

9. A Solid Foundation

“Add to Your Faith”

Before climbing a ladder, one needs to examine the foundation upon which it rests! Since the first step of the ladder is faith, let us begin with the premise that the foundation itself is faith.

Peter is addressing his message to those who, like himself, have been justified by faith. But we hear someone say, “You already told us that this ladder hangs from above and is not supported from beneath.” This is true. That is why the foundation is faith. Paul said “. . . the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God . . .” Galatians 2:20. We must keep in mind that the foundation, as well as every step in this ladder, is by the faith that is from above. In fact, “. . . in Him we live, and move, and have our being . . .” Acts 17:28. “. . . ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price . . .” 1 Corinthians 6:19-20. That price is the blood shed at Calvary, that Christ might be legally qualified to justify us and deliver us from ourselves. The thought that we need to be delivered from ourselves may be hard for some of us to accept.

God’s picture of ancient Israel reveals our condition today: “. . . the whole head is sick, and the whole heart faint. From the sole of the foot even unto the head there is no soundness in it; but wounds, and bruises, and putrefying sores: they have not been closed, neither bound up, neither mollified with ointment.” Isaiah 1:5-6.

Are we not thankful that in God’s plan of justification the old man really dies? We are then given a new life in Christ as Paul states, “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. This is a fact based on the promise of God. This, according to Peter, enables us to become partakers of the divine nature.

We must constantly keep in mind that we are new persons in Christ. In the climbing of Peter’s ladder, over and over again, we will be conscious of a strong power

working in our members that will war against the Spirit's leading in this walk of faith. We may often cry out as Paul did, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Romans 7:24.

It is essential for us to remember that the battle between Christ—the new ruler of the new man—and Satan—the deposed ruler of the old man—is still raging with even increased activity, for Satan is angry. His old method of control in our lives was through our habit patterns. We must never forget that character is revealed in our habits.

"The temper, the personal peculiarities, the habits from which character is developed—everything practiced in the home will reveal itself in all the associations of life. The inclinations followed will work out in thoughts, in words, in acts of the same character."¹

Again we read:

"The defects cherished in dealing with life's minor details pass into more important affairs Thus actions repeated form habits, habits form character, and by the character our destiny for time and for eternity is decided."²

With these facts firmly in mind, we can clearly see that the battle is over who is controlling the mind. We then must have a clear mind in order to discern the difference between the two powers striving for the supremacy. Now, let us be perfectly honest with ourselves and analyze to determine if most of our decisions in life have been made on the basis of principle or on feelings. If we are honest, we find that feelings have often had a great deal to do with even spiritual decisions. These feelings, that have been the avenue through which Satan has held control, have formed strong habit patterns and Satan will not let these die without a real battle. Our response to any given

situation will first be triggered by our accustomed habitual life. If we act in harmony with our feelings, Satan takes advantage of the situation that he has created and then uses our habit response to accuse, condemn and discourage us. He thus tries to make us believe that our justification is not genuine and that we must be fooling ourselves.

The born-again Christian, living by faith, must school himself to do what angels counseled Adam and Eve to do when Satan would tempt them. This is where our battle seems almost overwhelming. Our first parents failed, however, in Christ, we may succeed! How? Adam and Eve were told to repel Satan's first insinuations, then they would be secure.³ We must recognize the enemy at work in the habitual responses and, knowing our weakness, turn immediately to Christ for help. We must admit that we cannot win by resistance, no matter how we try to control our feelings! When we face our weakness and turn the situation over to Christ, He uses the same situation instantly as a tool in His hand to form our character. "None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin. He came to expel the demons that had controlled the will."⁴

In the whole climbing process Christ is at work forming this new character while we are kept busy surrendering to His working process. This is a full time responsibility for each of us. It is only as we, through surrender, open the door that He can do His work in His own new creation. We must be constantly willing to remove the obstacles and hindrances that prevent His working in our lives. Even in the surrender there is a real sense of satisfaction in knowing that "the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen." Hebrews 13:20-21

Even as Jesus was victorious through surrender, when to all human eyes it seemed a defeat and failure, so we have only one road to victory. This ladder is going

to be tough climbing, not because it is steep and rough or rugged, but because self will keep trying to do God's work instead of doing its own—that of surrender.

There are hindrances that must be removed before one can begin the ascent of this ladder. If self is not dead through justification, we will not be able to climb Peter's ladder but will find ourselves starting up the wrong ladder.

"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."⁵

Paul states, "if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, we shall be also in the likeness of His resurrection." Romans 6:5. He further states, ". . . we were reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life." Romans 5:10. While justification takes care of all the legal work, sanctification—the impartation of the life of Christ—is the process by which our fitness for heaven is determined. Justification without sanctification has no continuing saving value, and sanctification without justification is impossible.

"God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for *man to retain justification*, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul."⁶ This is the process of sanctification.

"Here the truth is laid out in plain lines. This mercy and goodness is wholly undeserved. 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."⁷

If you have not experienced justification by faith, the complete unconditional surrender of yourself to Christ and accepted His death at Calvary as your death to self, let me suggest that you bow your head right now and enter into His victory planned for you.

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Notes

- 1 Testimonies, vol. 6, p. 174.
- 2 Christ's Object Lessons, p. 356.
- 3 See Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 53.
- 4 The Desire of Ages, p. 38.
- 5 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1075, Manuscript 148, 1897.
- 6 Selected Messages, book 1, p. 366.
- 7 The SDA Bible Commentary, vol. 6, p. 1071, Signs of the Times, May 19, 1898.