

How to Truly Repent and Prepare for the Seal of God

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In the book of Revelation, we find a fascinating account of those we call the 144,000, ***those who are they***, those who reflect Christ's character most fully during the tumultuous time of the end. These are the Ones who will be Sealed by God, protected during the time of tribulation. Here are some of those verses:

“Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads. And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel.” Revelation 7:3,4

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Zion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father's name written in their foreheads. ... **These are they** which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God.” Revelation 14:1-5

When I first began preparing this message, it seemed full of do's and don'ts. And then I began thinking, “***these are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.***” The hundred and forty-four thousand is really about **relationship**. While we know that the Lamb is a symbol, a reference to Jesus, in terms of this passage it might be better to think of Jesus as the Good Shepherd. “**These are they** which follow the Good Shepherd whithersoever he goeth.”

You see, being part of the 144,000 is really about an everlasting relationship with Jesus. Turn with me if you would to John 10 and let's look at various verses there. Jesus is using the analogy of a sheepfold, the sheep and the shepherd, comparing Himself to the door to the sheepfold and the good shepherd, and His followers to the sheep.

Jesus said

⁴ And when he [that is the shepherd] putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice.

⁷ Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheepfold.

⁹ I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture.

¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

¹⁴ I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine.

¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

²⁷ My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

²⁸ And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand.

Jesus' true followers, His sheep, recognize His voice. They long to be with Him. Following the Master, the Shepherd is not drudgery; it is not painful. Rather it is painful to follow thieves and robbers, false doctrines, the deceptions of Satan. Those are what hurt us, *not* Jesus.

To be part of the 144,000 is to reflect Jesus, to think like Jesus, to understand what Jesus loves and know those things which Jesus considers to be abominations and detestable, and to be free from sin. We must look like Jesus (though not in terms of clothing since we really don't know what He wore), walk like Jesus, smile like Jesus. We must be a clean vessel, free of sin, into which the Holy Spirit may be poured.

We are told that the marking in Ezekiel 9 parallels that of the Sealing in Revelation. Ezekiel 9 tells a very sad story about judgment upon Jerusalem, starting at the temple. God sends an angel to mark those who **sigh and cry** over the sins, the abominable things done in the nation, in Jerusalem and at God's temple, among God's professed people. What does sigh and cry mean? Within the context of the passage:

- To sigh is to: emit a long, deep, audible breath expressing sadness, tiredness, or a similar feeling. Synonyms include: exhale; groan, moan, mourn, lament
- To cry is to: shed tears, especially as an expression of distress or pain. Synonyms include: weep, sob, wail.

So to sigh and cry means to express sadness, lament, mourn, shed tears, weep. Over what? Over the abominations done in the country, city, church! Isn't that what Jesus did?

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matthew 23:37

Ellen White wrote:

The day of God's vengeance is just upon us. The seal of God will be placed upon the foreheads of those **only who sigh and cry** [lament and weep] **for the abominations done in the land.** Those who link in sympathy with the world are eating and drinking with the drunken, and will surely be destroyed with the workers of iniquity. "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and His ears are open unto their cry;" but "the face of the Lord is against them that do evil." Psalm 34:15, 16.

Not one of us will ever receive the seal of God **while our characters have one spot or stain upon them.** It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul-temple of every defilement. Then the latter rain will fall upon us as the early rain fell upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost. *Christian Experience and Teachings of E.G. White*, p. 187, 189

See! If you wish to be one of Jesus' sheep following Him and obeying His voice, then you need to reflect Jesus and lament and weep over the sins of our nation, our cities, our

churches. And in order to do so, you have to be able to *identify* the sins and the things that God detests. And when we identify the sins and find them in our own lives, then we need to confess, seek mercy and turn permanently from those sins. If we want to follow Jesus, then we would not want *any* spot or stain upon our characters.

So relevant questions are: "Is there anything that stands between God and me? Are there still unconfessed and unrepented sins in my life that Satan could use as wedges to reduce my faith and trust in God and thus induce me to sin? Is my confession and repentance adequate? Has the blood of Christ blotted out ALL my sins? Is there something in me that prevents Him from cleansing me? Will my character be of the sort that God will put His Seal on?"

White's book, *The Great Controversy*, Chapter 28, "Facing Life's Record" gives some very important information regarding our sins in the record books of heaven.

Every man's work passes in review before God and is registered for faithfulness or unfaithfulness. Opposite each name in the books of heaven is entered with terrible exactness every wrong word, every selfish act, every unfulfilled duty, and every secret sin, with every artful dissembling [dissembling means to conceal one's true motives, feelings, or beliefs]. Heaven-sent warnings or reproofs neglected, wasted moments, unimproved opportunities, the influence exerted for good or for evil, with its far-reaching results, all are chronicled by the recording angel.

The law of God is the standard by which the characters and the lives of men will be tested in the judgment. Says the wise man: "Fear God, and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man. For God shall bring every work into judgment." Ecclesiastes 12:13, 14. The apostle James admonishes his brethren: "So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty." James 2:12

As the books of record are opened in the judgment, the lives of **all who have believed on Jesus** come in review before God. Beginning with those who first lived upon the earth, our Advocate presents the cases of each successive generation, and closes with the living. Every name is mentioned, every case closely investigated. Names are accepted, names rejected. **When any have sins remaining upon the books of record, unrepented of and unforgiven, their names will be blotted out of the book of life,** and the record of their good deeds will be erased from the book of God's remembrance. The Lord declared to Moses: "Whosoever hath sinned against Me, him will I blot out of My book." Exodus 32:33. And says the prophet Ezekiel: "When the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, ... all his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned." Ezekiel 18:24.

All who have truly repented of sin, and by faith claimed the blood of Christ as their atoning sacrifice, have had **pardon** entered against their names in the books of heaven; as they have become partakers of the righteousness of Christ, and their characters are found to be in harmony with the law of God, their sins will be blotted out, and they themselves will be accounted worthy of eternal life. The Lord declares, by the prophet Isaiah: "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions for Mine

own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25. *Great Controversy*, pp. 482, 483

The Great Controversy, Chapter 39, "The Time of Trouble" lays out the future as well as the importance of the answers to the questions regarding our character during the testing time and concerns that we might have regarding our former sins:

As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their allegiance to God.

Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise: I "will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." Revelation 3:10. If they could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached.

They afflict their souls before God, pointing to their past repentance of their many sins, and pleading the Saviour's promise: "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." Isaiah 27:5. Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is: "I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me."

Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So, in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

The Great Controversy, pp 618-620

For years, I was under the impression that if one simply prayed a prayer of confession that all of one's former sins as recorded in the record books of heaven would be blotted out, that if we prayed the "sinner's prayer," our record slate would be automatically whitened through Christ's cleansing blood; it would be like a reset button on life's past.

Over the past few years, I have discovered that was not the right understanding of confession and repentance. Jesus is very willing to blot out our sins from the record

books, but until we have specifically confessed and repented of each one, asking for forgiveness and mercy and *making restitution* where possible, they still remain on heaven's record books, testifying against us on the Judgment Day.

We must ask for the memory of all our sins to be brought back to us and then confess those and ask for them to be forgiven and blotted out.

Yet God is very willing to forgive and blot out those sins if we follow God's process of 1) confession and asking for forgiveness, 2) making restitution (where possible) and 3) staying turned away from the sin (true repentance).

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." 1 John 1:9

"Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy loving kindness: according unto the multitude of thy tender mercies blot out my transgressions." Psalm 51:1

"I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and will not remember thy sins." Isaiah 43:25

"I have blotted out, as a thick cloud, thy transgressions, and, as a cloud, thy sins: return unto me; for I have redeemed thee." Isaiah 44:22

"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." Acts 3:19.

How to bring to remembrance past sins

One morning, in my quiet time, God shared with me how to bring to remembrance sins that need to be brought before His throne of grace.

Firstly, re-commit and surrender your life completely to Jesus Christ. Ask for the Holy Spirit to guide you and to bring to mind any and all sins that He wishes you to confess and repent of.

As each sin is brought to mind, confess it, sincerely apologize for committing it, ask for forgiveness and God's mercy, claim His promise that He will blot it out through the blood of Jesus Christ, and thank Him. Then move on to the next one. Do not linger or dwell on any given sin. God is not honored by that, but rather by our faith in His promises. Once confessed and forgiven, do not bring up that sin again. That shows a lack of faith that Satan will take advantage of.

Once you have dealt with the sins that immediately come to mind, dig deeper. Sin is defined as "transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4), i.e. the breaking of God's commands, so review God's commands to His people one at a time. Ask yourself how you might have committed a sin in breaking that command, not only in deed, but in intent or in your heart.

Jesus stated in His sermon on the mount,

"You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment. Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca,' is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell." and "You have heard that it was said, 'Do not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matthew 5:21, 22, 27, 28).

Start with God's obvious commands such as the greatest commandments: 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' " Luke 10:27, Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18.

Continue on to the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:3-17) going through each one in detail:

1. *You shall have no other gods before me.*
Have you held Jesus to be useless in your life? Have you sought the Godhead for yourself, meaning putting yourself and your opinions ahead of God and His commands?¹ Have you placed family, job, excitement or addictions, etc. before God in your life? Have you bought into Satan's lie that "God is on trial"² and that you and other humans will be His judges? ("I will be like the Most High" even sitting in judgment of the Almighty Holy One). Have you failed to acknowledge and worship the Creator?
2. *You shall not make for yourself any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down yourself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; And showing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments.*
Is there anything or anyone in your life: house, cars, wealth, celebrities, models, musicians, sports heroes, books, comics, movies, games, etc., that you focus more attention on and desire more than God? What posters do you have on the walls in

¹ One of the most profound things I read in the books of antiquity was a comment Jesus, the Word, made to Adam: "But the wicked Satan did not keep his faith and had no good intent towards Me, that although I had created him, he considered Me to be useless, and sought the Godhead for himself; for this I hurled him down from heaven..." *First Book of Adam and Eve* 6:7. An entire paper can be written on Satan's application of these two deceptions, but observe that Satan tries to get humans to do the same thing to Jesus, to hold Jesus to be useless and to usurp Jesus' position and authority in their lives, refusing to willingly submit and obey Jesus. Note that the Ten Commandments are to restore man's respect of God, His position and ways. http://www.bibleplus.org/endoftime/First_Book_of_Adam_and_Eve.pdf

² While we may live a life vindicating (proving true) God's law, we as finite sinful humans will *never* sit in judgment of the omnipotent righteous God. "Our faith is holy; our work is to vindicate the honor of God's law" {White, *Selected Messages*, Vol. 2, p. 29.3}

your home? What statues or figurines adorn your mantelpiece or your garden? What books do you have on your shelves? Each one affects those around it. Which Android or iPhone apps consume much of your time (FaceBook, texting, news, gaming, etc.)? What worries, hurts or unforgiven offenses do you spend more time on than focusing on God? Are these in essence idols in your life? Are there church leaders, theology professors, bible teachers who have taught things that are not well-founded on scripture? Have you put their teachings ahead of God's?

3. *You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that takes His name in vain.*

The LORD's name is YHWH.³ YHWH's title is God of heaven and earth. Have you taken His name in vain in cursing or made a profession to be a Christian, but misrepresented Him and His character?

4. *Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shall you labor, and do all your work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God: in it you shall not do any work, you, nor your son, nor your daughter, your manservant, nor your maidservant, nor your cattle, nor your stranger that is within your gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it.*

This commandment refers to God's seventh-day Sabbath, which runs from Friday sundown to Saturday sundown. Keeping it holy, that is set aside dedicated to God, is to be a sign of the covenant relationship you have with the Creator (Ezekiel 20:19) and applies whether you are an Israelite or a foreigner choosing to bind yourself to the Creator, the God of Israel (Isaiah 56:1-7). Is there a possibility that you not known about this or disobeyed Him in this regard? The seventh-day Sabbath was not done away with at the cross any more than the rest of the Ten Commandments. Do not ignore or avoid this commandment as it will become one of the major tests of loyalty at the end of time! Even as the seventh-day Sabbath was a requirement for Israel, so it will be a requirement for Spiritual Israel at the end time.⁴ One cannot be sealed without keeping God's Sabbath day.

5. *Honor your father and your mother: that your days may be long upon the land which the LORD your God gives you.*

Have you dishonored or been disrespectful to your parents? rebelled against them? Not taken care of them in their old age? Ignored them? Allowed unforgiven deeds to create resentment in you? Do you obey willingly or

³ When you see the word LORD capitalized, it is a substitute for the four Hebrew letters of God's name YHWH. Based upon the frequent use of the word "Adonai" before the YHWH, and thus using the same vowels, YHWH is most likely pronounced either Yah-ho-wah or Yah-weh. Scholars call these four letters the tetragrammaton. In modern Hebrew, it is actually YHVH, yud, hey, vav, hey.

⁴ For a complete list of the verses in the Bible pertaining to the Sabbath, visit <http://www.bibleplus.org/sabbath/sabbath.htm>. Did you know that the angels of heaven were bidden by God to keep the Sabbath with him before they made it known to any man on earth? See *The Book of the Law and the Testimony* 2:17-18, 31-32. And that the redeemed will keep God's Sabbath throughout eternity (Isaiah 66:22-23). Why not start now on earth? You can download a copy at: http://www.bibleplus.org/endoftime/The_Book_of_the_Law_and_the_Testimony.pdf

- grudgingly? Do you watch programs that promote disrespect of parents under the guise of comedy? Have you allowed one divorced parent to slander the other parent to you and then followed their pattern of disrespect?
6. *You shall not kill.*
literally: wantonly murder. Jesus expanded this command to include hatred for a person or the intent or desire to kill. Do you kill virtually through computer gaming? Remember that the subconscious does not know the difference, and often shooter games are used to desensitize soldiers to killing. Adam Lanza, the shooter in the Connecticut shootings is a good example of someone literally carrying out what his brain was programmed to do. Note: there is a time to kill such as in war or to execute judgement for an act that God says the criminal is to be killed for. In fact, it is failing to carry out the death penalty provision of laws as written in God's word and in the heavenly books that has resulted in much of the perversion in our world today.
 7. *You shall not commit adultery.*
This includes all forms of sexual immorality as defined by God, not mankind (see Leviticus 18, 20 and Deuteronomy 22 for extensive lists). Jesus expanded it to include the intent or desire, such as lust. Have you looked at pornography, played online sexual games, or lusted in your heart for someone? Have you supported same sex marriage and thus been lumped together with that group?⁵ "Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them." (Roman 1:32)
 8. *You shall not steal.*
Stealing is more than just the taking of tangibles. How about music, software, movies, violated copyrights, underreported on one's tax return, cheated on a test, etc. Have you "enjoyed the benefits" of something that belonged to someone else without compensating them for it? If so, then it is likely theft
 9. *You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.*
While technically this refers to the legal sense (i.e. in court or in any related process), it can be expanded to misrepresenting someone through slander, gossiping, etc. Have you followed Jesus' directives on how to resolve differences? Matthew 18:15-17.
 10. *You shall not covet your neighbor's house, you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is your neighbor's.*
This is a measurement of the desires of the heart. Have you dwelt on something that belonged to someone else, desiring it to be your own? Their job position, their car, their house, their bank account, their cars, boats, toys, their spouse, their circumstances?

⁵ For a detailed scripture compilation, see <http://www.bibleplus.org/homosexuality/homo.htm>

As you meditate on these commands, does the Holy Spirit bring related sins to mind and convict you of the need to confess those sins? Follow the Holy Spirit's impulse and confess quickly and thoroughly. God doesn't ask us to get mired in the muck of our sins, but rather to verbally confess and ask for His forgiveness.

From these commands, branch to God's other directives, character traits or behaviors that apply to His people. For example:

- *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.” Ephesians 4:31. “Do not go about spreading slander among your people.” Leviticus 19:16.*
[Slander is the malicious, false diminishment of another's reputation through verbal comments. Defamation is the same, but via writing. Those who slander or defame will not be in heaven. ⁶]
- *“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him; for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple.” 1 Corinthians 3:16-17; “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;” 1 Corinthians 6:19.*
[Have you abused the body that God gave you through injurious habits or neglect of good habits such as exercise, clean water, eating healthy produce, sunshine, sleep, a grateful attitude and dependency in God? Have you fallen into the trap of stacking prescription medications for an initial condition that could have been helped by healthy choices?]
- *“They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents.” Romans 1:29-30.*
- *“In God's church, ‘I fear that there may be quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, factions, slander, gossip, arrogance and disorder. I am afraid that when I come again my God will humble me before you, and I will be grieved over many who have sinned earlier and have not repented of the impurity, sexual sin and debauchery in which they have indulged.’ ” 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.*
- *“Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.” Revelation 22:14, 15.*
- *“You shall not make any cuttings in your flesh for the dead, nor tattoo any marks on you: I am the LORD.” Leviticus 19:28.*
[Most tattoos promote the side of darkness: skulls, demons, dragons, serpents,

⁶ The word slander is used 43 times in the NIV Bible, 10 times in the KJV. "Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." 1 Corinthians 6:9-10

scorpions, immorality, nakedness, fairies, dark angels or dark wings, the phoenix bird, lotus flowers, the yin-yang and other pagan symbols. If you have a tattoo, God says repent (turn from), confess your sin and don't get any more tattoos. If you can, have them removed. Honor God with your body.]

- *“Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, And try Me now in this,” Says the LORD of hosts, “If I will not open for you the windows of heaven And pour out for you such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it. Malachi 3:10.*
[Have you failed in returning to God for ministry purposes at least 10% of your net increase? Have you made sure to pay your tithes and offerings to a ministry or church uses funds efficiently for soul winning? Do make restitution if you failed here]
- *“But I say unto you, that every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.” Matthew 12:36.*
[Have you spoken frivolously or wasted precious time of the hours God gave you on this earth?]
- *“Ye have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet ye say, Wherein have we wearied him? When ye say, Every one that doeth evil is good in the sight of the LORD, and he delighteth in them; or, Where is the God of judgment?” Malachi 2:17.*
[Have you spoken ill of the LORD, doubting His word?]
- *“Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.” Matthew 21:21. “I will therefore that men pray every where, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting.” 1 Timothy 2:8. “And he that doubteth is damned if he eat, because he eateth not of faith: for whatsoever is not of faith is sin.” Romans 14:23. “...the just shall live by his faith.” Habakkuk 2:4. “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.” Hebrews 10:38.*
[How is your faith in God? Have you lived a life of faith, or skepticism? Do you wait for signs to appear before believing, or do you believe based upon simple faith in the Word of God and His messengers? Do you doubt the judgment and even if there is executionary justice or a lake of fire?]
- Husbands, have you loved your wives regardless of whether you felt they deserved it or not? Wives, have you submitted/deferred to your husband, regardless of whether you felt they deserved it or not? See Ephesians 5:22-29 and Colossians 3:18-19.
[Respect for and love of the other is not contingent upon your spouse's perfection. Do not make the mistake of holding onto that view, as it is doubtful that perfection will ever happen to the level of expectation of the doubter. Are you raising your children in the Lord? Deuteronomy 6:7, 11:19, Colossians 3:20-21.]

- What about this one? Sinning by rejecting God’s messengers, rejecting the Word of the Lord? The Bible is *not* the only Word of the Lord, and we would expect God to send additional messengers before the great and terrible day of the LORD.

White writes, “It is hardly possible for men to offer greater insult to God than to despise and reject the instrumentalities [messengers] He would use for their salvation.” White, *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 402.

“As soon as the books of record are opened, and the eye of Jesus looks upon the wicked, they are conscious of every sin which they have ever committed. They see just where their feet diverged from the path of purity and holiness, just how far pride and rebellion have carried them in the violation of the law of God.

1. The seductive temptations which they encouraged by indulgence in sin,
 2. the blessings perverted,
 - 3. the messengers of God despised,**
 4. the warnings rejected,
 5. the waves of mercy beaten back by the stubborn, unrepentant heart
- all appear as if written in letters of fire.”

White, *The Great Controversy*, p. 666.2 (numbers were added and boldface provided to emphasize these grave sins.)

There are many more verses in the Bible declaring God’s will for His people (See Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, especially the Beatitudes and the rest of His teachings), the guidance provided by the New Testament authors, the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy, the laws of cleanliness, proper behavior, and that delineate God’s people from the world in Leviticus that still apply to us today. As you study God’s word, you will become more familiar with His commands and directives for His people. Some of God’s commands were directed to a particular people, place and time. Others pertained to the sacrificial system (which pointed forward to Jesus’ life and sacrifice and which were done away with at the cross). If in doubt whether a command applies to you and whether a sin has been committed, *pray and ask God what His will is for you.*

Look carefully at the characteristics that God will not allow into His kingdom. If you find those in your life, repent of those. For example if slander, criticizing or gossiping has been a problem for you, repent of that and practice speaking well of others. If you have shown lack of faith or forgiveness by dwelling on worries, concerns, hurts, slights, or offenses, confess those, and forgive any offender, that God may forgive you. If you have read books, watched videos or played games with focus on the occult or magic such as a number of popular series that teach sorcery and the supernatural, repent that you have exposed your mind to those. If you vicariously thrill to the violence and sexual immorality in movies, books, virtual reality, computer games or other entertainment, repent of that.

Remember what the angel said, “If each is to be like Christ, they must stand sinless as Christ.”

Let God lead you and bring to mind sins that you need to confess. He will be faithful to lead you “in paths of righteousness, for His name’s sake.” (Psalms 23:3). God wants to

help you! He loves you and wants you to be among the 144,000. Can you hear His voice calling you?

Restitution

However, in some cases, it is ***not enough*** just to go to God to confess one's sins and ask for forgiveness. Whenever it is applicable and possible, we must go to the person or persons we have wronged and do our best to make it right. Making restitution is right and proper and God will note that you had true repentance when you confessed your sin. When it is **not** possible because of circumstances or time, we can go to God with sincere repentance and a peace or trespass offering, and He will forgive us.

However, let's say that while it **is** possible to go directly to that person (phone call, letter, email, visit) and confess the wrong you have done and do what you can to make restitution, but YOU DO NOT. What then? What does the Word of God say?

Notice the conditional **If**s in some of the following quotations:

...**if** the wicked restores the pledge, gives back what he has stolen, and walks in the statutes of life without committing iniquity, he shall surely live; he shall not die. Ezekiel 33:15.

In Exodus 22:1-17 God through Moses gives rules for proper restitution, and when it is required to make something good:

If a man shall steal an ox, or a sheep, and kill it, or sell it; he shall restore five oxen for an ox, and four sheep for a sheep. Exodus 22:1

If the theft be certainly found in his hand alive, whether it be ox, or ass, or sheep; he shall restore double. Exodus 22:4

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold." Luke 19:8.

White reinforces this need for restitution and what happens if we do or ***do not*** make restitution:

If we have injured others through any unjust business transaction, **if** we have overreached in trade, or defrauded any man, even though it be within the pale of the law, we should confess our wrong, and make restitution as far as lies in our power. It is right for us to restore not only that which we have taken, but all that it would have accumulated if put to a right and wise use during the time it has been in our possession. {*Desire of Ages*, p 556}

Hasten, my brethren and sisters, to bring to God a faithful tithe, and to bring Him also a willing thank offering. There are many who will not be blessed till they make restitution of the tithe which they have withheld. God is waiting for you to redeem the past. The hand of the holy law is laid upon every soul who enjoys God's benefits.

Let those who have kept back their tithe make an accurate reckoning, and bring to the Lord that of which they have robbed His work. Make restitution, and bring the Lord *peace offerings*. "Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me." **If** you acknowledge that you have done wrong in misappropriating His goods, and freely and fully repent, [then] **He will forgive your transgression**.—*Review & Herald*, Dec. 10, 1901. {CS 87.1}

We profess a great and holy faith; and our character must be in accordance with that faith, with God's great moral standard. Let us shun every mean action, all dishonesty, all overreaching; and if any one is guilty of wrong in this respect, let him confess his sin, and make restitution to the one whom he has wronged, and in addition bring a trespass offering to God, that when the times of refreshing shall come, his sins may be blotted out, and his name retained in the book of life. {*Gospel Workers*, p. 432}

If you who have engaged in this work of bruising and condemning have not heartily repented, then light, peace, and joy will not come into your souls. When you are careful, kind, and tender to your brethren in the same degree that you have been hard, unforgiving, and oppressive, you will confess your faults and make restitution as far as possible; and when you have done all on your part you may ask the Lord to do that which it is impossible for you to do--heal the wounds you have made, forgive you, and blot out your transgression. {*Testimonies for the Church, Vol. 5 p. 343*}

If in doubt as to whether or not you need to make restitution, ask God for guidance. He will direct you.

Conditional Forgiveness

One thing that Jesus emphasizes over and over in the Bible is that in order to be forgiven, we must forgive others. In the Lord's prayer, He teaches us to pray: Father, "forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors." Jesus told a parable of a king who called to account someone who owed him 10,000 talents. At the request of the debtor, he forgave him. But after finding out that that debtor threw into prison someone who owed him a much smaller amount, the king *reinstated the debt* to the previously forgiven man and threw *him* into prison to be tormented until he should pay back in full the debt. I have a whole sermon and paper on this important aspect of forgiveness⁷ so I won't go farther into it here, other than to say this is extremely important. Jesus at His crucifixion stated, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." Can we follow Christ's example?

Claiming that we cannot be free from sin

Many claim, "I could never overcome sin. Jesus and Adam had advantages that I don't."

But hear this carefully. *Having a bright glorious nature is no guarantee that you won't sin.* Satan in his glorious nature sinned. A third of the glorious heavenly beings chose to sin. Eve and then Adam in their perfect glorious natures chose to sin.

⁷ http://www.bibleplus.org/endoftime/The_Importance_of_Forgiveness.pdf

Jesus came in Adam's post fall nature, in the flesh of Adam's descendants, and He chose not to sin. We are all born in the flesh, in Adam's post fall nature, even as Christ was. It is what we do, what we chose, that determines whether we are sinning. We can choose righteousness, choose life.

Who are we to be like? Jesus! He is to be our pattern. He is our *pattern man*.

God WILL have a holy people, a sanctified people. Will that be you? Will you be among those chosen? Do your part!

Staying Clean

True repentance **requires the forsaking of the sin** and to **make restitution** as far as possible. It requires that we forgive others. As White has written a number of times, we must overcome every *inherited and cultivated tendency* to sin. Some of us have cultivated, that is, developed habits of sin, and while we may confess, we seem to keep going back to those sins.

Peter cautioned believers against falling back into sin:

“For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: ‘A dog returns to his own vomit,’ and, ‘a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire.’” 2 Peter 20-22.

Jesus said, “When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.” Matthew 12:43-45.

So what is the answer to overcoming habitual sins, secret sins?

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.”
James 4:7.

Note that without submission to God, to Jesus, without soliciting His help, the devil will not flee from you. Resisting the devil on our own power would be as a White said “ropes of sand.” We are going to fall. But if we call upon Jesus, He will send His angels to give us strength and rebuke the dark angels.

So to stay clean of sin, if you feel a tempting impulse coming, **resist the impulse and immediately call on the name of Jesus** for help. It may be just a few words, “Jesus Help Me!” but call on Him. Rebuke the tempter, and immediately feel the tempting impulse leave you.

If you are going to be Jesus’ friend, His sheep, following the Good Shepherd throughout eternity, why not call on Him now?

Let me dig deeper into that.

Let’s say you know you are about to enter a place or situation that through cultivated tendencies (habit) you know you will be tempted. This could be your bedroom, sitting down at a computer, going to your workplace, going to the beach, a mall, a college or university, wherever you know you have historically been susceptible and fallen into sin. Perhaps you were used to smoking after a meal or engaging in some other injurious habit.

Before you go there or be exposed to that situation, **ask God to send His angels to protect you while you are there. Then in the name of Jesus Christ and through the power of His blood rebuke any dark angels who are lurking around that are waiting to tempt you.** The dark angels will have to flee and you will find yourself relaxed and able to resist the habitual inclination.

Do you want to develop a close relationship with Jesus? Do you want to follow Him. Then ***call on the name of Jesus!***

It Takes Time

As you can tell from the foregoing, this process of confession, seeking forgiveness, turning away from sin and making restitution is not a few-minute process. You may spend hours on your knees, seeking the help of the Holy Spirit. You may spend a bit of money making restitution. You may have to make some phone calls to people who have no interest in hearing from you. You may have some letters to write. But you may rest assured that God is more than willing and able to help you in the process. And perhaps this restitution you make will bring about reconciliation with the person you hurt.

Give what you have to the LORD

Remember what Jesus said in John 10:

¹¹ I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.

¹⁵ As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.

If Jesus gave His all, even to the point of laying down His life, then should He expect any less from us? Jesus left the riches of heaven to come to this world so that we might be saved. Shall we not leave the riches of this earth for the glories of the world to come and to follow the Good Shepherd?

The last trait of those who are sealed that I'm going to cover is that of being poor in the things of this world, but being rich, having a heart of gold, in the eyes of God.

Turn with me to Isaiah 24 and 25. These refer to events that take place at the end of time. Isaiah 24 talks about the Lord making the earth empty, making it a waste, the earth shall reeling to and fro like a drunkard, the Lord punishing the fallen angels and the kings of the earth. Chapter 25 continues this vivid description and ends with the banqueting table of the LORD. But look at verse 4:

Isaiah 25:4 For thou hast been **a strength to the poor**, a strength **to the needy** in his distress, a refuge from the storm, a shadow from the heat, when the blast of the terrible ones is as a storm against the wall.

God provides more evidence of what He means to be poor or needy. In the Dream *Sitting by the Feet at the Throne of God*⁸ we read of the Father proclaiming:

“Let those who want fireballs, those who wait for a Sunday law, and those who want to see the events they have waited for so long, **give all they can. Those who give will need nothing**, because they will be moved from place to place on the wings of angels to serve as witnesses before the assembled universe, and to testify to the fulfillment of My promises. They will be placed where they will be unharmed, in the arms of safety to witness events never before seen.”

The Father instructs the following: “Place a squadron of angels around each of those **who are poor and have nothing but a heart of pure gold**. Protect and care for these who are My precious jewels, these who shine brighter than any sun. As the waters rise, move each of them to safer ground. As the earth opens, move them to solid ground. As the elements fall, move them to sheltered ground. Keep these precious gems shiny, because they will sit next to Me on My throne.”

Sounds awesome doesn't it, to be protected by angels from all the tribulation that is coming upon the earth? But note that the angels protect those who like Jesus gave their all. They gave all their resources to help the cause of Christ. They engaged with Him in His mission for the salvation of souls. They divested themselves of all that holds them to this earth and have nothing left but a heart of gold.

In the compilation *Last Day Events*, Ellen White also teaches this:

... if those who have of their abundance do not hear his voice, and cut loose from the world, and dispose of a portion of their property and lands, and sacrifice for God, **he will pass them by**, and call for those who are **willing to do anything for Jesus**, even to sell their homes to meet the wants of the cause. God will have a free-will offering. Those who give **must esteem it a privilege to do so**. {*Spiritual Gifts*, Vol. 2, p. 249.1} {1T 176.4}

⁸ <http://www.formypeople.org/dream/66-sitting-by-the-feet-at-the-throne-of-god/>

Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. . . . {LDE 261.1}

I saw that if any held on to their property, and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able. . . . But *if they desired to be taught, He would teach them, in a time of need, when to sell and how much to sell.*—*Early Writings*, pp. 56, 57 (1851). {LDE 261.2}

It is too late now to cling to worldly treasures. Soon unnecessary houses and lands will be of no benefit to anyone, for the curse of God will rest more and more heavily upon the earth. The call comes, "Sell that ye have, and give alms" [Luke 12:33]. This message should be faithfully borne--urged home to the hearts of the people--*that God's own property may be returned to Him in offerings to advance His work in the world.*—*Manuscript Releases*, Vol. 16, p. 348 (1901). {LDE 261.3}

Ellen White states that we should first give up all unnecessary houses and lands, especially as we move from the expensive homes to smaller ones and from cities to smaller towns. If you own houses and lands, retirement funds or savings that you are not using, or **as He bids you**, then give alms and to the LORD's cause. In the tribulation to come, you will lose everything anyways! Eventually you will be leaving even the villages for secluded places in the mountains.

This **LIVING BY FAITH** will be especially difficult for those who have a great need for security. It will also be difficult for the wealthy and self-sufficient because they have invested so much into what they own.

So you have to start with the end, the goal, in mind. Are you keeping your eyes on Jesus? Do you strive to be one of the 144,000? Do you long to follow Jesus for eternity wherever he goes? Then be "*willing to do anything for Jesus*" and "*esteem it a privilege to do so*" to join with Jesus in His mission to save souls.

Is God calling you?

God is preparing an end-time people, the 144,000, *those who are they*, who will be His representatives at the end of time.

Strive to Be Among the 144,000.-- [Rev. 7:9-17 quoted.] Those whom the Lamb shall lead by the fountains of living waters, and from whose eyes He shall wipe away all tears, **will be those now receiving the knowledge and understanding revealed in the Bible, the Word of God.** . . .

We are to copy no human being. There is no human being wise enough to be our criterion. We are to look to the man Christ Jesus, who is complete in the perfection of righteousness and holiness. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He is the pattern man. His experience is the measure of the experience that we are to gain. His

character is our model. Let us, then, take our minds off the perplexities and the difficulties of this life, and fix them on Him, that by beholding we may be changed into His likeness. We may behold Christ to good purpose. We may safely look to Him; for He is all-wise. As we look to Him and think of Him, He will be formed within, the hope of glory.

Let us strive with all the power that God has given us to be among the hundred and forty-four thousand (*Review & Herald*, March 9, 1905).

Will you answer God's call? Take time, right now, to begin the process of confession, asking for forgiveness and mercy, and making restitution as possible. Kneel down in reverence to your God. Kneel on a padded pillow so your mind can be properly focused. Pour out your heart to God. He will hear and cleanse you. Why not start now? And why not surrender all to Him?

Our closing song will be:

I Surrender All*

All to Jesus I surrender;
All to Him I freely give;
I will ever love and trust Him,
In His presence daily live.

Refrain:

I surrender all,
I surrender all;
All to Thee, my blessed Savior,
I surrender all.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Humbly at His feet I bow,
Worldly pleasures all forsaken;
Take me, Jesus, take me now.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Make me, Savior, wholly Thine;
Let me feel the Holy Spirit,
Truly know that Thou art mine.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Lord, I give myself to Thee;
Fill me with Thy love and power;
Let Thy blessing fall on me.

All to Jesus I surrender;
Now I feel the sacred flame.
Oh, the joy of full salvation!
Glory, glory, to His Name!

*Judson W. Van DeVenter, 1896

Addendum

For those who would like a copy of this message or missed my other message on forgiveness, go to my public FaceBook page: <https://www.facebook.com/BiblePlus.org/>. You can also read some other articles there that may be helpful for you.

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