

WHAT LACK I YET?

I'd like to start out this morning by reading a quote from *Ministry of Healing, page 143*, because as you will see, this is something many people need, and perhaps it's the kind of healing you need today. Here's what it says, "Everywhere there are hearts crying out for something which they have not. They long for a power that will give them mastery over sin, a power that will deliver them from the bondage of evil, a power that will give health and life and peace."

Isn't that just about what everyone in this world is looking for? They may not be longing for a power that will give them mastery over sin and evil, but they all want health, and life and peace, but the thing they may not realize is that in order to have the latter they need the former. In order to have health, and life, and peace they need to be delivered from the bondage of evil by the masterly power of God, and it could be that this is the cry of your heart this morning, to have a power that will give you mastery over sin, because without it, real health and life and peace is just an elusive dream.

I will tell you that this was the cry of my heart many years ago and it continues to be my heart cry today, that I would not just have this power on and off, but retain it in my everyday life. You see, there was a time after becoming a Christian that I lost my connection with Christ, not that I was doing anything outwardly that was wrong or doing anything wrong that people could see, but I knew my obedience to the law was not coming from my heart, and that my religion was just a round of ceremonies and merely outward obedience to law, and I think this is the way it is for many professed Christians today. To others in my church family it looked like I was living a successful Christian life, but I knew in my heart that there was something wrong; something was missing. I knew that much. My thoughts were corrupt, and our thoughts are inseparably connected to the heart. And when I think about it now, I was nothing more than a mere human moralist during that time. And did you know that if we are mere human moralists that we can't be saved that way? If you are a mere human moralist you might think that if your good deeds outweigh the bad then you will make it to heaven, but this is a fallacy cooked up by the father of lies and has no Scriptural support whatever. Just because you are a "Good person" doesn't mean your feet will leave the ground when Jesus comes. There's more to salvation than that, much more.

The rich young ruler we'll be talking more about in a few minutes thought he was a good person, but that wasn't enough, was it? When he came to Jesus he said, "Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?" And what did Jesus say to him? He said, "Why do you call me good? There is none good but one, that is God."

And the story goes on, but before we go any further with it I want you to notice what it says in *Selected Messages, book 1, page 364*, "He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law (**that's what a mere human moralist tries to do**), is attempting an

impossibility. Man cannot be saved without obedience (**and I want to emphasize that this is important. We can't be saved without obedience**), but his works should not be of himself; Christ should work in him to will and to do of His good pleasure. If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation, is represented by the offering of Cain."

Several years ago I did a series of sermons titled "The Cain Principle", and the Cain principle is defined this way in ***Signs of the Times, December 23, 1886***, "The Cain class of worshipers includes by far the largest number; for every false religion (**notice**) every false religion that has been invented has been based on the Cain principle, that man can depend upon his own merits and righteousness for salvation."

And really, we see the Cain principle operating in every single religion in the world today except true Christianity, and I say true Christianity because there are many professed Christians who are also trying to save themselves, I know because I was one of them, but if we have a true understanding of the Bible, we won't be fooled by this false idea. Christ has to work in us to will and to do of His good pleasure or it won't work; it'll be an impossibility.

In **Philippians 2:12, 13** Paul gives us a two part system for salvation. He says, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (**part one**). (**But then he tells us what part two is by saying**) For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

We do have something to work out, but we are not to do it on our own. We have a part and God has a part. That means we are to be co-laborers with Christ; the human and the divine must work together to make the work a success. We can't do it on our own, and God doesn't do it all for us; it's a partnership and both sides have to do their part in this partnership in order for it to succeed. And we should know also that it's not an equal partnership, because God's part is huge compared to ours, but just because that's true doesn't mean that we can be slackards when it comes to doing our part.

Let me read you two statements that will back this up. They're both from ***God's Amazing Grace***. The first is from ***page 319*** and says, "Man can accomplish nothing without God, and God has arranged His plans so as to accomplish nothing in the restoration of the human race without the cooperation of the human with the divine. The part man is required to sustain is immeasurably small (**and that means that God's part is immeasurably large, doesn't it?**), yet in the plan of God it is just that part (**that immeasurably small part**) that is needed to make the work a success."

And the second statement is from ***page 209***, "Your part is to put your will on the side of Christ. (**How do we do that; what does that mean? Well I'll tell you; it means we don't choose to live how our fallen flesh wants to live, but how God wants us to live. The Bible is God's will**

for us, and when we choose to do what it says, it's that same as God choosing for us and not we ourselves) When you yield your will to His, He immediately takes possession of you, and works in you to will and to do of His good pleasure. **(Isn't it pleasing to God when we do what the Bible says? Yes! That's how, through the Spirit, He does His good will in us)** Your nature is brought under the control of His Spirit. Even your thoughts are subject to Him. If you cannot control your impulses, your emotions, as you may desire, you can control the will **(and what is the will? The power of choice)**, and thus an entire change will be wrought in your life. When you yield up your will to Christ **(in other words, when you choose to do your part by allowing God to choose for you by obeying His word)**, your life is hid with Christ in God. It is allied to the power which is above all principalities and powers. You have a strength from God that holds you fast to His strength; and a new life, even the life of faith, is possible to you."

There's an interesting couple verses in **Romans 10** that seems to hit the nail on the head, which means that this problem of trying to save ourselves and also the desire for power to stop sinning is nothing new. Listen to what Paul says, **Romans 10:2, 3**, "For I bear them record **(speaking of the Jews)** that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge. For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God."

So, the question we must ask ourselves this morning is this; have I submitted myself unto the righteousness of God, or am I going about trying to establish my own righteousness? If I'm a mere human moralist and I realize that this is not working; if I'm caught up in this false idea of trying to reach heaven by my own works in keeping the law and have discovered that it's an impossibility, what am I supposed to do? What's the answer to this dilemma? How can I have true and real obedience to the law that comes from the heart? Because that makes all the difference in the world. And as a professed Christian, why am I having this problem in the first place?

Well, the answer is really quite simple, because God doesn't purposely make salvation hard to understand or to obtain; we do a good job of that all by ourselves. In ***The Desire of Ages, page 391*** it says, "As they **(that is, God's hungry, thirsting people)**, "As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus."

I actually had this happen to me over 40 years ago when I came to Christ through the prompting of the Holy Spirit without having fed on God's word by reading the Bible, but I still fed on the word because Jesus is the word of God, isn't He? That's what it says in the first chapter of John's Gospel. When the Gospel was presented to me I accepted Christ as my Saviour and new life was imputed to me immediately, and it destroyed my earthly nature; it's called justification. But it didn't take me long to figure out that I needed to literally feed on the written word in order to retain that new life and to keep the earthly nature under control, which is called sanctification, and that's imparted to us as we go along from day to day, and

it's what causes us to retain our justification, which is complete pardon from the consequences of sin, which is eternal death.

Now I'm going to stop preaching and go to meddling for a minute. Are you ready? Do you wonder why you're having a difficult time having obedience from the heart, if this is indeed your problem? It's because you're not spending adequate time in the word, it's just that simple! And I don't mean spending time in order to win an argument, or reading a devotional with your hand on the door knob, but quality time getting to know Jesus. If you spend time getting to know Jesus, the problem of not having heart obedience will vanish! Turn off the television, the radio, the videos, the Internet; put down the magazines, and novels, and newspapers, or whatever it is that's taking up your valuable time and feed upon God's word. I don't know what it is with you, but you know how you're spending your unprofitable time. The solution to the problem of being a mere human moralist is really very simple, but not so easy to implement once you've developed a few bad habits.

Acquiring a love for Bible study is kind of like getting off a flesh food diet and becoming a vegetarian. You may not relish the change in your diet at first, but if you persist for a little while the change will come and you will begin to like it. And it's the same way with Bible study; if you persist for a little while the change will come, and when it does you'll wonder where the time went as you commune with God.

Have you ever read about the struggle Ellen White had with meat eating? If you haven't, or if it's been a while, I'd like to read it to you because it's a good example of what we're talking about this morning in a spiritual sense.

Testimonies for the Church, Volume 2, pages 371, 372. She writes, "I have not changed my course a particle since I adopted the health reform. I have not taken one step back since the light from heaven upon this subject first shone upon my pathway **(Would to God all SDAs could say that, but instead, a step back church wide has taken place, and this is unfortunately true with both health reform and doctrine)**. I broke away from everything at once, from meat and butter, and from three meals, and that while engaged in exhaustive brain labor, writing from early morning till sundown. I came down to two meals a day without changing my labor.

"I have been a great sufferer from disease, having had five shocks of paralysis. I have been with my left arm bound to my side for months, because the pain in my heart was so great. When making these changes in my diet, I refused to yield to taste, and let that govern me. Shall that stand in the way of my securing greater strength, that I may therewith glorify my Lord? Shall that stand in my way for a moment? Never!

"I suffered keen hunger, I was a great meat eater. But when faint, I placed my arms across my stomach, and said, 'I will not taste a morsel. I will eat simple food, or I will not eat at all.' Bread

was distasteful to me. I could seldom eat a piece as large as a dollar. Some things in the reform I could get along with very well; but when I came to the bread, I was especially set against it. When I made these changes, I had a special battle to fight. The first two or three meals, I could not eat. I said to my stomach, 'You may wait until you can eat bread.' **(now listen carefully)** In a little while I could eat bread, and graham bread, too. This I could not eat before; but now it tastes good, and I have had no loss of appetite."

And friends, this is exactly the way you need to look at Bible study if it's something you don't relish. If you will say to yourself, "I will not do whatever it is that's destroying my love for the word of God until I can begin to enjoy it," you will soon find that it tastes good, and that it "will destroy the natural, earthly nature, and impart new life in Christ Jesus." And the outcome of that will be a power that will give you mastery over sin, a power that will deliver you from the bondage of evil, and give you a power that will give health and life and peace." Does that make sense?

Notice also what it says in *Youths Instructor, June 1, 1856*, "It may be difficult for you to love to study the word of God at once, when you have not been in the habit of studying it, but God will help you. Pray for His forgiveness for neglecting His holy word so long, and then beg of the Lord to give you love and interest in His word, be in earnest in the matter. When I lose my love for the Bible I am alarmed. **(And why was she alarmed? Because she says)** I know that I do not love Jesus if I do not love to search the Book that testifies of Him."

Now just think that through for a minute! Don't we find it easy to spend time with the people we love? And doesn't the time fly by all too quickly? If we don't love to search the book that testifies of Jesus, then we don't really love Him! That thought ought to wake us up, because if we don't love Jesus, we don't have Him abiding in our hearts, and if we don't have Him abiding in our hearts we don't have life, and if we don't have life we are lost. And so we see where a lack of Bible study leads, don't we? We have to have Jesus in the heart! There's no substitute for it. That's why **1 John 5:12** says, "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." Do you see how simple this is?

If you have a hard time studying the Bible, start out by reading *The Desire of Ages* along with the accompanying Bible verses that go along with each chapter and you will fall head over heels in love with Jesus, I guarantee it. And once that happens it won't be hard to obey the One you love; that I can tell you by experience.

For the most part I don't think we realize how valuable our time is, and that God expects us to use it wisely? Time is a talent, and there's no other talent that's more important, because what we do with our time directly affects where we're going to eventually end up.

Christ's Object Lessons, page 342 says, "Our time belongs to God. Every moment is His, and we are under the most solemn obligation to improve it to His glory. Of no talent He has given

will He require a more strict account than of our time.

“The value of time is beyond computation. Christ regarded every moment as precious, and it is thus that we should regard it. Life is too short to be trifled away. We have but a few days of probation in which to prepare for eternity. We have no time to waste, no time to devote to selfish pleasure, no time for the indulgence of sin. It is now that we are to form characters for the future, immortal life. It is now that we are to prepare for the searching judgment.”

After reading this you might be thinking, “something has got to change in my life”, and friend, I'm here to tell you that it can change, but only if you are willing to begin to redeem the time. In **Ephesians 5** the apostle Paul tells us we can redeem the time, but we have to start right away, because the opportunity to do so is fast slipping away from us, and we don't know if God will give us tomorrow, do we? Today is the day of salvation, not tomorrow. Today, if you if you will hear His voice, harden not your heart.

We need to get this in our heads; I need to get it in my head, because too much of our time is worse than wasted on things that really don't matter. I used to have a friend that would always say the same thing when a catastrophe of some kind happened in his life. He would say, “In a hundred years from now it won't matter.” And I thought that was a pretty good attitude to have. There's only one thing that will really matter a hundred years from now, and that is, what kind of character did we form while we were here. If we had obedience from the heart our character will be formed correctly, God will see to that, and if we were mere human moralists, you can be sure that it will be formed incorrectly, and we will not have a place in heaven and the earth made new.

Now back to the story about the rich young ruler. When he came to Jesus and said, “Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?” Now what was wrong with that question? Do you think he had good theology? No he didn't, because he was a mere human moralist! His emphasis was on self, was it not? “What good thing shall I do” in order to have eternal life, and Jesus replied to him by saying if he would enter into life he must keep the commandments. And the young man said, “All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?” He knew something was missing, didn't he? “What lack I yet.” Then Jesus hit his weak spot when He said, “If you will be perfect **(in other words, if you would have what you need to make it to heaven)**, go and sell what you have, and give to the poor, and you shalt have treasure in heaven: **(and here's the best part)** and come and follow me.”

What an invitation! And you know the rest of the story. Why did he go away sorrowful? Because he didn't have a heart to obey, that's the bottom line; he wasn't willing to give up what he thought was great riches and failed to see the true riches, which is Jesus in the heart.

Notice what it says about this young man in ***Christ's Object Lessons, page 392***, “The lover of self is a transgressor of the law **(whether they keep the law outwardly like this young man**

did or not). “The lover of self is a transgressor of the law. This Jesus desired to reveal to the young man, and He gave him a test that would make manifest the selfishness of his heart”, the part that no one but God could see.

And so, this young man had a heart problem, did he not? He said he had kept the law of God from his youth up, but it wasn't from the heart, and that could not save him, and neither will it save us. When he said, “What lack I yet” and Jesus revealed what his lack was, he made manifest what was truly in his heart; he was a lover of self and revealed the fact by walking away sorrowful. But how different things could have been for him. He could have had the privilege of being one of the disciples of Christ and he gave it all up for what? Something that was only temporary. He could have had eternal riches, but he thought it was too much of a sacrifice and went away full of sorrow because he couldn't have his cake and eat it too, as the saying goes.

We aren't told any more about this young man that I'm aware of, but having had the opportunity to receive eternal life and refused it, you can be sure that his life spiraled downward from that point on, because that's what happens to those who reject the truth. He had the opportunity to study the life of Christ by being physically with Him, but he chose not to, and friends, don't think that being with Christ through Bible study is just for the preacher and the Sabbath school teacher, because it's for everyone that longs for a power that will give them mastery over sin and the rewards that go along with it, and if we are too indolent to take the time to get better acquainted with Jesus, we will go away sorrowful as well, and we may never have another chance to recover from that bad choice.

The same choice the rich young ruler had comes to all of us when we realize our lack and want to have it supplied, and we will meet with eternal loss if we make the same mistake he made. Rather we must be willing to give up all for Christ and then be willing to follow in His footsteps and walk even as He walked.

I'd like to read something from one of my favorite books, ***Steps to Christ, page 46***, “What do we give up, when we give all? A sin-polluted heart, for Jesus to purify, to cleanse by His own blood, and to save by His matchless love. **(That's what the rich young ruler needed, didn't he?)** And yet men think it hard to give up all! I am ashamed to hear it spoken of, ashamed to write it.

“God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves. Man is doing the greatest injury and injustice to his own soul when he thinks and acts contrary to the will of God. No real joy can be found in the path forbidden by Him who knows what is best and who plans for the good of His creatures. The path of transgression is the path of misery and destruction.”

Oh friend, like the rich young ruler, you may have been raised from your youth up to keep the commandments and think because of that, that that will assure you a place in heaven, and yet you may not have a real connection to Christ, and that's a scary thought. There are many Seventh-day Adventists who pride themselves on being 4th or 5th generation Adventists who have been taught to be obedient to all ten of the commandments from their youth up, and believe they have been, and yet without obedience from the heart it won't save them. It reminds me of what Jesus said He will say to many professed Christians when He comes.

In **Matthew 7:23**, even after they say they've done God's will, He's going to have to say, "I never knew you, depart from me, ye that work iniquity." Did you get that? Jesus said He will say to many that claimed to have done His will, that He never knew them, and that what they did do was really iniquity, and it's all because their obedience was not coming from a heart of love for what Jesus has done for them. They were mere human moralists.

Do you realize that trying to keep the commandments without heart obedience is not really keeping the commandments? That's what we read earlier when the prophet said, "The lover of self is a transgressor of the law", no matter how blameless the outward life may be, because some people are good actors. The young man said, "All these things have I kept from my youth up", but clearly that wasn't good enough. He didn't know his own heart. He thought he was good to go, but he discovered that that wasn't the case, and after he found out and had the opportunity to do the right thing, he made the wrong choice; he didn't control his will by giving it to Christ.

Since we've been talking a lot about obedience from the heart, I'd be remiss if I didn't read the following statement from *The Desire of Ages*, page 668, because it's a classic. Here's what it says, "All true obedience comes from the heart. **(So, if there's a true obedience, then that means what? There is a false obedience, which doesn't come from the heart)** It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent **(if we will agree with God and yield to Him, that's our immeasurably small part)**, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."

And friends, when sin becomes hateful to us, it won't be hard to stop. Don't ask me how God accomplishes this; all I can tell you is He does! By faith we partake of His righteousness and then He works out His life within us. And so, faith is another important ingredient in the salvation process that we can't do without, and how does faith come to us? We're back to Bible study again, because **Romans 10:17** says, "Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God."

Steps to Christ, page 58, “It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. **(Sounds like the rich young ruler is being described here, doesn't it?)** By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?

“Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.”

We need to think about these things and examine ourselves if we would know whether or not our obedience is coming from the right place. Do you know what convinced me that the Bible is true, and what has given me faith to believe that it's true? First and foremost it was the fact that God changed me when I accepted Christ, and the other thing was Bible prophecy. I figured if God inspired holy men of old to predict with 100% accuracy that certain things were going to happen, and they did happen, and are continuing to be fulfilled, then all the promises in the Bible would also be fulfilled in my life as well, and they have been, and they are to this day. And this can be your experience if you want it enough to sacrifice whatever it is that's holding you back from making a complete surrender to the lover of your soul.

It could be that you're feeling like the rich young ruler right now and want to ask Jesus, “What lack I yet”, and if you are, the same answer comes to you as came to him. It might not be material riches that Christ is asking you to give up in order to follow Him, because most of us don't have it, but it's something, and only you know what it is, and if you don't know what it is, the Holy Spirit will reveal it to you if you ask in sincerity and with a willing heart to obey. Jesus said, “Whosoever he be of you that forsakes not all that he has, he cannot be my disciple.” Are you willing friend? He's not going to ask you to give up anything other than what's for your eternal good, so why not do what He says. That's the only thing that makes sense.

Accept the righteousness of Christ and give up on the idea of saving yourself by your own righteousness because you think you're a good person. There's only One that's good, and that's God, and if we don't understand that, we're just spinning our wheels, and sooner or later we're going to end up in the ditch.

Jeremiah said, “Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart.” If you want to have this true heart experience more than anything else, you can have it; it's yours for the taking, and once you have it you must keep it alive by communing with God by feeding upon His word. If you're really ready for this kind of experience, why not ask the Lord for it now, and He will surely not withhold it from you.