

The harvest of the earth is ripe. Revelation 14:15

Introduction

One purpose of this Bible study is to establish the long-held faith of Seventh-day Adventists in the doctrine of special character development in the last generation.

That the last generation will be “wholly” sanctified, blameless, without spot, holy, and will even attain “perfection” can not well be disputed biblically.

What those words *mean* may be. Paul wrote to Timothy, “I charge thee before God that thou strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers.” Only when we strive regarding what the prophets said, do we have a foundation for resolving our conflict—the Bible itself.¹

The latter and larger purpose of the study is to reveal the encouraging and hopeful context of this character-development doctrine in the New Testament.

This will necessarily bring the afore-mentioned end. The reader will be delighted to find that final-generation character development is not an obscure doctrine or a strained one, but a plainly taught and oft repeated truth.

We will begin by considering the truths revealed through the harvest theme, or harvest motif, in scripture.

Arguments from the Harvest Motif

And thou shalt observe the feast of weeks, of the firstfruits of wheat harvest, and the feast of ingathering at the revolution of the year. Exodus 34:22, margin.

There were two times of harvest in the Jewish year as outlined by the feasts of Israel. The first harvest, celebrated by the Feast of First-fruits (otherwise known as the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost) commenced in the second month.

The second harvest brought with it the Feast of Tabernacles, or Feast of Harvest. This harvest marked the “revolution of the year” when the cycle of sanctuary symbols came to its completion, though several months of the calendar year were still to come.

These two annual harvests represented two distinct harvests of souls. Jesus was the first-fruits and those that were raised at his resurrection fulfilled the

¹ But to argue, dictionary-like, regarding the etymological origins and/or the precise meaning of a given word or phrase will force the contestants to move off the ground of inspiration and into the muddled waters of commentary and lexicon.

When we strive about the meaning of a prophet’s words we approach too nearly to the idea of dictation inspiration. We speak as if God chose for the prophet the exact word that, in its contemporary usage, would fully reflect the inspired thoughts.

This is manifestly not true. Words for profound truths are difficult to find and are often inadequate. Several authors each searching for proper modes of expression for a deep thought might be expected to choose a varied multiplicity of words that taken together would better reflect the idea than any single word would.

Then do not make the ancient use of Hebrew or Greek words, chosen by the prophets to express their visions, the primary basis of your arguments. Study of the scriptures, not of the lexicon, provides the surest framework for understanding a phrase or a sentence.

While the erudite Greek dictionary may accurately reflect the etymology and first-century use of a word, it will neglect to alert you to those passages where the author was grasping for language to express his thoughts. Bible authors gave new meanings to many words, and likely to more words than we know.

typical wave-sheaf. The second harvest feast, bringing an end to the great seventh-month feasts, prefigured the harvest of souls at the end of the world.

The harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. Matthew 13:39

How is the harvest timed?

But when the fruit is ripe (margin), immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come. Mark 4:29

And another angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in thy sickle, and reap: for the time is come for thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. Revelation 14:15

The certain day to harvest grains can not well be predetermined when the seeds are planted. The harvest is gathered when the fruit is ripe. So it is with the harvest at the end of the world.

Even the wicked, as tares in Matthew 13 and as grapes in Revelation 14 and Joel 3, are ripened for their judgments, and are harvested when “fully ripe.”

Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.² Matthew 13:30

Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great.³ Joel 3:13

And another angel came out from the altar, which had power over fire; and cried with a loud cry to him that had the sharp sickle, saying, Thrust in thy sharp sickle, and gather the clusters of the vine of the earth; for her grapes are fully ripe. Revelation 14:18

No second probation follows the harvest, and so Jeremiah records the mourning thoughts that will fill many minds at that time.

The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved. Jeremiah 8:20

Jesus was aware of the harvest to be gathered at Pentecost and alluded to the ripeness of the grains prior to His passion. The generations living then and now are each rebuked for not keeping the ripeness of the fields in mind.

Additionally, the last generation is reprimanded for forgetting the needed out-pouring of the Spirit that would prepare the grain for harvest.

Say not ye, There are yet four months, and then cometh harvest? behold, I say unto you, Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest. John 4:35. See Matthew 9:37-38.

Neither say they in their heart, Let us now fear the LORD our God, that giveth rain, both the former and the latter, in his season: he reserveth unto us the appointed weeks of the harvest.⁴ Jeremiah 5:24

² Verse 26; the tares do not appear until a crop is produced; and can not be safely gathered until the harvest, v. 28.

³ Verse 14 speaks of the valley of “decision.” The marginal reading allows “threshing.” Whichever is intended, and perhaps the double meaning was not an accident, the prophecy is of a special time of decision-making that would determine one’s destiny in the shaking and harvest. See Jer. 51:33.

⁴ Verses 25 and 26 portray the cause of the delayed harvest and rain. “Your iniquities have turned away these things; and your sins have withheld good things from you. For among my people are found wicked men.” While a certain blame is attached to the false teachers, the nation is implicated. “and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end?” v. 31, NKJV. When Judas was no more and among the praying disciples were found no “wicked men” the early rain came.

When are the righteous “ripe” for the harvest of Revelation 14:15?

For the earth bringeth forth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. Mark 4:28

And that which fell among thorns are they, which, when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. Luke 8:14

Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. James 5:7-8

While the fruit may be perfect at every stage of development, the harvest is not conditioned on perfect buds and blades and baby ears. The finishing of the process, brought about almost entirely before the latter rain yet dependant on that rain for its completion, marks the field for reaping.

James presents our duty as that of seeking stability, of settling into the truth in such a way that we can not be moved, “for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.”

God’s love is being “perfected” in believers. This process is being carried forward to this end—so that we might have confidence in the “day of Judgement.”

No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. . . Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world. There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love. 1 John 4:12, 17, 18. See 1 John 2:5.

“No one who truly loves and fears God will continue to transgress the law in any particular. When man transgresses he is under the condemnation of the law, and it becomes to him a yoke of bondage. Whatever his profession may be he is not justified, which means pardoned. ‘The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.’ Through obedience comes sanctification of body, soul, and spirit. This sanctification is a progressive work, and an advance from one stage of perfection to another.” *My Life Today*, p. 250

Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. 1 John 3:2-3

When will we be like Him? When He appears. Does that level of development find expression in the church in the time of John? No, it does not yet appear. What is the fruit of this belief in those that have it? They purify themselves. What end are they seeking? To be pure “even as He is pure.”

Jesus and the Ripening Remnant

While our Lord Jesus Christ has always been the Sinless One, the Holy One, His return to earth is heralded in Hebrews as being particularly “without sin,” in relation to His bearing of the sins of the world.

So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation. Hebrews 9:28

These sins have been either laid to the charge of those that would not accept Deliverance, or blotted out for those that have accepted it, and Jesus returns as a King bearing them no longer.

An understanding of the rites pointing to this truth led early Adventists to question to what extent the Remnant would be ripened prior to Christ’s coming. Sins that would be committed during the final scenes of earth’s history presented a problem in the types and shadows.

How could they be blotted out when the work of judgment was completed, probation closed, and Christ was descending in the clouds of glory? They found that the Bible indicates that a special work of purification will prepare the church for this crisis.

The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid. Zephaniah 3:13

The language reminds us of the 144,000.

These are they that follow the Lamb wherever He goes. . . And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God. Revelation 14:3-5

Consider the parallels.

Remnant	144,000
No deceit in mouth	No guile in mouth
feed and lie down safely	follow the <i>Lamb</i> wherever
Shall do no iniquity	Without Fault

What does it mean to be “without fault” before the throne? Whatever it does mean, the phrase and others like it are used repeatedly in reference to the last generation.

The Gospel in the Goal

Peter portrays the high standard set for the last generation in similar colors to John and Zechariah. They are to be “diligent to be found . . . without spot and blameless,” 2 Peter 3:14.

Perhaps Adventists aiming to be found “holy still” at the close of probation might fall into an error of viewing their achievements as the basis of their salvation.

But a more likely, more prevalent error is that of one fearing that probation will close before some consecrated soul is sufficiently ready.

This fear is unwarranted. The very same passages that proclaim the ascension-day church to be without fault, blame, or spot, also remove all Biblical reasons for fearing that the harvest will come before the harvest is ripe. We will consider first the passage in 2 Peter 3.

But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.

While ungodly men will be burned in the final fire, God’s unwillingness to prematurely bring their destruction is motivated by His will that not one should thus “perish.” But why does He wait? While the coming in Matthew 24 is timed on the finishing of the gospel commission, the coming in 2 Peter 3 is timed like that of Revelation 14, on the ripening of the harvest.

But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, Looking for and hasting [margin] the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat?

The day waits for a certain “manner of persons” that having “holy conversation and godliness” are ready for the day that will melt the world. Men ought to be seeking this state and thus be found “hasting” the Coming. There will be a new heaven and a new earth appropriate for those that escape the fire of the last day.

Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.

If we expect that the end will come that way, we ought to be diligently preparing. The word “found” implies a finished judgement by “Him” that is coming. Then to what should we account our salvation in the last days? Are we saved because we have become so good? Do our characters then stand in place of our characters before? Are we our own saviors? Peter answers the question by reminding us why the Coming was delayed. It waited for us to be ready.

And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you;

When do we count that God’s longsuffering “is Salvation”? At the time when, on account of that longsuffering, God postpones His return so that not one need be lost. *God waits for His people, and if it were not so, our case would be hopeless.* Before someone mumbles “carnal security” let him reread the chapter. Who is God waiting for? Those that are seeking. Those that look for such things. Those that are “diligent” accordingly.

The class who are entering into the Day of Atonement by soul searching, the very ones most inclined to be discouraged with what they find in their souls, they are the ones for whom Christ waits. He waits, not impatiently and fretfully, but with a longsuffering that is our salvation. As if Peter feels that readers might accuse him of teaching another gospel, he refers us to the writings of Paul.

As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness.

Paul speaks of “these things” in all his epistles. What are “these things”? The truths about the last generation, its faultless, blameless state, and about the relation of the gospel to their situation. While Paul’s epistles present the same end, they give also a great deal of information about what God has done to assure that not one grain will be unripe when the angel says “thrust in your sickle.”

They teach how one may have the “steadfastness” from which Peter warns us not to fall, and that lacking, might cause us to wrest scriptures to our own eternal loss. Amos, speaking of the final shaking, said “not the least grain will fall to the ground.” Amos 9:9.

All Paul’s Epistles

In his conclusion of the book of Romans Paul introduces a subject that is woven throughout his other epistles.

Now to him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began. But now is made manifest, and by the scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith: To God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever. Amen. Romans 16:25-27.

The mystery, kept secret for thousands of years, was by the commandment of God to be sounded throughout the world. Both the *work* of the mystery, and the *proclaiming* of it (Matthew 24:14), are linked with the end of the world.

But in the days of the voice of the seventh angel, when he shall begin to sound, the mystery of God should be finished, as he hath declared to his servants the prophets. Revelation 10:7.

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. For the earnest expectation of the creature

waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God . . . But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. Romans 8:18-19, 25. See Galatians 5:5.

These passages describe a process that begins with the proclamation of the gospel, proceeds in the end of time to the finishing of the mystery, and leads immediately to Christ’s coming and our translation into a glorified state. We may understand the nature of the mystery that prepares for translation from other epistles.

I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ; that in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge; Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So that ye come behind in no gift; waiting for the revelation [margin] of our Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 1 Corinthians 1:4-7.

If we work backwards through this long sentence, we find that we are called to share an experience with Jesus. That experience is to be shared “in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It consists in being “blameless” in that day. To give us that experience, we have been given a continuing confirmation right down to the end of time.

That gift is given specifically to those that are “waiting for the revelation” of Christ in the end of time. That gift is otherwise known as the “testimony of [Jesus] Christ.” It was given to the church of Corinth, and enriched them in all knowledge and speaking.

The “Testimony of Jesus [Christ]” is indeed a spiritual gift. It was possessed by the prophet John and by the prophetically gifted angel that spoke to him. Compare Revelation 22:9 and 19:10.

The testimony is the spirit of prophecy, and was manifest in the city of Corinth (see 1 Corinthian 12 and Acts 8:1-6). It was a confirmation to them that they were the true church, for they were lacking no gift. And it was to be given as a confirmation again at the end of time to those who are waiting for Christ’s return.

What is the purpose of this end-time granting of the prophetic office? The living testimony was granted that the church may be found “blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”

The last day church would be given again the Spirit of Prophecy. Its purpose would be to ripen the harvest and make ready a people for the coming of the Lord.

In the second letter the *Testimony* came to the Corinthians, as testimonies do, very practically. They were to separate from their worldly-minded associates and “be separate.” On condition of obedience to this command, the “Lord Almighty” had promised “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.”

Of this glorious offer, Paul wrote:

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. 2 Corinthians 7:1

To those struggling to break the chains that bind them to those that love not our Lord Jesus, the Father has pledged to be their security, their place of refuge. The promise inspires the efforts of personal reformation.

Yet the call to holy living often creates feelings of inadequacy. Paul adds, as if to answer the unspoken objection, “I speak not this to condemn you: For I have said before, that ye are in our hearts to die and live with you.” v. 3.

Take a moment to consider the balance in the *testimony*. It offers full and free forgiveness and care in the words “I will receive you and be a Father.” It does not, however, lower the standard of conduct. The reception is conditioned on faith in the text, both in the promise and the command.

The Lord may say “be clean. . . and I will receive you” without teaching righteousness by works. A man is received when he exercises faith by separating from his associations. He separates because of faith in the dearest promises that he will be received.

The call to reach the highest standard neither treats him as a criminal, nor does it keep him at arm's length until he submits. He is "dearly beloved" when called. He is in the apostle's heart, uncondemned by the man that forbids his fraternity with the world.

That illustrates well the work of God's testimonies. They call men to "perfect holiness" with all the warmth and true love that the Holy Spirit can place in men. But spiritual things are still spiritually discerned and many will stoop to accuse the God's men of harshness in forbidding friendship with the world.

The Gifts and the Rain

After listing the various gifts of the Spirit Paul explains their purpose in the church.

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ: Ephesians 4:12, 13

In other words, the "rain" of the Spirit that expresses itself in the gift of prophecy (see Joel 2) will fall until the harvest field of the church is ready for harvest. That is the purpose of the gifts, and the specific reason they are revived in the time of the judgement.

This ripening is manifest in the settling into the truth so that one can not be moved.

That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; but [on the contrary] speaking the truth in love, [we] may grow into him in all things." v. 14-15.

These passages parallel well the following testimony:

Just as soon as the people of God are sealed in their foreheads--it is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved--just as soon as God's people are sealed and prepared for the shaking, it will come. Indeed, it has begun already; the judgments of God are now upon the land, to give us warning, that we may know what is coming. *Maranatha* p. 200

Our Part

Our part in finishing the work of character development is laid down and limited by several passages of scripture. We are given duties appropriate to our weakened condition. God takes upon himself the work of bringing the grain to harvest-readiness.

Paul, speaking of two of our duties, makes them the condition of being found "blameless and harmless...without rebuke" in the midst of a crooked and perverse people such as will be found in the last days.

Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world. Philippians 2:14-15

Murmuring and disputing are the antithesis of Biblical love, a love that is not a statement of affection but rather revealed "in deed and in truth." Love is putting the well-being and happiness and needs of others before our own.

Murmuring places a low estimate on the value of making others happy. It seeks to receive sympathy rather than to impart strength.

Disputing has never tended to increase our love for the one we are challenging. Yet a growing love is just what is demanded of us at this time if we are to attain the ripened state.

And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, at the coming of

our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints. 1 Thessalonians 3:12-13

You would not ask a mere child to replace the transmission in your car. You might ask him to wash the car carefully. If you placed the first burden on him, he would be rightly overwhelmed unless he had no just idea of what was involved.

There is a parallel in the work of character development. With help and encouragement from our Father we may tackle the duty of living complaint-and-argument-free. We may fall, repent, and make another effort.

There are other practical things we can do. Our Savior takes our efforts, much as we would accept the efforts of a young child to help us clean the kitchen, and adds to them His power. While we chose not to complain, "the Lord make[s] us to increase and abound in love one to another."

This growing love is the condition of being found "unblameable in holiness before God...at the coming of our Lord Jesus." In this passage there are three aspects of this love that are to be growing particularly. They give us direction in our work of character development.

We are to love "one another" more today than we did two weeks ago, for a growing love is not static. We are to love those that are without, "all men" with a continually increasing affection. And the love of our spiritual leaders is to be a model of this growing selflessness. This unblameable state of "holiness" will apparently be tested here on earth, for we are to be "stablished" that way.

Here, like elsewhere, settling into the truth is connected with the work that is to immediately precede the second coming.

Two chapters later Paul expands on this counsel.

And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you; And to esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves.

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn them that are unruly, comfort the feebleminded, support the weak, be patient toward all men. See that none render evil for evil unto any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

Quench not the Spirit. Despise not prophesyings. Prove all things; hold fast that which is good. Abstain from all appearance of evil.

And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24.

The list of projects entrusted to us is longer here. We are to labor to love the classes that are especially prone to be weaned from our affection. They include those, our authorities, who "admonish" us. They take in the "unruly" and the easily discouraged. Those that injure us are to receive good at our hand as all others do.

We are given to rejoice, pray, thank continuously. The passage expands our source of directives to include modern day prophets, though they must be thoroughly tested. Those that prove true are to be held too stiffly, as if there would be a movement to undermine their authority. Finally we are to be careful of appearances. Like Daniel, we are to repel the temptation to withdraw from public faithfulness.

But then the passage changes abruptly. After saying "do this and this and this and this and this and this," the passage continues, "and God will bring the big job to its final completion." While we have our little tasks to do, it is God that will sanctify us "wholly."

We will be brought to a state of being "blameless" sometime just before Christ's coming. The prayer of Paul is that God may preserve that state until the end, something only possible if it is achieved before that time.

Have you ever wondered "What if I am not ready in time?" or "What if I can't hold out?" This passage is for you. Your work is not to be ready "in

time,” or to “hold out.” Your work is to do your duties. God will ripen the harvest. The angel will not say “thrust in your sickle” until that work is done. God’s work will be to preserve the ripened grain through the troublous time. He is the one that will not let the smallest grain slip through the sieve in the sifting process.

Does this lessen the danger of putting off preparation? No. Preparation is our duty. Despising not prophesying is our task. Loving the unlovable belongs to us. These are everywhere the conditions of our being ripened by God. But our ripening is distinctly His duty. “Faithful is He that calleth you, who also will do it.”

The first chapter of the letter to the Colossians also bears out this truth.

And, having made peace through the blood of [Christ’s] cross, by [Christ] to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

The idea that things in heaven need reconciled may intrigue those not familiar with the cleansing of the sanctuary.⁵ The blotting out of sins in heaven and the eradication of them on earth are the work going on now. The end of that work is the subject of the rest of the chapter.

And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled. . . . to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight:

The work is done by virtue of Christ’s death, and is connected with the sealing process. Under what condition can we expect to be presented “holy and unblameable and unreprouvable” when He appears?

If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard Whereof I am made a minister, . . . to fulfil the word of God; Even the mystery which hath been hid from ages and from generations, but now is made manifest to his saints: To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory: Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus: Col. 1:20-28.

The condition is that of holding on, as it is in Matthew 24:13, Romans 11:21-23, Hebrews 3:6, I Timothy 5:12, 2 Peter 2:19-22, and I Corinthians 15:1-2. More than that, it is holding on when the winds are blowing strongest; it is being grounded and settled (see 2 Thessalonians 2:17; 3:3) so that we will “be not moved.”

⁵ See also Hebrews 9:23; This cleansing was predicted in Daniel 8:14 and foreshadowed by the cleansing of the articles and building of the early sanctuary. Aaron was to “make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that dwelleth [margin] among them in the midst of their uncleanness.” The “uncleanness” of the people had been transferred to the sanctuary by the daily work of the priests and was cleansed once a year on the Day of Atonement. Both apartments and the altar were cleansed, and all with blood. Leviticus 16:16, 18, 19. In verse 33 Moses concluded with words that seem almost like a paradox, “And he shall make an *atonement* for the *holy* sanctuary.” The uncleanness of the people, though residing in the sanctuary, though in need of cleansing, did not make it other than “holy.” The paradox becomes clear in the light of Acts 3:19 and Jeremiah 17:1. The cleansing is the blotting out of sins from the record books of heaven, represented by the horns that received the sprinkling of the blood. When this work is finished, the New Covenant promise will be fulfilled “Their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more.” Hebrews 10:17. Neither the sanctuary by its written record of sins, nor our Savior by His memory of it, can be faulted on the basis of the record. When the work of cleansing has been done, it may be well said “There shall no wise enter into [the city] anything that defiles.” Revelation 21:27.

These conditions are the same as the conditions of being sealed. What is this mystery that Paul speaks about and that is finished during the days of the 7th angel’s sounding? It is “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The message preached is both a “warning” and a “teaching” to “every man” that God intends for him to be presented “perfect in Christ Jesus.” When? Why, when the mystery is finished, just prior to the end of the world. It is prior to the end, for it is finished “in the days when he shall *begin* to sound.”

If the mystery is to be finished then, prior to the greatest time of trouble, then those that are “finished” will stand through that time. We are little surprised that the completion of the work is everywhere connected with being grounded and settled.

“But thou, man of God, flee these things [the love of money, foolish and hurtful lusts and] fight the good fight of faith. . . . Keep this commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, perfected [margin] unto all good works. I charge thee therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom;

‘Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine.’

For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. 2 Timothy 3:16-4:4

What kind of sound doctrine will they not endure in the last days? That which reproveth their love of money and their hurtful lusts. That which seeks their perfection and exhorts to holy living “until the appearing.” When Paul wrote to Laodicea, a city typical of our time, he wished for them that

That their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgement of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; Col 2:2.⁶

The Laodicean church lacked the very two things that the end-time church would be wanting as well, and was chosen accordingly to represent us. Their hearts were not knit together. What knits hearts together in the fullest fellowship?

Not sentimental religion, but rather true love combined with the rich experience of being assured by a full understanding. And an understanding of what? Of the mystery that was a few verses earlier defined as “Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Paul’s “great conflict” (verse one) was to bring Laodicea to the point of acknowledging first, and experiencing after, the truth of that mystery. At the time of his writing, they were turned away from that “sound doctrine” to fables.

This conflict of Paul’s might guide us in our efforts to promote revival and reformation. He had two burdens, both reflected in many of his passages regarding the end of time. The first, that the church might be knit together in love. The second, that they might be knit together by a common faith, fully assured of the truth of Christ’s indwelling.

Jesus preached the same.

Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have compassion, making a difference: And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh. Now unto him that is able to

⁶ See verse one where this is addressed to Laodicea.

keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy. Jude 21-24

We are to be presented “faultless” at the “presence of his glory.” But for that, we must be kept “from falling” during the most trying time of earth’s history. The promise is that God is able to keep us during that time. Then are we saved by our steadfastness? No, the credit goes entirely to “the mercy of our Lord Jesus.” And what is our part in preparing for this crisis? We are to “keep” ourselves “in the love of God, looking for the mercy.” Our focus on Christ’s character will have the desired effect on our own. Our growing love will make us steadfast.

Perfection is a theme of the book of Hebrews. Paul faulted the ceremonial rituals as ineffective in “that [they] could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.” Hebrews 9:9.

The rites were symbols of a truly effective service that could, on the contrary, “purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.” (v. 14) by the ministration of the blood of Jesus. This perfection was not that justification experienced by the Patriarchs, for they had not received this perfection when they died, “God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.” Hebrews 11:40.

The perfection offered in Hebrews 9 was the type of perfection that would have made the continuing sacrifices meaningless.

For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. For then they would have ceased to be offered because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. Hebrews 10:1-2, margin.

Once the cleansing process is finished, the worshippers will have no more, as it were, lambs to slay. Symbols could never clean a heart, and so the first tabernacle was to repeat its lessons over and over. The gospel has power, on the other hand, to bring a man to the state of being “wholly sanctified.”

And when the crop is thus readied for the garner, the work in the heavenly sanctuary will “have ceased . . . because that the worshippers once purged” have nothing on their consciences to be confessed. Their transgressions forgiven, their sins covered, they will be blessed especially to “whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” Ps. 32:2.

As God had purposed “before the foundation of the world” that the image of God should be restored in man after his fall, we will be “holy and without blame *before Him* in love.” Ephesians 1:4.

Then will be proclaimed the final sentence:

He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. Revelation 22:11

Some have used this passage as evidence that not all true Christians will have reached the state of “holiness” at probation’s close. Their argument separates the class of the “righteous” from those that are “holy.” Can this argument be used backwards? Are there unjust men who are not filthy?

Such a thought is common in the world where it is said “he is a good man.” But it is offensive to God. “You have wearied the Lord with your words. Yet ye say, ‘Wherein have we wearied Him?’ When you say ‘everyone that doeth evil is good in the sight of the Lord.’” Mal. 2:17.

Without Jesus there is no man that is not both unjust and entirely filthy. And the scriptures we have examined so far give us no ground for expecting a translated man to be unready for the trials that precede his translation.

Perfection at Conversion from the Cross

The finishing of the mystery, the ripening of the grain, the maturing of the mystical church body, the purging of the conscience from dead works, these are all processes. They have a commencement, a continuation, and a completion.

For afore the harvest, when the bud is perfect, and the sour grape is ripening in the flower, he shall both cut off the

sprigs with pruning hooks, and take away and cut down the branches. Isaiah 18:5. See Mark 4:28.

While we have examined those passages that point to Christ’s coming and find there that the work has been done, these passages can not be made to undermine the truth that the Christian is called to an imputed perfection, and to an imparting of perfection from the moment that he consecrates himself. It is long before “the harvest” that the “bud is perfect.”

Appendix A includes a list of passages that call the every-day Christian of yesteryear to be perfectly whole, accepted in the beloved, and indwelt by the Spirit. A man that is wholly surrendered has this “perfection” already. These, by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice, will be perfected in the resurrection, as other “just men” have been that were taken to heaven with Jesus. Hebrews 10:14; 12:23.

Appendix B contains a list of verses that place the goal of Christian maturity before the believer as something to be striven for. With these might be classed Paul’s confession

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. Philippians 3:12

This appendix contains a number of great promises. Claim them. Hold to them. Embrace them as the saints of old embraced the promises proffered to them. While few of these speak particularly about the last generation, they address issues that have been faced in all ages and will be faced again.

History arms us with examples of perfection gained, lost, and imputed. Appendix C includes a few notes and a list of texts on past perfection.

Finally, Appendix D is a cache for many verses that may be of service to the student wishing to dig deeper. Most of these passages do not speak about the last generation in particular, and some even speak of the perfection of God, or of inanimate objects. Taken together they convey the truth that there are several types of perfection spoken of in Scripture.

Summary

Abundant evidence in the New Testament affirms the truth that the last generation will reach a condition akin to the ripening of a harvest field. This condition is described in such detail in the several passages that it is possible to say several things about it with confidence.

First, it is the expressed hope of Peter, Paul, Jude, James, and John that the last generation will be like Jesus in ways no other generation of believers has been.

Second, this condition is associated with an end of the judgement in the heavenly sanctuary and will, when reached, conclude the continued need for that judgement.

Third, the Spirit of Prophecy and the gifts were given to the church in the last generation specifically to bring this condition to the church.

More than these, the Bible distinguishes between our part and God’s part in the process of “wholly” sanctifying the church. God’s part is to finish the work and to patiently wait for it to be accomplished. His responsibilities free us from concern regarding the timing of the close of probation.

The various prophets used a variety of terms to express the character of the last generation. These include:

"spotless"; "without spot"
"wholly" sanctified
"no guile"
"blameless"; "without blame"; "unblameable"
"without wrinkle"
"perfect as pertaining to the conscience"
"shall do no iniquity"
"shall be like Him"
"ripe"
"perfecting holiness"*
"faultless"; "without fault"
"a perfect man"
"the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"
"without rebuke" "irreprovable" "unrebukable"

"mystery of God shall be finished"

These terms are used in conjunction with references to Christ's coming. Sometimes they are used in ways that show that God's people will experience a time of testing of their ripened condition just prior to the Advent. The following phrases, showing the relative timing of this ripened experience, are taken from the passages:

"the harvest is the end of the world"
"stablish your hearts; for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh"
"But the day of the Lord"; "the coming of the day of God"
"waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ"
"blameless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ"
"in the days of the 7th angel, when he shall begin to sound"
"be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus."
"stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness. . .at the coming of our Lord"
"to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight."
"keep the commandment without spot, unrebukeable, until the appearing"
"keep you from falling and present you faultless before the [his] presence"
"the remnant of Israel shall do no iniquity"
The 144,000 "are without fault before the throne of God."

Finally, the acknowledgment of these realities, that the last generation will experience the completion of the mystery of godliness, is a key point on which Laodicea is urged to unite. Indeed, the message to her includes a hint that those among her that "overcome" will in a special manner share in Christ's privileges because, as He says, they have overcome "even as I have overcome." Revelation 3:21.

We are far from even the acknowledgment of this.

---- the end ----

Appendix A

Deuteronomy 18:13 Thou shalt be perfect with the LORD thy God.

1 Kings 8:61 Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day.

1 Kings 11:4 For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father.

Ezekiel 16:14 And thy renown went forth among the heathen for thy beauty: for it was perfect through my comeliness, which I had put upon thee, saith the Lord GOD.

Matthew 5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought:

2 Corinthians 12:9 And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

Hebrews 7:19 For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God. {the bringing....: or, it was the bringing in}

Appendix B

2 Samuel 22:33 God is my strength and power: and he maketh my way perfect.

Psalms 18:32 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

Psalms 138:8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

Luke 6:40 The disciple is not above his master: but every one that is perfect shall be as his master. {that....: or, shall be perfected as his master}

John 17:23 I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.

1 Corinthians 13:10 But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

1 Corinthians 14:20 Brethren, be not children in understanding: howbeit in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men. {men: Gr. perfect, or, of a ripe age}

2 Corinthians 13:9 For we are glad, when we are weak, and ye are strong: and this also we wish, even your perfection.

2 Corinthians 13:11 Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfect, be of good comfort, be of one mind, live in peace; and the God of love and peace shall be with you.

Galatians 3:3 Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?

Philippians 3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

Colossians 1:28 Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus:

Colossians 3:14 And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness.

Colossians 4:12 Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, saluteth you, always labouring fervently for you in prayers, that ye may stand perfect and complete in all the will of God. {labouring....: or, striving} {complete: or, filled}

1 Thessalonians 3:10 Night and day praying exceedingly that we might see your face, and might perfect that which is lacking in your faith?

1 Timothy 3:2 A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach;

1 Peter 5:10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.

1 Peter 3:10 For he that will love life, and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips that they speak no guile:

Hebrews 5:14 But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil. {of full age: or, perfect} {use: or, an habit, or, perfection}

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God. Hebrews 6:1

Appendix C

At least a few of the references to perfection in history speak of an absolute not-sinning experience. Foremost among them would be references to Lucifer's pre-fall experience as typified by the king of Tyrus.

Son of man, take up a lamentation upon the king of Tyrus, and say unto him, Thus saith the Lord GOD; Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and perfect in beauty. Thou wast perfect in thy ways from the day that thou wast created, till iniquity was found in thee. Ezekiel 28:12-15

Compare the following two statements. A misunderstanding of the first gave rise to the latter. The Zion from which God has shined was not the polluted Jerusalem of Isaiah 1:21, but the church that directly precedes the coming of God with a devouring fire (see v. 3), the time when God is judge himself (v. 6).

Psalms 50:2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

Lamentations 2:15 All that pass by clap their hands at thee; they hiss and wag their head at the daughter of

Jerusalem, saying, Is this the city that men call The perfection of beauty, The joy of the whole earth?

Noah and Job, Precursors of the Last Generation

These erring and fallen men were yet called “perfect.” Both are made types in the new testament, or examples, for those that wait for Christ’s coming. Both are contrasted, by the Searcher of hearts, with all other men alive at the time. But the perfection of Job, particularly his faithfulness under intense pressure, was challenged by Satan and forms the plot of the book. For this reason its statements regarding how a “perfect” man views his own character are of interest.

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God. Genesis 6:9

There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. Job 1:1

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? Job 1:8

And the LORD said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil? and still he holdeth fast his integrity, although thou movedst me against him, to destroy him without cause. Job 2:3

If I justify myself, mine own mouth shall condemn me: if I say, I am perfect, it shall also prove me perverse. Though I were perfect, yet would I not know my soul: I would despise my life. This is one thing, therefore I said it, He destroyeth the perfect and the wicked. Job 9:20-22

The last statement rebukes all questions along the line of “do you know anyone that is perfect? are you perfect?” Reason with Job. He was accused of self-righteousness. His response was that he never claimed to be perfect. In fact, he argues, if I were perfect I would not know it. Job, unconscious that God had declared his perfection, admits to only one thing—He does confess that it is possible for a man to be perfect, and that the perfect man might receive judgments like his own. Self-righteous “perfection” could not stomach the test of Job, for it expects that it has earned God’s blessing. This was Saul’s perfection before, like Abram, his name was changed. Philippians 3:6.

Abram, Called to be Perfect

Abram, remembered perhaps too often for his falls and the affair that led to Ishmael’s birth, was called when Ishmael was four years old to be “perfect” and was then renamed Abraham, the father of all faithful.

And when Abram was ninety years old and nine, the LORD appeared to Abram, and said unto him, I am the Almighty God; walk before me, and be thou perfect. Genesis 17:1

His faith was “made perfect” after the call, by the things that he suffered when required to offer up Isaac.

Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? James 2:22

Appendix D

Other Passages on Perfection and How Christians may Attain It

Psalms 37:37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

Psalms 119:96 I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

Proverbs 4:18 But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Revelation 3:2 Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die: for I have not found thy works perfect before God.

James 3:2 For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body.

James 1:4 But let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

James 1:17 Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.

Hebrews 4:15 For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

Hebrews 13:21 Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. {working: or, doing}

Perhaps not Useful

Matthew 14:36 And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole.

1 Peter 1:13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; {to the end: Gr. perfectly}

James 1:25 But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed. {deed: or, doing}

Hebrews 7:28 For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore. {consecrated: Gr. perfected}

Perfection of Jesus or God the Father

Deuteronomy 32:4 He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.

2 Samuel 22:31 As for God, his way is perfect; the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all them that trust in him. {tried: or, refined}

Psalms 19:7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. {law: or, doctrine} {converting: or, restoring}

Luke 13:32 And he said unto them, Go ye, and tell that fox, Behold, I cast out devils, and I do cures to day and to morrow, and the third day I shall be perfected.

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Hebrews 2:10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

Hebrews 5:9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;

John 8:7 So when they continued asking him, he lifted up himself, and said unto them, He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her.

1 Peter 1:19 But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot:

1 Peter 2:22 Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:

Guile

Psalms 55:11 Wickedness is in the midst thereof: deceit and guile depart not from her streets.

John 1:47 Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

2 Corinthians 12:16 But be it so, I did not burden you: nevertheless, being crafty, I caught you with guile.

1 Thessalonians 2:3 For our exhortation was not of deceit, nor of uncleanness, nor in guile:

Exodus 21:14 But if a man come presumptuously upon his neighbour, to slay him with guile; thou shalt take him from mine altar, that he may die.

Psalms 34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

Appendix E

This appendix has been added as an afterthought. Some readers, it is likely, would be interested to know how Ellen White used the phrase "without an intercessor" and like ideas. These statements, where they should have inspired Bible study, have unfortunately often acted more like substitutes for study. Men have accepted them without nobly, and Berrean-like, searching the scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.

Nevertheless, some students with limited libraries or limited search abilities may be benefited, after reading the Bible study, to see the corroborating evidence from the *Testimonies*.

As Jesus moved out of the most holy place, I heard the tinkling of the bells upon His garment; and as He left, a cloud of darkness covered the inhabitants of the earth. There was then no mediator between guilty man and an offended God. While Jesus had been standing between God and guilty man, a restraint was upon the people; but when He stepped out from between man and the Father, the restraint was removed and Satan had entire control of the finally impenitent. It was impossible for the plagues to be poured out while Jesus officiated in the sanctuary; but as His work there is finished, and His intercession closes, there is nothing to stay the wrath of God, and it breaks with fury upon the shelterless head of the guilty sinner, who has slighted salvation and hated reproof. In that fearful time, after the close of Jesus' mediation, the saints were living in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. Every case was decided, every jewel numbered. Jesus tarried a moment in the outer apartment of the heavenly sanctuary, and the sins which had been confessed while He was in the most holy place were placed upon Satan, the originator of sin, who must suffer their punishment. {EW 280.2}

Then Jesus ceases his intercession in the sanctuary above. He lifts his hands, and with a loud voice says, "It is done;" and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as he makes the solemn announcement: "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." [REV. 22:11.] Every case has been decided for life or death. Christ has made the atonement for his people, and blotted out their sins. The number of his subjects is made up; "the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven," is about to be given to the heirs of salvation, and Jesus is to reign as King of kings, and Lord of lords. {GC88 613.2}

When he leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. God's long-suffering has ended. The world has rejected his mercy, despised his love, and trampled upon his law. The wicked have passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been at last withdrawn. Unsheltered by divine grace, they have no protection from the wicked one. Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human

The Lord is proving and testing His people. Angels of God are watching the development of character and weighing moral worth. Probation is almost ended, and you are unready. Oh, that the word of warning might burn into your souls! Get ready! get ready! Work while the day lasts, for the night cometh when no man can work. The mandate will go forth: He that is holy, let him be holy still; and he that is filthy, let him be filthy still. The destiny of all will be decided. A few, yes, only a few, of the vast number who people the earth will be saved unto life eternal, while the masses who have not perfected their souls in obeying the truth will be appointed to the second death. O Saviour, save the purchase of Thy blood! is the cry of my anguished heart. {2T 401.1}

passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old. {GC88 614.1}

None but the hundred and forty-four thousand can learn that song; for it is the song of their experience,—an experience such as no other company have ever had. "These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth." These, having been translated from the earth, from among the living, are counted as "the first-fruits unto God and to the Lamb." "These are they which came out of great tribulation;" [REV. 14:1-5; 15:3; 7:14-17.] they have passed through the time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation; they have endured the anguish of the time of Jacob's trouble; they have stood without an intercessor through the final outpouring of God's judgments. But they have been delivered, for they have "washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." "In their mouth was found no guile; for they are without fault" before God. {GC88 648.3} When Christ shall cease His work as mediator in man's behalf, then this time of trouble will begin. Then the case of every soul will have been decided, and there will be no atoning blood to cleanse from sin. When Jesus leaves His position as man's intercessor before God, the solemn announcement is made, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." Revelation 22:11. Then the restraining Spirit of God is withdrawn from the earth. As Jacob was threatened with death by his angry brother, so the people of God will be in peril from the wicked who are seeking to destroy them. And as the patriarch wrestled all night for deliverance from the hand of Esau, so the righteous will cry to God day and night for deliverance from the enemies that surround them. {PP 201.2}

When he leaves the sanctuary, darkness covers the inhabitants of the earth. In that fearful time the righteous must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor. The restraint which has been upon the wicked is removed, and Satan has entire control of the finally impenitent. The power attending the last warning has enraged them, and their anger is kindled against all who have received the message. The people of God are then plunged into those scenes of affliction and distress described by the prophet as the time of Jacob's trouble:— {4SP 432.1}

We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon coming. This is not a fable to us; it is a reality. We have no doubt, neither have we had a doubt for years, that the doctrines we hold today are present truth, and that we are nearing the judgment. We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality. When He comes He is not to cleanse us of our sins, to remove from us the defects in our character, or to cure us of the infirmities of our tempers and dispositions. If wrought for us at all, this work will all be accomplished before that time. When the Lord comes, those who are holy will be holy still. Those who have preserved their bodies and spirits in holiness, in sanctification and honor, will then receive the finishing touch of immortality. But those who are unjust, unsanctified, and filthy, will remain so forever. No work will then be done for them to remove their defects, and give them holy characters. The Refiner does not then sit to pursue His refining process and remove their sins and their corruption. This is all to be done in these hours of probation. It is now that this work is to be accomplished for us. . . . {CH 43.4}

I feel deeply in this matter. The truths you have been listening to from God's servants so attentively, are realities to me. They are not idle tales. The scenes of this earth's history are rapidly passing, and our probation is soon to close. Many of us who profess to be Christians are unready, and have not the preparation required to meet that fearful day, when in Heaven it shall be said, "He that is unjust, let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still; and he that is holy, let him be holy still." It is for us to bend all our energies to obtain the necessary preparation for that important time. We profess that we are preparing for a better country. Our faith says that we are merely passing through this land as pilgrims and strangers. We are not fellow citizens here. We are not dwellers upon the earth; because as a snare shall the day of the Lord come upon all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. We have not built our hopes here, in this world. Our actions have testified to our faith, that in Heaven is our enduring substance. Our manners and our actions should all be living preachers to testify that the things of this life are of minor consequence; that they must pass away, and that the things of the kingdom of God, the treasures that are reserved for the faithful overcomers, outweigh every earthly consideration, and every earthly treasure. {RH, March 29, 1870 par. 8}

If we would only study the truths of God's word, and do his will, we should know of the doctrine; we should not be ignorant of the important truths for this time. We believe without a doubt that Christ is soon to come; and believing this we feel a necessity upon us to plead with men and women to prepare for the coming of the Son of Man. We do not want that any of you should be of that number who shall call for rocks and mountains to fall on them to hide them from the face of Him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb. We want you rather to be of that number who shall enter in through the gates into the city, who shall have an abundant entrance, and shall have right to the tree of life, and shall eat of its immortal fruit and pluck of its healing leaves. We want you to be of that company that shall bow before the throne of God crying, "Worthy, worthy, worthy, is the Lamb that was slain for us." We want you to be praising God with immortal tongues, and be saved with an everlasting salvation; and, therefore, we warn you to flee from the wrath to come. We plead with you to perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. It is perfection that is required; and nothing short of perfection will enable you to see the King in his beauty. {RH, April 12, 1870 par. 4} When you are all ready, having overcome your sins, having put away all your iniquity from you, you are in a condition to receive the finishing touch of immortality. Many are waiting and expecting that a more favorable opportunity than the present time will come when they can put away sin more easily than now; and when it will not require so great humility and sacrifice on their part, and they will not have to make the effort they are required to make at the present time to perfect holiness in the fear of God. I fear that while they are thus waiting for the better time, their probation may close and they be found in their sins. For the sentence is to go forth: "He that is unjust let him be unjust still; and he which is filthy let him be filthy still; and he that is righteous let him be righteous still; and he that is holy let him be holy still." This may be spoken in Heaven in your case, and the work for you will have been done, and you lost, eternally lost. {RH, April 12, 1870 par. 5}

Those who corrupt their own bodies cannot enjoy the favor of God, until they sincerely repent, make an entire reform, and perfect holiness in the fear of the Lord. None can be Christians and indulge in habits which debilitate the system, and bring on a state of prostration of the vital forces, which end in making a complete wreck of beings formed in the image of God. This moral pollution will certainly bring its reward. The cause must bring the results. Those who profess to be disciples of Christ should be elevated in all their thoughts and acts, and should ever realize that they are fitting for immortality, and that if saved, they must be without spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing. Their Christian character must be without a blemish, or they will be pronounced unfit to be taken to a holy heaven, to dwell with pure, sinless beings in God's everlasting kingdom. {ApM 29.2}

The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life. Jesus was in all things made like unto His brethren. He became flesh, even as we are. He was hungry and thirsty and weary. He was sustained by food and refreshed by sleep. He shared the lot of man; yet He was the blameless Son of God. He was God in the flesh. His character is to be ours. The Lord says of those who believe in Him, "I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people." 2 Cor. 6:16. {DA 311.4}

Christ is the ladder that Jacob saw, the base resting on the earth, and the topmost round reaching to the gate of heaven, to the very threshold of glory. If that ladder had failed by a single step of reaching the earth, we should have been lost. But Christ reaches us where we are. He took our nature and overcame, that we through taking His nature might overcome. Made "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Rom. 8:3), He lived a sinless life. Now by His divinity He lays hold upon the throne of heaven, while by His humanity He reaches us. He bids us by faith in Him attain to the glory of the character of God. Therefore are we to be perfect, even as our "Father which is in heaven is perfect." {DA 311.5}

True sanctification is a Bible doctrine. The apostle Paul, in his letter to the Thessalonian church, declares, "This is the will of God, even your sanctification." And he prays, "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly." [1 THESS. 4:3; 5:23.] The Bible clearly teaches what sanctification is, and how it is to be attained. The Saviour prayed for his disciples, "Sanctify them through thy truth; thy Word is truth." [2 JOHN 17:17, 19.] And Paul teaches that believers are to be "sanctified by the Holy Ghost." [ROM. 15:16.] What is the work of the Holy Spirit? Jesus told his disciples, "When he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth." [JOHN 16:13.] And the psalmist says, "Thy law is the truth." By the Word and the Spirit of God are opened to men the great principles of righteousness embodied in his law. And since the law of God is "holy, and just, and good," a transcript of the divine perfection, it follows that a character formed by obedience to that law will be holy. Christ is a perfect example of such a character. He says, "I have kept my Father's commandments." "I do always those things that please him." [JOHN 15:10; 8:29.] The followers of Christ are to become like him,--by the grace of God, to form characters in harmony with the principles of his holy law. This is Bible sanctification. {GC88 469.1}

None will ever be called to perfect Christian character under more unfavorable circumstances than that of our Saviour. The fact that Christ lived thirty years in Nazareth, from which many thought it a wonder if any good thing could come, is a rebuke to the youth who consider that their religious character must conform to circumstances. If the surroundings of youth are unpleasant and positively bad, many make this an excuse for not perfecting Christian character. The example of Christ would rebuke the idea that His followers are dependent upon place, fortune, or prosperity, in order to live blameless lives. Christ would teach them that their faithfulness would make any place or position, where the providence of God called them, honorable, however humble. {MYP 79.1}

I entreat all, especially those who minister in word and doctrine, to make an unreserved surrender to God. Consecrate your lives to Him, and be indeed ensamples to the flock. Be no longer content to remain dwarfs in spiritual things. Let your aim be nothing short of perfection of Christian character. Let your lives be unselfish and blameless, that they may ever be a living rebuke to those who are selfish and whose affections seem to be upon their earthly treasure. God grant that you may be strengthened according to the riches of His glory, "with might by His Spirit in the inner man; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fullness of God." {2T 521.2}

Vital godliness is a principle to be cultivated. The power of God can accomplish for us that which all the systems in the world cannot effect. The perfection of Christian character depends wholly upon the grace and strength found alone in God. Without the power of grace upon the heart, assisting our efforts and sanctifying our labors, we shall fail of saving our own souls and of saving the souls of others. System and order are highly essential, but none should receive the impression that these will do the work without the grace and power of God operating upon the mind and heart. Heart and flesh would fail in the round of ceremonies, and in the carrying out of our plans, without the power of God to inspire and give courage to perform. {3T 188.1}

While God is a friend to the blind and the unfortunate, He does not excuse their sins. He requires them to overcome and to perfect Christian character in the name of Jesus, who overcame in their behalf. But Jesus pities our weakness, and He is ready to give strength to bear up in trial and to resist the temptations of Satan, if we will cast our burden upon Him. Angels are sent to minister to the children of God who are physically blind. Angels guard their steps and save them from a thousand dangers, which, unknown to them, beset their path. But His Spirit will not attend them unless they cherish a spirit of kindness and seek earnestly to have control over their natures and to bring their passions and every power into submission to God. They must cultivate a spirit of love and control their words and actions. {3T 516.1}

You have been ready to give of your means, but have withheld yourself. You have not felt called upon to make sacrifices which would involve care; you have not had a willingness to do any work for Christ, be it ever so humble. God will bring you over the ground again and again until with humble heart and subdued mind you bear the test that He inflicts and are wholly sanctified to His service and work. Then you may win immortal life. You may be a fully developed man in Christ Jesus, or you may be a spiritual dwarf, gaining no victories. My brother, which will you choose? Will you live a life of self-denial and self-sacrifice, doing your work with cheerfulness and joy, perfecting Christian character, and pressing on for the immortal reward? or will you live for yourself and lose heaven? God will not be trifled with; Christ accepts no divided service. He asks for all. It will not do to withhold anything. He has purchased you with an infinite price, and He requires that all you have shall be yielded to Him a willing offering. If you are fully consecrated to Him in heart and life, faith will take the place of doubts, and confidence the place of distrust and unbelief. {4T 214.1}

The controlling power of appetite will prove the ruin of thousands, when, if they had conquered on this point, they would have had moral power to gain the victory over every other temptation of Satan. But those who are slaves to appetite will fail in perfecting Christian character. The continual transgression of man for six thousand years has brought sickness, pain and death as its fruits. And as we near the close of time, Satan's temptation to indulge appetite will be more powerful and more difficult to overcome. It is only through obedience and continual effort that we shall overcome as Christ overcame. {TSDF 36.6}

In like manner we have fixed our minds upon the exceeding great and precious reward; and, in order to obtain it, we must have a perfect character. The angels of God are watching the development of character. Angels of God are weighing moral worth; and we are to obtain a fitness here to join the society of sinless angels. Do you expect that when Christ comes he will give you that fitness? Not at all. You must be found of him without spot, without blemish, or wrinkle, or anything like it. Now is the watching and trying time. Now it is the time to obtain a preparation to abide the day of his coming, and to stand when he appeareth. Do you say that you cannot do it because around you are so much sin and iniquity and corruption? I refer you to Enoch. He lived just previous to the world's being washed from its moral pollution, by a flood. He was on the earth at the time when corruption was teeming on every hand; and yet he bore the impress of the divine. He walked with God three hundred years; and he was not, for God took him, that is, translated him to Heaven. The flaming chariots of God were sent for this holy man, and he was borne to Heaven. Enoch had the witness that he pleased God. And this witness we can have. {RH, April 19, 1870 par. 10}

"The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?" He had been flattered for his amiable traits of character. He was willing to do good things, and he flattered himself that by his integrity in dealing with his fellow men he was fulfilling the law. The perfection of character he thought he possessed, ranked him in the same state spiritually as was Paul when, touching the letter of the law, he thought himself blameless. But no human standard can save a soul from death. God's standard must be seen, acknowledged, and followed. {RH, September 11, 1900 par. 2} "If thou wilt be perfect," Christ said, "go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me." Jesus needed the co-operation of just such men, whom God had intrusted with his goods. It is God's plan that those to whom he has given money or houses or lands shall act as his faithful almoners, relieving the sufferings of their fellow beings, and in this way winning them to the Saviour. {RH, September 11, 1900 par. 3}

Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He was manifest in the flesh. What was his work in this world?--To put away sin by the sacrifice of himself on the cross of Calvary. He was tempted in all points as we are, yet without sin. By his prayers and strong supplications, he overcame. In his human nature, he perfected a character after the divine similitude. By a life of perfect obedience to every requirement of God, he procured redemption for all who will be obedient. The divine nature is imparted to those who receive and acknowledge him as their Saviour. They become partakers of the divine nature, overcoming the assaults of Satan and escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust. Christ energizes by his Spirit those who seek him with the whole heart. {RH, August 31, 1905 par. 13}

Christ had laid aside his crown and his royal robe, he had stepped down from his throne, and had clothed his divinity with humanity. For our sakes he became poor, that we through his poverty might be made rich. He came into a world all marred and scarred by the curse. He took upon him humanity that he might know the infirmities and temptations of humanity, that he might know how to help and save men. The Captain of our salvation was made perfect through suffering. Was he not perfect before?--Yes. But he was made a perfect Saviour, learning obedience by the things which he suffered, that humanity might have a perfect character and be fitted for the society of the angels of Heaven. Man was not able, in his own behalf, to meet and overcome the prince of darkness; but Christ

overcame him in man's behalf and broke his power over the human race, so that through his merits they might be overcomers in their own behalf. {ST, May 20, 1889 par. 8}

We are to love God supremely and our neighbor as ourselves, and the Lord Jesus Christ has provided means by which we may fulfill the conditions upon which we may obtain eternal life. We cannot do evil, and work wickedness, and yet stand justified before God at last. Now is our day of probation, and we are now to perfect characters that will stand the test of the judgment. When Christ comes, there is to be no change of character; this mortal shall put on immortality, and this corruption shall put on incorruption; and those who are alive and remain upon the earth will be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, if their characters are blameless and pure. Transformation of character must take place during the precious hours of probation. {ST, August 29, 1892 par. 1}

The apostle says of those who profess to serve Jesus, "Ye are laborers together with God." All our ability, all our talents, are to be brought into working order in union with divine agencies, or we shall never be overcomers, and inherit eternal life. Self must die. Every practice, every habit, that has a harmful tendency, however innocent it may be regarded by the world, must be battled with until overcome, that the human agent may perfect a character after the divine pattern. The apostle says: "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God that worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings; that ye may be blameless and harmless [you must be blameless in order to be harmless], the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain." {YI, June 7, 1894 par. 9}

Christ is the Captain of our salvation. "It became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." The suffering that poured in upon the Son of God is beyond anything that man will be called to endure; yet Christ overcame, and perfected a spotless character. By his suffering and resistance he made plain to man that perfection of character can be obtained and maintained by humanity. {YI, December 28, 1899 par. 7}

The part man has to act in the salvation of the soul, is to believe on Jesus Christ as a perfect Redeemer, not for some other man, but for his own self. He is to trust, to love, to fear the God of heaven. There is a certain work to be accomplished. Man must be delivered from the power of sin. He must be made perfect in every good work. In doing the words of Christ is his only assurance that his house is built upon the solid foundation. To hear, to say, to preach, and not to do the words of Christ, is building upon the sand. Those who do the words of Christ will perfect a Christian character, because Christ's will is their will. Thus is Christ formed within, the hope of glory. They are beholding, as in a glass, the glory of God. By making Christ the subject of meditation, he will become the subject of conversation; and by beholding, we will actually be changed into the same image, from glory to

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glory, even by the Spirit of the Lord. Man, fallen man, may be transformed by the renewing of the mind, so that he can "prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God." How does he prove this?--By the Holy Spirit taking possession of his mind, spirit, heart, and character. Where does the proving come in?--"We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men." A real work is wrought by the Holy Spirit upon the human character, and its fruits are seen; just as a good tree will bear good fruit, so will the tree that is actually planted in the Lord's garden produce good fruit unto eternal life. Besetting sins are overcome; evil thoughts are not allowed in the mind; evil habits are purged from the soul temple. The tendencies, which have been biased in a wrong direction, are turned in a right direction. Wrong dispositions and feelings are rooted out. Holy tempers and sanctified emotions are now the fruit borne upon the Christian tree. An entire transformation has taken place. This is the work to be wrought. We see by experience that in our own human strength, resolutions and purposes are of no avail. Must we, then, give up?--No; although our experience testifies that we cannot possibly do this work ourselves, help has been laid upon One who is mighty to do it for us. But the only way that we can secure the help of God is to put ourselves wholly in his hands, and trust him to work for us. As we lay hold of him by faith, he does the work. The believer can only trust. As God works, we can work, trusting in him and doing his will. {PH028 8.2}

The Lord designs that in the revelation of truth in all ages, the doctrine of grace shall be gradually unfolded to the comprehension of man. If we follow on to know the Lord, we shall know His going forth is prepared as the morning. His truth unfolds as the obscurity of dawn brightens into the radiance of noonday. We have been fully convinced of this fact in these meetings. {1MR 37.2}

I have received a blessing in hearing from human lips the presentation of rich truth indited by the Holy Spirit of God, presenting the requirements of God,--a holy and perfect obedience; showing that complete satisfaction has been given the Father in His only begotten Son as a Lamb without blemish and without spot; and that through the merits and virtue of Christ's character, all who will believe in Him may become complete in Him. {1MR 37.3}

The Lord Jesus took upon him the form of sinful man, clothing his divinity with humanity. But he was holy, even as God is holy. If he had not been without spot or stain of sin, he could not have been the Saviour of mankind. He was a Sin-bearer, needing no atonement. One with God in purity and holiness of character, he could make a propitiation for the sins of the whole world. . . .

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When the human agent feels his need of the Sun of Righteousness, when he comes to Jesus saying, Lord, I am sinful, unworthy, hopeless; save me, or I perish, he is accepted in the beloved, and his heart is warmed by the rays of divine love. In this sincere coming to Christ he opens the door to Him who has long been saying, "Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and

open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me." He is accepted by faith, and he knows what it means to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.--Ms 164, 1898, pp. 1, 4. ("Be Ye Therefore Perfect," typed December 14, 1898.) {6MR 5.1}

Holiness to God is glorifying Him by the entire conformity of the human will to the divine. There is a clean, pure mind. The soul and the body, as Christ's purchased possession, is to be presented to God without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing. This will prove the counteracting of Satan's

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ingenious work to ruin man. This is the re-creation of the human agent through Jesus Christ's merits; a clean thing is brought out of an unclean, restoring the image of God in man. The human agent is to go forward to reach the highest standard of perfection of character by beholding the character of Jesus Christ.--Letter 17a, 1893, pp. 6, 7. (To Edgar Caro, October 2, 1893.)

No unlikeness to Christ will be permitted in the holy city. The process of gaining perfection of character is to be carried on in this life, that we may be prepared for the future immortal life. It is God's purpose that His church on earth shall reach perfection. It is essential that His directions be strictly obeyed. The members are to help and strengthen one another. No self-exaltation or accusing or harshness are to be shown in our dealings with one another. We must purify our souls through love and obedience to the truth. We must act like saints toward one another. We must purify our souls through love and obedience to the truth. We must act like saints toward one another, preparing ourselves, drilling ourselves, to be without fault in character, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing.--Letter 67, 1905, pp. 2-7. (Written February 18, 1905, from St. Helena, California, to Brethren and Sisters.)

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humanity. He met all the temptations by which Adam was assailed, and overcame these temptations, because in His humanity He relied upon divine power. This subject demands far more contemplation than it receives. Christians strike too low. They are content with a superficial spiritual experience, and therefore they have only the glimmerings of light, when they might have far greater knowledge, when they might discern more clearly the wonderful perfection of Christ's humanity, which rises far above all human greatness, all human power. Christ's life is a revelation of what fallen human beings may become through union and fellowship with the divine nature. The more deeply we study the life and character of our Redeemer, the more clearly shall we see the Father as He is, full of goodness and mercy, love and truth. {18MR 331.4}