

# Holy Martyr

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So far, most of what we have seen of the history of the early Christian church has been encouraging, characterized by love for each other and supernatural growth.

In our last sermon, things began heating up a bit. The Apostles were brought before the Council, flogged, and given a stern warning to stop talking about Jesus.

The account in Luke ends this story with these encouraging words:

*The apostles left the high council rejoicing that God had counted them worthy to suffer disgrace for the name of Jesus. And every day, in the Temple and from house to house, they continued to teach and preach this message: "Jesus is the Messiah." (Acts 5:41-42, NLT)*

## Attack

But things were changing. Satan was not content to let God's church grow unhampered.

He attacked it on two fronts, much like he does today. First, he tried to create discontent among the believers threatening their unity.

This challenge was met through a Spirit-led decision to appoint seven deacons to handle food distribution, so the Apostles could focus on prayer and teaching. You can read about this in the first verses of Acts 6. The conclusion was:

*So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too. (Acts 6:7, NLT)*

Satan also attacked on a second front – persecution.

## Stephen

Stephen is the best known of the seven deacons. Scripture tells us that:

*Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. But one day some men ... started to debate with him ... None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke. (Acts 6:8-10, NLT)*

This was a direct fulfillment of Jesus' promise recorded in Luke 21; where He said:

*"... Don't worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you!"*  
(**Luke 21:14-15**, NLT)

This made the men angry and they decided to settle the score by bringing false accusations against him to the Jewish Council. As a result, Stephen was arrested and brought in for questioning.

*The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."*

*At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.*

*Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these accusations true?"* (**Acts 6:13 – 7:1**, NLT)

Stephen then gave a beautiful history of God's interaction with His people from the time of Abraham down to David. It's worth reading. It gives a perspective that is hard to get from just reading through the same stories in the Old Testament (**Acts 7:2-50**).

Commenting on these verses, Ellen White, in the book *The Acts of the Apostles*, notes:

*He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy and the spiritual interpretation of it now made manifest through Christ. He repeated the words of Moses that foretold of the Messiah:*

*"A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear."* (**Deuteronomy 18:15**)

*He made plain his own loyalty to God and to the Jewish faith, while he showed that the law in which the Jews trusted for salvation had not been able to save Israel from idolatry. He connected Jesus Christ with all the Jewish history. He referred to the building of the temple by Solomon, and to the words of both Solomon and Isaiah:*

*"Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?"* (**Isaiah 66:1-2**)

*When Stephen reached this point, there was a tumult among the people. When he connected Christ with the prophecies and spoke as he did of the temple, the priest, pretending to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. To Stephen this act was a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. He saw the resistance that met his words and knew that he was giving his last testimony. Although in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it.*

(**The Acts of the Apostles, pages 99-100**)

Then, in words that sealed his fate, he said:

*“You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That’s what your ancestors did, and so do you! Name one prophet your ancestors didn’t persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous One – the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered. You deliberately disobeyed God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.” (Acts 7:51-53, NLT)*

This did not go over well with the council. They started yelling out in anger and hate, calling for his condemnation. And then ...

*Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!” (Acts 7:55-56, NLT)*

This was more than they could take ...

*They rushed at him and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” And with that, he died.*

*(Acts 7:57-60, NLT)*



## Trouble

Up to this point, each story – even those where they were dealing with trouble – ended with encouraging words about growth and success. This story breaks that trend with these words:

*A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria ... Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. (Acts 8:1-3, NLT)*

When I was growing up, end-time stories were especially prevalent in our church. Persecution, hiding, standing up for our faith were all things we talked about and were taught on a regular basis.

I was fascinated by the stories of Christians standing firm for God in the midst of trouble and persecution. In one way, they inspired me to come closer to God and in other ways, they filled me with fear.

As Adventists, we've had a preoccupation with end times – especially the time of trouble. These discussions often centered around the Sabbath; the one thing that in the end that would set us apart from “Apostate Christianity”.

The time of trouble was presented in such a way as to create fear in our hearts. This fear has been used to “motivate” us to get ready.

Getting ready usually meant doing the right things: moving to the country, memorizing the right Scriptures (so we could defend ourselves properly), creating the right habits, and living the way we are supposed to live.

And then, if we did all those things right, we would be ready.

This has all led to an atmosphere of uncertainty and anxiety. How do you know when you have memorized enough Scripture? How do you know you have been good enough? What if you can't break that one habit in time?

We have a sense that perfection is required. And, we know ourselves well enough to understand that we will not get there.

All this focus on our actions, on what we have to do, has created a culture of fear, discouragement, frustration.

Did you know that here in the United States there are about twice as many former Adventists as there are practicing Adventist? The majority of these people have not joined another church because they believe what we teach about the Bible.

It appears that most gave up because they got tired of the fear and failure they were experiencing. They couldn't live up to what they believed, so it was better to quit trying.

## The Gift

Jesus ended His teaching in the Upper Room just prior to His arrest, with these words:

*“... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33, NLT)*

Many of us have been focused on the wrong thing all this time – we have been focused on ourselves. And when we're focused on ourselves, we see requirements we can't meet and are aware of our struggles, our sin, and our failures. This results in fear and uncertainty.

But, when we are focused on Jesus, we see love, strength, and victory! And, the result will ultimately be peace and confidence.

I don't know for sure who said it, but it's a true statement:

*When I look at myself, I don't see how I can be saved.  
When I look at Jesus, I don't see how I can be lost!*

Paul wrote:

*God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can't take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done ... (Ephesians 2:8-9, NLT)*

Did you catch that? Salvation is a gift!

If you deserve it, it's called a reward. If you earned it, it's called a wage. But this is a gift. You get it because God loves you and wants you to be with Him for eternity – and it's the only way you will get there!

You can refuse a gift, or you can reach out and accept it. You accept this gift by believing in Jesus and trusting that *He has completely paid for it*. It does not put you in debt.

And, as long as you continue believing in Him and stay with Him, you can be sure you have eternal life!

*And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.  
(1 John 5:11-13, NLT)*

And the gift does not stop there. God said:

*"I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people ... And I will forgive their wickedness, and I will never again remember their sins." (Jeremiah 31:33-34, NLT)*

When we come to Jesus and believe in Him, God gives us the gift of eternal life. And as we stay with Him, God continues the gift by planting the principles that governed Jesus' perfect life into our hearts and minds.

This is how we prepare for the end times. This is what makes us ready to face persecution. Our response of love to Jesus and the Father will sustain us through anything this world has to throw our way.

## Security

In the book of Hebrews, it says:

*Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you." Therefore, we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* (Hebrews 13:5-6, CSB)

In other words, don't be deceived by the false security money can give you. Focus on the real thing. God Himself has said:

*"I will never leave you or abandon you." Therefore, we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"* (Hebrews 13:5-6, CSB)

That's real security. That's the security that Stephen had. He knew He was secure in Jesus' hands and that his eternity was secure. Because of that, he was not concerned about himself, he was concerned about the salvation of those he was speaking to – even though they hated him and were about to kill him.

If you want to face life with this kind of security, accept His gift of salvation – now.

If you want to be prepared to face persecution in the future, focus on God – now!

Take Jesus' promise to heart and you will be ready – today, tomorrow, and the rest of your life.

*"... Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world."* (John 16:33, NLT)

That's real security!

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## Notes

Text you find in **this color** is a link to more information. It may take you to the Bible verse in context and/or in several different translations utilizing BibleGateway.com. In some cases, it may take you to a website where there is additional information. And, it may take you to a PDF copy of previous sermons in this series.

## Previous Sermons in this Series – click on the title to access it.

1. January 6, 2018: **The End - The Beginning**
2. January 20, 2018: **Holy Fire**
3. January 27, 2018: **Holy Love**
4. February 17, 2018: **Holy Boldness**
5. February 24, 2018: **Un-Holy Deception**
6. March 31, 2018: **Holy Gift**
7. April 7, 2018: **Holy Response**
8. April 21, 2018: **Holy Rescue**

## Scripture References

**Proverbs 3:5-12 (NIV):** *Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; <sup>6</sup> in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.*

<sup>7</sup> *Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD and shun evil. <sup>8</sup> This will bring health to your body and nourishment to your bones.*

<sup>9</sup> *Honor the LORD with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; <sup>10</sup> then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine.*

<sup>11</sup> *My son, do not despise the LORD's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, <sup>12</sup> because the LORD disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in. (Proverbs 3:5-12, NIV)*

**Jeremiah 31:31-34 (NLT):** *"The day is coming," says the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and Judah. <sup>32</sup> This covenant will not be like the one I made with their ancestors when I took them by the hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt. They broke that covenant, though I loved them as a husband loves his wife," says the LORD.*

<sup>33</sup> *"But this is the new covenant I will make with the people of Israel after those days," says the LORD. "I will put my instructions deep within them, and I will write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. <sup>34</sup> And they will not need to teach their neighbors, nor will they need to teach their relatives, saying, 'You should know the LORD.' For everyone, from the least to the greatest, will know me already," says the LORD. "And I will forgive their wickedness,*

and I will never again remember their sins.” (Jeremiah 31:31-34, NLT – see also Hebrews 8:7-13 & Hebrews 10:15-18)

**Matthew 5:1-12 (NLT):** One day as he saw the crowds gathering, Jesus went up on the mountainside and sat down. His disciples gathered around him, <sup>2</sup> and he began to teach them.

<sup>3</sup> “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

<sup>4</sup> “God blesses those who mourn, for they will be comforted.

<sup>5</sup> “God blesses those who are humble, for they will inherit the whole earth.

<sup>6</sup> “God blesses those who hunger and thirst for justice, for they will be satisfied.

<sup>7</sup> “God blesses those who are merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

<sup>8</sup> “God blesses those whose hearts are pure, for they will see God.

<sup>9</sup> “God blesses those who work for peace, for they will be called the children of God.

<sup>10</sup> “God blesses those who are persecuted for doing right, for the Kingdom of Heaven is theirs.

<sup>11</sup> “God blesses you when people mock you and persecute you and lie about you and say all sorts of evil things against you because you are my followers. <sup>12</sup> Be happy about it! Be very glad! For a great reward awaits you in heaven. And remember, the ancient prophets were persecuted in the same way.” (Matthew 5:1-12, NLT)

**Matthew 5:43-48 (NLT):** “You have heard the law that says, ‘Love your neighbor’ and hate your enemy.

<sup>44</sup> But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you! <sup>45</sup> In that way, you will be acting as true children of your Father in heaven. For he gives his sunlight to both the evil and the good, and he sends rain on the just and the unjust alike. <sup>46</sup> If you love only those who love you, what reward is there for that? Even corrupt tax collectors do that much. <sup>47</sup> If you are kind only to your friends, how are you different from anyone else? Even pagans do that. <sup>48</sup> But you are to be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect.” (Matthew 5:43-48, NLT)

**Matthew 11:28-30 (NLT):** Then Jesus said, “Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. <sup>29</sup> Take my yoke upon you. Let me teach you, because I am humble and gentle at heart, and you will find rest for your souls. <sup>30</sup> For my yoke is easy to bear, and the burden I give you is light.” (Matthew 11:28-30, NLT)

**Matthew 11:28-30 (the Message):** Are you tired? Worn out? Burned out on religion? Come to me. Get away with me and you’ll recover your life. I’ll show you how to take a real rest. Walk with me and work with me – watch how I do it. Learn the unforced rhythms of grace. I won’t lay anything heavy or ill-fitting on you. Keep company with me and you’ll learn to live freely and lightly.” (Matthew 11:28-30, the Message)



**Luke 21:12-15 (NLT):** *“But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. <sup>13</sup> But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. <sup>14</sup> So don’t worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, <sup>15</sup> for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you!”*  
(Luke 21:12-15, NLT)

**John 15:18 – 16:4 (NLT):** *“If the world hates you, remember that it hated me first. <sup>19</sup> The world would love you as one of its own if you belonged to it, but you are no longer part of the world. I chose you to come out of the world, so it hates you. <sup>20</sup> Do you remember what I told you? ‘A slave is not greater than the master.’ Since they persecuted me, naturally they will persecute you. And if they had listened to me, they would listen to you. <sup>21</sup> They will do all this to you because of me, for they have rejected the one who sent me. <sup>22</sup> They would not be guilty if I had not come and spoken to them. But now they have no excuse for their sin. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who hates me also hates my Father. <sup>24</sup> If I hadn’t done such miraculous signs among them that no one else could do, they would not be guilty. But as it is, they have seen everything I did, yet they still hate me and my Father. <sup>25</sup> This fulfills what is written in their Scriptures: ‘They hated me without cause.’*

<sup>26</sup> *“But I will send you the Advocate – the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. <sup>27</sup> And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.*

**16** *“I have told you these things so that you won’t abandon your faith. <sup>2</sup> For you will be expelled from the synagogues, and the time is coming when those who kill you will think they are doing a holy service for God. <sup>3</sup> This is because they have never known the Father or me. <sup>4</sup> Yes, I’m telling you these things now, so that when they happen, you will remember my warning. I didn’t tell you earlier because I was going to be with you for a while longer. (John 15:18 – 16:4, NLT)*

**John 16:31-33 (NLT):** *Jesus asked, “Do you finally believe? <sup>32</sup> But the time is coming – indeed it’s here now – when you will be scattered, each one going his own way, leaving me alone. Yet I am not alone because the Father is with me. <sup>33</sup> I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.” (John 16:31-33, NLT)*

**Acts 6 – 7 (NLT):** *But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.*

<sup>2</sup> *So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, “We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. <sup>3</sup> And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. <sup>4</sup> Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.”*

<sup>5</sup> Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). <sup>6</sup> These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

<sup>7</sup> So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in Jerusalem, and many of the Jewish priests were converted, too.

### **Stephen Is Arrested**

<sup>8</sup> Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people. <sup>9</sup> But one day some men from the Synagogue of Freed Slaves, as it was called, started to debate with him. They were Jews from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia, and the province of Asia.

<sup>10</sup> None of them could stand against the wisdom and the Spirit with which Stephen spoke.

<sup>11</sup> So they persuaded some men to lie about Stephen, saying, "We heard him blaspheme Moses, and even God." <sup>12</sup> This roused the people, the elders, and the teachers of religious law. So they arrested Stephen and brought him before the high council.

<sup>13</sup> The lying witnesses said, "This man is always speaking against the holy Temple and against the law of Moses. <sup>14</sup> We have heard him say that this Jesus of Nazareth will destroy the Temple and change the customs Moses handed down to us."

<sup>15</sup> At this point everyone in the high council stared at Stephen, because his face became as bright as an angel's.

### **Stephen Addresses the Council**

**7** Then the high priest asked Stephen, "Are these accusations true?"

<sup>2</sup> This was Stephen's reply: "Brothers and fathers, listen to me. Our glorious God appeared to our ancestor Abraham in Mesopotamia before he settled in Haran. <sup>3</sup> God told him,

'Leave your native land and your relatives, and come into the land that I will show you.' (Gen. 12:1)

<sup>4</sup> So Abraham left the land of the Chaldeans and lived in Haran until his father died. Then God brought him here to the land where you now live.

<sup>5</sup> "But God gave him no inheritance here, not even one square foot of land. God did promise, however, that eventually the whole land would belong to Abraham and his descendants – even though he had no children yet. <sup>6</sup> God also told him that his descendants would live in a foreign land, where they would be oppressed as slaves for 400 years. <sup>7</sup> 'But I will punish the nation that enslaves them,' God said, 'and in the end they will come out and worship me here in this place.'

<sup>8</sup> "God also gave Abraham the covenant of circumcision at that time. So when Abraham became the father of Isaac, he circumcised him on the eighth day. And the practice was continued when

Isaac became the father of Jacob, and when Jacob became the father of the twelve patriarchs of the Israelite nation.

<sup>9</sup> “These patriarchs were jealous of their brother Joseph, and they sold him to be a slave in Egypt. But God was with him <sup>10</sup> and rescued him from all his troubles. And God gave him favor before Pharaoh, king of Egypt. God also gave Joseph unusual wisdom, so that Pharaoh appointed him governor over all of Egypt and put him in charge of the palace.

<sup>11</sup> “But a famine came upon Egypt and Canaan. There was great misery, and our ancestors ran out of food. <sup>12</sup> Jacob heard that there was still grain in Egypt, so he sent his sons – our ancestors – to buy some. <sup>13</sup> The second time they went, Joseph revealed his identity to his brothers, and they were introduced to Pharaoh. <sup>14</sup> Then Joseph sent for his father, Jacob, and all his relatives to come to Egypt, seventy-five persons in all. <sup>15</sup> So Jacob went to Egypt. He died there, as did our ancestors. <sup>16</sup> Their bodies were taken to Shechem and buried in the tomb Abraham had bought for a certain price from Hamor’s sons in Shechem.

<sup>17</sup> “As the time drew near when God would fulfill his promise to Abraham, the number of our people in Egypt greatly increased. <sup>18</sup> But then a new king came to the throne of Egypt who knew nothing about Joseph. <sup>19</sup> This king exploited our people and oppressed them, forcing parents to abandon their newborn babies so they would die.

<sup>20</sup> “At that time Moses was born – a beautiful child in God’s eyes. His parents cared for him at home for three months. <sup>21</sup> When they had to abandon him, Pharaoh’s daughter adopted him and raised him as her own son. <sup>22</sup> Moses was taught all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was powerful in both speech and action.

<sup>23</sup> “One day when Moses was forty years old, he decided to visit his relatives, the people of Israel. <sup>24</sup> He saw an Egyptian mistreating an Israelite. So Moses came to the man’s defense and avenged him, killing the Egyptian. <sup>25</sup> Moses assumed his fellow Israelites would realize that God had sent him to rescue them, but they didn’t.

<sup>26</sup> “The next day he visited them again and saw two men of Israel fighting. He tried to be a peacemaker. ‘Men,’ he said, ‘you are brothers. Why are you fighting each other?’

<sup>27</sup> “But the man in the wrong pushed Moses aside. ‘Who made you a ruler and judge over us?’ he asked. <sup>28</sup> ‘Are you going to kill me as you killed that Egyptian yesterday?’ <sup>29</sup> When Moses heard that, he fled the country and lived as a foreigner in the land of Midian. There his two sons were born.

<sup>30</sup> “Forty years later, in the desert near Mount Sinai, an angel appeared to Moses in the flame of a burning bush. <sup>31</sup> When Moses saw it, he was amazed at the sight. As he went to take a closer look, the voice of the LORD called out to him,

<sup>32</sup> ‘I am the God of your ancestors – the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.’

“Moses shook with terror and did not dare to look. <sup>33</sup> Then the LORD said to him,

*'Take off your sandals, for you are standing on holy ground. <sup>34</sup> I have certainly seen the oppression of my people in Egypt. I have heard their groans and have come down to rescue them. Now go, for I am sending you back to Egypt.'* (Ex. 3:5-10)

<sup>35</sup> *"So God sent back the same man his people had previously rejected when they demanded, 'Who made you a ruler and judge over us?' Through the angel who appeared to him in the burning bush, God sent Moses to be their ruler and savior. <sup>36</sup> And by means of many wonders and miraculous signs, he led them out of Egypt, through the Red Sea, and through the wilderness for forty years.*

<sup>37</sup> *"Moses himself told the people of Israel,*

*'God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among your own people.'* (Deut. 18:15)

<sup>38</sup> *Moses was with our ancestors, the assembly of God's people in the wilderness, when the angel spoke to him at Mount Sinai. And there Moses received life-giving words to pass on to us.*

<sup>39</sup> *"But our ancestors refused to listen to Moses. They rejected him and wanted to return to Egypt. <sup>40</sup> They told Aaron, 'Make us some gods who can lead us, for we don't know what has become of this Moses, who brought us out of Egypt.'<sup>41</sup> So they made an idol shaped like a calf, and they sacrificed to it and celebrated over this thing they had made. <sup>42</sup> Then God turned away from them and abandoned them to serve the stars of heaven as their gods! In the book of the prophets it is written,*

*'Was it to me you were bringing sacrifices and offerings during those forty years in the wilderness, Israel? <sup>43</sup> No, you carried your pagan gods – the shrine of Molech, the star of your god Rephan, and the images you made to worship them. So I will send you into exile as far away as Babylon.'* (Amos 5:25-27)

<sup>44</sup> *"Our ancestors carried the Tabernacle with them through the wilderness. It was constructed according to the plan God had shown to Moses. <sup>45</sup> Years later, when Joshua led our ancestors in battle against the nations that God drove out of this land, the Tabernacle was taken with them into their new territory. And it stayed there until the time of King David.*

<sup>46</sup> *"David found favor with God and asked for the privilege of building a permanent Temple for the God of Jacob. <sup>47</sup> But it was Solomon who actually built it. <sup>48</sup> However, the Most High doesn't live in temples made by human hands. As the prophet says,*

<sup>49</sup> *'Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool. Could you build me a temple as good as that?' asks the LORD. 'Could you build me such a resting place? <sup>50</sup> Didn't my hands make both heaven and earth?'* (Isa. 66:1-2)

<sup>51</sup> *"You stubborn people! You are heathen at heart and deaf to the truth. Must you forever resist the Holy Spirit? That's what your ancestors did, and so do you! <sup>52</sup> Name one prophet your ancestors didn't persecute! They even killed the ones who predicted the coming of the Righteous*

*One – the Messiah whom you betrayed and murdered.<sup>53</sup> You deliberately disobeyed God’s law, even though you received it from the hands of angels.”*

*<sup>54</sup> The Jewish leaders were infuriated by Stephen’s accusation, and they shook their fists at him in rage. <sup>55</sup> But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, gazed steadily into heaven and saw the glory of God, and he saw Jesus standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand. <sup>56</sup> And he told them, “Look, I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing in the place of honor at God’s right hand!”*

*<sup>57</sup> Then they put their hands over their ears and began shouting. They rushed at him <sup>58</sup> and dragged him out of the city and began to stone him. His accusers took off their coats and laid them at the feet of a young man named Saul.*

*<sup>59</sup> As they stoned him, Stephen prayed, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” <sup>60</sup> He fell to his knees, shouting, “Lord, don’t charge them with this sin!” And with that, he died. (Acts 6 – 7, NLT)*

**Acts 8:1-3 (NLT):** *Saul was one of the witnesses, and he agreed completely with the killing of Stephen.*

*A great wave of persecution began that day, sweeping over the church in Jerusalem; and all the believers except the apostles were scattered through the regions of Judea and Samaria. <sup>2</sup> (Some devout men came and buried Stephen with great mourning.) <sup>3</sup> But Saul was going everywhere to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragging out both men and women to throw them into prison. (Acts 8:1-3, NLT)*

**Romans 6:20-23 (NLT):** *When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the obligation to do right.*

*<sup>21</sup> And what was the result? You are now ashamed of the things you used to do, things that end in eternal doom. <sup>22</sup> But now you are free from the power of sin and have become slaves of God. Now you do those things that lead to holiness and result in eternal life. <sup>23</sup> For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.*

**(Romans 6:20-23, NLT)**

**Ephesians 2:1-10 (NLT):** *Once you were dead because of your disobedience and your many sins. <sup>2</sup> You used to live in sin, just like the rest of the world, obeying the devil – the commander of the powers in the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. <sup>3</sup> All of us used to live that way, following the passionate desires and inclinations of our sinful nature. By our very nature we were subject to God’s anger, just like everyone else.*

*<sup>4</sup> But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so much, <sup>5</sup> that even though we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. (It is only by God’s grace that you have been saved!) <sup>6</sup> For he raised us from the dead along with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms because we are united with Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> So God can point to us in all future ages as examples of the incredible wealth of his grace and kindness toward us, as shown in all he has done for us who are united with Christ Jesus.*

*<sup>8</sup> God saved you by his grace when you believed. And you can’t take credit for this; it is a gift from God. <sup>9</sup> Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about*

it. <sup>10</sup> For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago. (**Ephesians 2:1-10**, NLT)

**Hebrews 13:5-6 (CSB):** *Keep your life free from the love of money. Be satisfied with what you have, for he himself has said, "I will never leave you or abandon you."* (**Deut. 31:6**) Therefore, we may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?" (**Hebrews 13:5-6**, CSB)

**1 John 5:11-13 (NLT):** *And this is what God has testified: He has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. <sup>12</sup> Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have God's Son does not have life. <sup>13</sup> I have written this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know you have eternal life.* (**1 John 5:11-13**, NLT)

## E.G. White Quotations

**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 9, The Seven Deacons, pages 87-96:** *In those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations."*

*The early church was made up of many classes of people, of various nationalities. At the time of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, "there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven." Acts 2:5. Among those of the Hebrew faith who were gathered at Jerusalem were some commonly known as Grecians, between whom and the Jews of Palestine there had long existed distrust and even antagonism.*

*The hearts of those who had been converted under the labors of the apostles, were softened and united by Christian love. Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another. Satan knew that so long as this union continued (**Page 88**) to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth; and he sought to take advantage of former habits of thought, in the hope that thereby he might be able to introduce into the church elements of disunion.*

*Thus it came to pass that as disciples were multiplied, the enemy succeeded in arousing the suspicions of some who had formerly been in the habit of looking with jealousy on their brethren in the faith and of finding fault with their spiritual leaders, and so "there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews." The cause of complaint was an alleged neglect of the Greek widows in the daily distribution of assistance. Any inequality would have been contrary to the spirit of the gospel, yet Satan had succeeded in arousing suspicion. Prompt measures must now be taken to remove all occasion for dissatisfaction, lest the enemy triumph in his effort to bring about a division among the believers.*

*The disciples of Jesus had reached a crisis in their experience. Under the wise leadership of the apostles, who labored unitedly in the power of the Holy Spirit, the work committed to the gospel messengers was developing rapidly. The church was continually enlarging, and this growth in*



membership brought increasingly heavy burdens upon those in charge. No one man, or even one set of men, could continue to bear these burdens alone, without imperiling the future prosperity of the church. There was necessity for a further distribution of the responsibilities which had been borne so faithfully by a few during the earlier days of the church. The apostles must now take an important step in (Page 89) the perfecting of gospel order in the church by laying upon others some of the burdens thus far borne by themselves.

Summoning a meeting of the believers, the apostles were led by the Holy Spirit to outline a plan for the better organization of all the working forces of the church. The time had come, the apostles stated, when the spiritual leaders having the oversight of the church should be relieved from the task of distributing to the poor and from similar burdens, so that they might be free to carry forward the work of preaching the gospel. "Wherefore, brethren," they said, "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word." This advice was followed, and by prayer and the laying on of hands, seven chosen men were solemnly set apart for their duties as deacons.

The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as well as to the general financial interests of the church, and by their prudent management and their godly example they were an important aid to their fellow officers in binding together the various interests of the church into a united whole.

That this step was in the order of God, is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen. "The word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests (Page 90) were obedient to the faith." This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and to the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons. The fact that these brethren had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success.

To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work--that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ. The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of Christian unity, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God. Had not their divine Leader prayed to the Father, "Keep through Thine own name those whom Thou hast given Me, that they may be one, as We are"? And had He not declared of His disciples, "The world hath hated them, because they are not of the world"? Had He not pleaded with the Father that they might be "made perfect in one," "that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me"?

*John 17:11, 14, 23, 21. Their spiritual life and power was dependent on a close connection with the One by whom they had been commissioned to preach the gospel.*

*Only as they were united with Christ could the disciples hope to have the accompanying power of the Holy Spirit and (Page 91) the co-operation of angels of heaven. With the help of these divine agencies they would present before the world a united front and would be victorious in the conflict they were compelled to wage unceasingly against the powers of darkness. As they should continue to labor unitedly, heavenly messengers would go before them, opening the way; hearts would be prepared for the reception of truth, and many would be won to Christ. So long as they remained united, the church would go forth "fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners." Song of Solomon 6:10. Nothing could withstand her onward progress. The church would advance from victory to victory, gloriously fulfilling her divine mission of proclaiming the gospel to the world.*

*The organization of the church at Jerusalem was to serve as a model for the organization of churches in every other place where messengers of truth should win converts to the gospel. Those to whom was given the responsibility of the general oversight of the church were not to lord it over God's heritage, but, as wise shepherds, were to "feed the flock of God, . . . being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:2, 3); and the deacons were to be "men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom." These men were to take their position unitedly on the side of right and to maintain it with firmness and decision. Thus they would have a uniting influence upon the entire flock.*

*Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further (Page 92) perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with special gifts --"first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony.*

*"There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as He will. For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." 1 Corinthians 12:4-12.*



*Solemn are the responsibilities resting upon those who are called to act as leaders in the church of God on earth. In the days of the theocracy, when Moses was endeavoring to carry alone burdens so heavy that he would soon have (Page 93) worn away under them, he was counseled by Jethro to plan for a wise distribution of responsibilities. "Be thou for the people to Godward," Jethro advised, "that thou mayest bring the causes unto God: and thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt show them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do." Jethro further advised that men be appointed to act as "rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens." These were to be "able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness." They were to "judge the people at all seasons," thus relieving Moses of the wearing responsibility of giving consideration to many minor matters that could be dealt with wisely by consecrated helpers.*

*The time and strength of those who in the providence of God have been placed in leading positions of responsibility in the church, should be spent in dealing with the weightier matters demanding special wisdom and largeness of heart. It is not in the order of God that such men should be appealed to for the adjustment of minor matters that others are well qualified to handle. "Every great matter they shall bring unto thee," Jethro proposed to Moses, "but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee. If thou shalt do this thing, and God command thee so, then thou shalt be able to endure, and all this people shall also go to their place in peace."*

*In harmony with this plan, "Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers (Page 94) of tens. And they judged the people at all seasons: the hard causes they brought unto Moses, but every small matter they judged themselves." Exodus 18:19-26.*

*Later, when choosing seventy elders to share with him the responsibilities of leadership, Moses was careful to select, as his helpers, men possessing dignity, sound judgment, and experience. In his charge to these elders at the time of their ordination, he outlined some of the qualifications that fit a man to be a wise ruler in the church. "Hear the causes between your brethren," said Moses, "and judge righteously between every man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him. Ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man; for the judgment is God's." Deuteronomy 1:16, 17.*

*King David, toward the close of his reign, delivered a solemn charge to those bearing the burden of the work of God in his day. Summoning to Jerusalem "all the princes of Israel, the princes of the tribes, and the captains of the companies that ministered to the king by course, and the captains over the thousands, and captains over the hundreds, and the stewards over all the substance and possession of the king, and of his sons, with the officers, and with the mighty men, and with all the valiant men," the aged king solemnly charged them, "in the sight of all Israel the congregation of the Lord, and in the audience of our God," to "keep and seek for all the commandments of the Lord your God." I Chronicles 28:1, 8. (Page 95)*

*To Solomon, as one called to occupy a position of leading responsibility, David gave a special charge: "Thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek Him, He will be found of thee; but if thou forsake Him, He will cast thee off forever. Take heed now; for the Lord hath chosen thee: . . . be strong." I Chronicles 28:9, 10.*

*The same principles of piety and justice that were to guide the rulers among God's people in the time of Moses and of David, were also to be followed by those given the oversight of the newly organized church of God in the gospel dispensation. In the work of setting things in order in all the churches, and ordaining suitable men to act as officers, the apostles held to the high standards of leadership outlined in the Old Testament Scriptures. They maintained that he who is called to stand in a position of leading responsibility in the church "must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; but a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers." Titus 1:7-9.*

*The order that was maintained in the early Christian church made it possible for them to move forward solidly as a well-disciplined army clad with the armor of God. The (Page 96) companies of believers, though scattered over a large territory, were all members of one body; all moved in concert and in harmony with one another. When dissension arose in a local church, as later it did arise in Antioch and elsewhere, and the believers were unable to come to an agreement among themselves, such matters were not permitted to create a division in the church, but were referred to a general council of the entire body of believers, made up of appointed delegates from the various local churches, with the apostles and elders in positions of leading responsibility. Thus the efforts of Satan to attack the church in isolated places were met by concerted action on the part of all, and the plans of the enemy to disrupt and destroy were thwarted.*

*"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints." I Corinthians 14:33. He requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality co-operating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God. (The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 9, The Seven Deacons, pages 87-96)*

**The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10, The First Christian Martyr, pages 97-102:** *Stephen, the foremost of the seven deacons, was a man of deep piety and broad faith. Though a Jew by birth, he spoke the Greek language and was familiar with the customs and manners of the Greeks. He therefore found opportunity to preach the gospel in the synagogues of the Greek Jews. He was very active in the cause of Christ and boldly proclaimed his faith. Learned rabbis and doctors of the law*

engaged in public discussion with him, confidently expecting an easy victory. But "they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake." Not only did he speak in the power of the Holy Spirit, but it was plain that he was a student of the prophecies and learned in all matters of the law. He ably defended the truths that he advocated and utterly defeated his opponents. To him was the promise fulfilled, "Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give (Page 98) you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay nor resist." Luke 21:14, 15.

As the priests and rulers saw the power that attended the preaching of Stephen, they were filled with bitter hatred. Instead of yielding to the evidence that he presented, they determined to silence his voice by putting him to death. On several occasions they had bribed the Roman authorities to pass over without comment instances where the Jews had taken the law into their own hands and had tried, condemned, and executed prisoners in accordance with their national custom. The enemies of Stephen did not doubt that they could again pursue such a course without danger to themselves. They determined to risk the consequences and therefore seized Stephen and brought him before the Sanhedrin council for trial.

Learned Jews from the surrounding countries were summoned for the purpose of refuting the arguments of the prisoner. Saul of Tarsus was present and took a leading part against Stephen. He brought the weight of eloquence and the logic of the rabbis to bear upon the case, to convince the people that Stephen was preaching delusive and dangerous doctrines; but in Stephen he met one who had a full understanding of the purpose of God in the spreading of the gospel to other nations.

Because the priests and rulers could not prevail against the clear, calm wisdom of Stephen, they determined to make an example of him; and while thus satisfying their revengeful hatred, they would prevent others, through fear, from adopting his belief. Witnesses were hired to bear false testimony (Page 99) that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against the temple and the law. "We have heard him say," these witnesses declared, "that this Jesus of Nazareth shall destroy this place, and shall change the customs which Moses delivered us."

As Stephen stood face to face with his judges to answer to the charge of blasphemy, a holy radiance shone upon his countenance, and "all that sat in the council, looking steadfastly on him, saw his face as it had been the face of an angel." Many who beheld this light trembled and veiled their faces, but the stubborn unbelief and prejudice of the rulers did not waver.

When Stephen was questioned as to the truth of the charges against him, he began his defense in a clear, thrilling voice, which rang through the council hall. In words that held the assembly spellbound, he proceeded to rehearse the history of the chosen people of God. He showed a thorough knowledge of the Jewish economy and the spiritual interpretation of it now made manifest through Christ. He repeated the words of Moses that foretold of the Messiah: "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear." He made plain his own loyalty to God and to the Jewish faith, while he showed that the

law in which the Jews trusted for salvation had not been able to save Israel from idolatry. He connected Jesus Christ with all the Jewish history. He referred to the building of the temple by Solomon, and to the words of both Solomon and Isaiah: "Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands; as saith the prophet, Heaven is (Page 100) My throne, and earth is My footstool: what house will ye build Me? saith the Lord: or what is the place of My rest? Hath not My hand made all these things?"

When Stephen reached this point, there was a tumult among the people. When he connected Christ with the prophecies and spoke as he did of the temple, the priest, pretending to be horror-stricken, rent his robe. To Stephen this act was a signal that his voice would soon be silenced forever. He saw the resistance that met his words and knew that he was giving his last testimony. Although in the midst of his sermon, he abruptly concluded it.

Suddenly breaking away from the train of history that he was following, and turning upon his infuriated judges, he cried: "Ye stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which showed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers: who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it."

At this, priests and rulers were beside themselves with anger. Acting more like beasts of prey than human beings, they rushed upon Stephen, gnashing their teeth. In the cruel faces about him the prisoner read his fate; but he did not waver. For him the fear of death was gone. For him the enraged priests and the excited mob had no terror. The scene before him faded from his vision. To him the gates of heaven were ajar, and, looking in, he saw the glory of the courts of God, and Christ, as if just risen from His (Page 101) throne, standing ready to sustain His servant. In words of triumph Stephen exclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God."

As he described the glorious scene upon which his eyes were gazing, it was more than his persecutors could endure. Stopping their ears, that they might not hear his words, and uttering loud cries, they ran furiously upon him with one accord "and cast him out of the city." "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep."

No legal sentence had been passed upon Stephen, but the Roman authorities were bribed by large sums of money to make no investigation into the case.

The martyrdom of Stephen made a deep impression upon all who witnessed it. The memory of the signet of God upon his face; his words, which touched the very souls of those who heard them, remained in the minds of the beholders, and testified to the truth of that which he had proclaimed. His death was a sore trial to the church, but it resulted in the conviction of Saul, who

could not efface from his memory the faith and constancy of the martyr, and the glory that had rested on his countenance.

At the scene of Stephen's trial and death, Saul had seemed to be imbued with a frenzied zeal. Afterward he was angered by his own secret conviction that Stephen had been honored by God at the very time when he was dishonored (Page 102) by men. Saul continued to persecute the church of God, hunting them down, seizing them in their houses, and delivering them up to the priests and rulers for imprisonment and death. His zeal in carrying forward this persecution brought terror to the Christians at Jerusalem. The Roman authorities made no special effort to stay the cruel work and secretly aided the Jews in order to conciliate them and to secure their favor.

After the death of Stephen, Saul was elected a member of the Sanhedrin council in consideration of the part he had acted on that occasion. For a time he was a mighty instrument in the hands of Satan to carry out his rebellion against the Son of God. But soon this relentless persecutor was to be employed in building up the church that he was now tearing down. A Mightier than Satan had chosen Saul to take the place of the martyred Stephen, to preach and suffer for His name, and to spread far and wide the tidings of salvation through His blood. (The Acts of the Apostles, Chapter 10, The First Christian Martyr, pages 97-102)

**Steps to Christ, pages 62-63:** The condition of eternal life is now just what it always has been – just what it was in Paradise before the fall of our first parents – perfect obedience to the law of God, perfect righteousness. If eternal life were granted on any condition short of this, then the happiness of the whole universe would be imperiled. The way would be open for sin, with all its train of woe and misery, to be immortalized.

It was possible for Adam, before the fall, to form a righteous character by obedience to God's law. But he failed to do this, and because of his sin our natures are fallen and we cannot make ourselves righteous. Since we are sinful, unholy, we cannot perfectly obey the holy law. We have no righteousness of our own with which to meet the claims of the law of God. But Christ has made a way of escape for us. He lived on earth amid trials and temptations such as we have to meet. He lived a sinless life. He died for us, and now He offers to take our sins and give us His righteousness. If you give yourself to Him, and accept Him as your Saviour, then, sinful as your life may have been, for His sake you are accounted righteous. Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned.

More than this, Christ changes the heart. He abides in your heart by faith. You are to maintain this connection with Christ by faith and the continual surrender of your will to Him; and so long as you do this, He will work in you to will and to do (63) according to His good pleasure. So you may say, "The life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me." Galatians 2:20. So Jesus said to His disciples, "It is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you." Matthew 10:20. Then with Christ working in

*you, you will manifest the same spirit and do the same good works – works of righteousness, obedience.*

*So we have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us. (Steps to Christ, pages 62-63)*