read in the Saviour’s words: ‘That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.’ The only way to be rid of a bad nature is by death. The only way to way to receive a good nature is be born again.”<sup>4</sup>

Death is the only way to deal with the old nature.

Here is how this death takes place in the believer. The lower passions have their seat in the body and work through it. The words *flesh* and *fleshly* or *carnal lusts* refer to the lower nature. We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How? By inflicting pain on the body? No. What I want to do is to put to death the temptation to sin. Kill the corrupt thought. I want every thought controlled by Jesus Christ.<sup>5</sup>

In Romans 6 Paul declares that the death of the old nature is real. In verse 11 we are told to reckon this to be a fact! Here is where many Christians fail. It is so easy to believe this experience to be a theological expression, but not something that is real or practical.

Satan is responsible for this reasoning. When God states a fact, Satan will oppose, modify or attempt to change the fact to suit his cause. Satan knows that if the Christian truly believes his old nature is really dead, his power is broken.

In order to reinforce his claim that the death experience is not real, Satan tries to get the Christian to live more and more in his feelings rather than by his faith. And so he gets the believer to fall into sin. Then he turns around and blames him for falling into

sin. And he uses this experience of falling as proof that the old nature is not dead. He simply uses perfectly rational reasoning and says, "If the old nature were dead, you would not have been tempted."

At this point, it is necessary for the Christian to stop trying to reason his way through the maze of feelings he has coursing through his being. He must, in spite of feelings, believe God's Word.

If he has given himself to Christ he knows that ". . . they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts." Galatians 5:24. We must always return to God's Word and stop trying to reason with Satan's suggestions if we are to remain Christians. God says that your old nature is dead even if you have fallen into sin through being tempted. Satan says that is it not dead. Now the question for us to answer is not *what* do we believe, but *who* do we believe?

How can I handle these feelings? Read chapter one again and observe the fact that Satan is the master of our feelings. The following statements underscore this fact:

"We should daily dedicate ourselves to God and believe He accepts the sacrifice, without examining whether we have that degree of feeling that corresponds with our faith. Feeling and faith are as distinct as the east is from the west. Faith is not dependent upon feeling. We must earnestly cry to God in faith, feeling or no feeling, and then live our prayers. Our assurance and evidence is God's word, and after we have asked we must believe without doubting."<sup>6</sup>

In order to help us see how subtle this question of faith versus feelings is, let us think clearly as we read this next quotation"

". . . God must be served from principle instead of from feeling . . . Confound not faith and feeling together. They are distinct. Faith is ours to exercise. This faith

we must keep in exercise. Believe, believe. Let your faith take hold of the blessing, and it is yours. Your feelings have nothing to do with this faith. When faith brings the blessing to your heart, and you rejoice in the blessing, it is no more faith, but feeling.”<sup>7</sup>

The last sentence in the foregoing paragraph is not the easiest to grasp. Please read it again. Now let’s take a closer look. Obviously, it is a very short step from faith to feeling. Or can we say that living by faith requires constant vigilance lest we slip into living by feeling.

A clear Biblical example might help us at this point. In Luke 10:17 the Bible says, “And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devil are subject unto us through Thy name.” Catch the excitement that must have been shown by these returning missionaries. Never had they had an experience like that before. Their joy must have been very evident, for it is especially mentioned.

Now listen to Christ’s response in verse 18. “And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.” What a response! I can almost see the expressions on the faces of those workers, can’t you? There must have been some talking among those men. “He must not have understood what we said. Why is He so sad? I can’t figure Him out.” Some may have even tried to clarify their report.

Jesus, however, was responding from a wealth of experience that they knew nothing about. Christ’s mind went back to the fall of Lucifer and He simply was saying, “I saw that same spirit in Satan long ago and now I am seeing it here.” To Satan had been given the blessing of great power. He thrilled to the power but forgot the greater blessing of his relationship to the source of that power. The key words here that reveal the solemn truth are “subject unto us.”

Listen now to verses 19 and 20: “Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any

means hurt you. Notwithstanding in this rejoice not that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven.”

The greatest blessing possible for God to bestow—a blessing that cost the life of the Son of God—was set aside and relegated to an insignificant place when compared to the casting out of devils. Calvary was the price paid that we might have our names written in heaven. The power to cast out devils Christ could give at no cost to Himself. How often we think more of a basket of groceries miraculously set on our front steps when needed, than the gift of God in allowing us to become members of His family, “. . . of his flesh, and of his bones.” Ephesians 5:30.

Now that we have pointed out the problems of living by our feelings, let us return to the question of how we handle these feelings. Do we grit our teeth and bear them? Do we ignore them and hope that they will go away? Is it better to express our feelings and thereby let the tension or stress out? These and many other solutions would receive support from some very responsible people.

All our feelings are much easier to deal with by first checking their source. We must keep in mind the fact that God works first with the heart (mind) and His work is from inside outward. Satan, on the other hand, works through the feelings and his work is from the outside inward.

God motivates all of our actions through the mind. Satan motivates through the senses. He bypasses the reasoning process. Please remember, “There are but two powers that control the minds of men – the power of God and the power of Satan.”<sup>8</sup> With these facts in mind it is easier to ascertain the source of the feelings and know what to do with them.

But how do we handle the feelings even when we know they are from the devil? We must remember the counsel in The Adventist Home, p.128. “Put to death the temptation to sin.” This is impossible for us to do in our own strength. Right here is where we must use the power of the will.

We must *choose* to believe God in spite of our feelings. Having done this, then we must frankly admit to ourselves that we cannot control our feelings. Then flee to the Lord in prayer, admitting our inability, and thank Him for His great power and willingness to deliver us. He will deliver! The feelings will pass away and peace will reign in our heart.

It may be necessary to do this often for a time until we convince Satan that we will not willingly be controlled by feelings. Walk by faith—feelings or no feelings. Keep thinking, I am dead, and my life is hid with Christ in God. Colossians 3:3. What can the devil do with a dead person? When the will is used to choose even that which we cannot do, God is glorified, for He loves to do for us that which it is not possible for us to do ourselves.

Graveyard religion may not have much appeal for us, I'm sure it didn't for Jesus. Yet, it is the only way out of this sin problem. He said to the Greeks who came to see Him just before His death ". . . Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24.

May I suggest that your graveyard may be in your own home, workshop, office or anywhere that self may arise during each day's activities. Remaining a Christian takes much more than a daily dying to self. With Paul we must be "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. So then death worketh in us, but life in you." 2 Corinthians 4:10 & 12.

There is only one way to attract others to Jesus and not to ourselves. If self is hidden (crucified) Jesus is revealed. "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."<sup>9</sup>

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- 1 The Life of Victory, by Meade MacGuire, p. 35.
- 2 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1075, Manuscript 148, 1897.
- 3 His Cross and Mine, by Meade MacGuire, p. 80.
- 4 His Cross and Mine, by Meade MacGuire, p. 91.
- 5 The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 127,128.
- 6 Selected Messages, book 2, p. 243.
- 7 Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 167.
- 8 Temperance, p. 276.
- 9 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 69.