

BORN BLIND

Jesus had just been reasoning with the unbelieving Jews about His relationship to His heavenly Father and He told them plainly that He was in existence before Abraham was born. And they said, “What, how can that be”? And as I have thought about this, I have to wonder if my response would have been any different. I would hope so, because it all depends on the condition of the heart, doesn’t it? The Pharisees, because of the way they acted, were obviously not converted and hence they didn’t have the Holy Spirit, but another spirit, which means they had no spiritual discernment. And so their reaction was predictable, but not what it should have been.

And not only that, but Jesus claimed to be the great “I AM” that spoke to Moses at the burning bush and the One who led the children of Israel anciently, that is, He claimed to be the eternal presence and the self-existent One, and that must have really blown their mind. And by the way, this is not our subject today, but if you don’t believe that Jesus is the eternal presence and the self-existent One, then your salvation is in jeopardy for more than one reason. That’s how important it is to understand the true identity of Jesus. He’s not a younger God, an inferior God, a less experienced God, or a lesser God than is our heavenly Father. He is equal with Him and owes His eternal existence to no one, but has voluntarily taken a subordinate position in the Godhead in order to save us.

Turn with me for just a couple minutes to **John chapter 8**, because this is an important point that I don’t want to just pass by without comment. Jesus is here talking with the unbelieving Jews again and He told them plainly that He was the “I AM” of the Old Testament, and He said if they didn’t believe that, they would die in their sins, which means they would be eternally lost. Let’s read it. **John 8:24**. Jesus is speaking here and He says, “I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for except ye believe that I am *he*.” **(notice, the word “he” is italicized, which means it’s a supplied word by the translators and isn’t in the Greek manuscripts; you know, those manuscripts that have been preserved by a miracle of God we’re told in the Spirit of Prophecy. The translators put the “he” in there, they thought, in an effort to clarify the meaning, but it’s better to leave it out)**. Jesus said, “Except ye believe that I AM, ye shall die in your sins.” In **verse 28** Jesus emphasizes this again when He says, “When ye have lifted up the Son of man **(upon the cross)**, then shall ye know that I am *he* **(again, leave out the italicized “he”)**, then shall ye know that I AM **(and some of them did recognize that after His crucifixion)**, and that I do nothing of myself, but as the Father taught me, I speak

these things.”

And how do we know that Jesus was claiming to be the great “I AM” here? Because at the end of the chapter it says they took up stones to stone Him. They knew exactly what Jesus was saying and they didn’t like it, because they considered it blasphemy, and there’s an ever-increasing number of Adventists today that don’t like it, but they ought to know better, because this is very clear in the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy.

Now, there may be someone who would say, “You have no right to decide to drop these italicized words, because the Bible scholars who translated the Bible knew better than you do how to correctly interpret the Greek here.” And some of these same ones even go so far as to say that the translators of the KJV were inspired, but friends, they were not inspired; they were not prophets. They were simply biblical language scholars who in some instances didn’t choose correctly, which in some cases can lead to wrong conclusions. Most of these men were Sunday keeping, eternally burning hell believers, and believers in the immortality of the soul, among other errors they held, so sometimes they didn’t choose the best interpretation of the Greek and Hebrew Scriptures.

Would you be surprised if God’s last day prophet did the same thing I just did? I want you to notice something. In **John 13:19**, notice what Jesus said to His disciples during the Lord’s Supper as he began to expose His betrayer, “Now I tell you before it come, **(that is, Judas’ betrayal)** that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am *he*.” Notice how the “*he*” is italicized just like what we read in **John chapter 8**. Now let me read to you how Sister White quotes this verse in ***The Desire of Ages, page 655***. “I tell you before it come,” He said, “that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I AM”, and she stops right there. Not only does she leave out the italicized “*he*”, but she also capitalizes the “I AM”, showing that Jesus is most definitely Jehovah God, or the self-existent eternal One. There was never a time when Jesus didn’t exist and He wasn’t birthed out of the Father sometime in the past. He has always existed and He will always exist, and our eternal salvation is dependent upon that fact, and so it’s important, eternally important that we have a correct understanding of who Jesus is.

Just as these words of Jesus were true when speaking to the Jews and to the twelve, they are just as true for us today. If we get confused about the true identity of Jesus and come to believe that He is not the eternal presence and the self-existent God, because that’s what “I AM” means, then we are going to die in our sins, and if we die in our sins we will be eternally lost. We need to understand and believe that heaven gave its very

best when Jesus was born into this world. And if somehow Jesus wasn't equal with the Father, would heaven have given its very best? No!

The reason the religious leaders had Jesus crucified was because they believed He was a blasphemer, that is, that He was claiming to be God, and not just any God, but the self-existent eternal presence that spoke to Moses, and the great "I AM" when conversing with the unbelieving Jews. Notice what it says in **John 10:33**. The Jews said, "For a good work we stone Thee not; but for **(what?)** for blasphemy; and because that Thou, being a man, makest Thyself God", which in the Greek means "Supreme Deity." That's why they wanted to stone Him, and that's the main reason they had Him crucified. And friends, we are doing the same thing if we don't believe that Jesus is the supreme deity and the self-existent eternal God.

When the priests and rabbis took up stones to cast at Him for claiming to be the great "I AM", what happened? **John 8:59** says, "Jesus hid Himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by." Can't you just see those who had the stones in their hands looking all around for Him? All of a sudden He was gone. Where did He go? He just vanished, and they were frustrated in their purpose once again to see Him dead.

Now let's get back to the subject at hand. As Jesus passed by, or after He had disappeared, the Bible says He saw a man that was blind from his birth, and in **John chapter 9:2, 3** His disciples asked Him, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him." Then in **verses 6, 7** it says, "When He had thus spoken, He spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and He anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, and said unto him, go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent). He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing."

You see, the Jews believed that all sin is punished in this life. Every affliction a person had was regarded as the penalty for some wrongdoing, either of the sufferer himself or of his parents. And it's true that many times disease and suffering does result from the transgression of God's law, but this truth had become perverted, just like a lot of things today, and we should be very careful not to pass judgement upon people when bad things happen to them.

The truth is, Satan is the author of sin and its results, but he had fooled people into thinking that all disease was God's doing as punishment inflicted on account of sin. And so, not only was the person who was having to suffer an affliction of some kind thought of as a terrible person, but they were also looked upon as a great sinner, and it was this very misconception that paved the way for the Jews to finally reject Jesus. Because remember, what was prophesied of Jesus in **Isaiah 53** where it says He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"? That's the way the Jews looked upon Jesus, and even to this day, they reason that because He was "stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted", it had to be because He was a great sinner and therefore it was right to take Him out of the way by putting Him to death. They thought they were doing a good thing by delivering Jesus up to be crucified, because that's what blasphemers deserved, and that's what sinners deserved, and of course they didn't believe themselves to be sinners, oh no. They thought they were righteous and holy, even though they had murder in their hearts toward Jesus the whole three and a half years of His ministry.

But you know, if they were Bible students who saw the spiritual application of the Scriptures regarding this issue, and many others, they would never have become so deceived as to kill the Messiah. In the book of Job there's a lesson that would have corrected their error in thinking as they did. The history of Job had been given to show that suffering is inflicted, not by God, but by Satan, and can be overruled by God for purposes of mercy. That's the way it was with the blind man. But the Jews didn't learn that lesson, and because of that they made the biggest blunder of all time. And so, the attitude of Job's friends in thinking that Job was suffering under the displeasure of God for some great sin he was guilty of, was repeated by the Jews in their rejection and crucifixion of Christ.

And not only that, but even Christ's own disciples held this same error in regard to the relation of sin and suffering. This falsehood was so ingrained in the minds of all Israel, that even the disciples were fooled by this lie of the devil. Because remember, it was the disciples who asked, "who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind." But Jesus said neither one. He was born blind that the power and glory of God might be revealed when he should be healed. When Jesus told the blind man to go wash the mud off his eyes and the man's sight was restored, that was a practical lesson for the disciples that would forever lay to rest the false teaching of the religious leaders upon this point.

And the other thing that stuck in the craw of the Pharisees was that Jesus healed this blind man on what day? On the Sabbath day. Jesus did many healings on the Sabbath day and the religious leaders called Him a sinner for doing so, because this was another subject that had become perverted by men who were destitute of the Holy Spirit. These men had unbalanced minds, and all fanaticism today results from the same thing, and there seems to be plenty of it to go around.

The neighbors of the young man who was born blind, and others who knew him before in his blindness, said, "Is not this he that sat and begged?" And do you know why they weren't sure it was him? It was because his countenance was so changed and brightened by this miracle, that he appeared like another man. As they looked at one another some said, "This is he;" others said, "He is like him." But the young man himself settled the question by saying, "I am he." Then he told his neighbors and friends all about the One who healed him and by what means he had been healed, and they asked, Where is He? And he said, I don't know, I never saw Him. I have no idea who He was. I just did what He said and I received my sight.

Then he was brought before a council of the Pharisees, and again the man was asked how he had received his sight. And in **verse 11** he answered by saying, "He put clay upon mine eyes, and I washed, and do see. Therefore said some of the Pharisees, this man **(they knew it was Jesus)** this man is not of God, because He keepeth not the Sabbath day." You see, the Pharisees hoped to make Jesus out to be a sinner by breaking the Sabbath, and if they could do that, it would also mean He couldn't possibly be the Messiah. Jesus, as the creator, was the One who had made the Sabbath, and of course He knew better than anyone else about all its obligations, but they just couldn't fathom the idea that their mixed-up traditions were a big part of the cause of their unbelief.

Oh, the religious leaders appeared to be very zealous for the observance of the Sabbath, and yet they were planning murder on that very day. So who were the ones who were really blind? They accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath, but were themselves guilty of murder in their hearts, and the Bible says, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." They were murderers before they committed the act. In **1 John 3:15** it says, "Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. And **James 2:10** says, if you break any one of the 10 commandments, you're guilty of breaking them all. So it wasn't Jesus or the blind man who were murderers and a hater of their brother and violating the spirit of the law, it was the very ones who were

supposed to be the example of righteousness to the congregation.

But in spite of the efforts of the Pharisees to discredit Jesus and the miracle He performed, many of the people were greatly moved by the hearing of this miracle and were convicted that the One who could open the eyes of the blind was more than a common man, and in answer to the charge that Jesus was a sinner because He didn't keep the Sabbath day according to tradition, the people said, "How can a man that is a sinner do such miracles?" So you see, on the one hand the religious leaders said that Jesus was a sinner, and on the other hand they couldn't deny that He performed a real miracle, and is it any wonder why people were confused? And isn't it the same today? People trust way too much to their religious leaders instead of studying for themselves and believing and obeying what the Bible plainly teaches.

Again the rabbis appealed to the blind man in **verse 17**, "What sayest thou of Him, that He hath opened thine eyes?" And, "He said, He is a prophet." Then in an effort to continue to deny that Jesus was someone special, the Pharisees asserted that the blind man was lying about having been born blind. That's why they called for his parents. And in **verse 19** they asked them, saying, "Is this your son, who you say was born blind?"

So, there was the man himself declaring that he had been born blind and had his sight restored, and his parents said the same thing, but the Pharisees would rather deny the evidence of their own senses than admit that they were wrong. That's how powerful prejudice is, and we should be very careful not to do the same thing when confronted by a teaching that is different than what we've always believed, because it's possible we could be mistaken. There's only One who took humanity that's infallible, and He's in heaven today pleading His blood in our behalf, and we should never forget that.

The Pharisees had one hope left, and that was to intimidate the man's parents. With an air of sincerity and piety they asked them, "How is it that your son now sees?" The religious leaders had already told the people that if anyone should acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah they should be put out of the synagogue for a period of 30 days. Now, you wouldn't think that that would be such a big deal, it's only a month, but that was only the beginning of their troubles, because during that time no child could be circumcised; their dead couldn't be properly lamented and buried, and of course other church members would look down their noses at them, and if that didn't scare the offender enough and bring him to repentance, then a heavier penalty followed. That's why the parents answered in **John 9:20, 21** by saying, "We know that this is our son, and

that he was born blind: but by what means he now seeth, we know not; or who hath opened his eyes, we know not: he is of age; ask him: he shall speak for himself." His parents knew exactly what had happened to their son, because he had already told them. And so by their claim of ignorance they shifted the responsibility from themselves to their son.

And you know, as I was considering this story I thought about how all this sounds very much like what's going to happen to seventh-day Sabbath keepers just before the Lord returns. Unless they conform to the customs of an apostate church and the civil authorities by the observance of the false sabbath, they will be visited with civil penalties, and as those penalties become increasingly sever and they refuse to disregard the fourth commandment for the first day of the week, it will finally be declared that they are deserving of death. All this may seem far fetched now, but as apostate religion once again rules the state, as in the past, and by the way, that's why the harlot woman of **Revelation 17** rides the beast, the harlot (the church) controlling the animal (the state or the civil power), and it will again happen just as Bible prophecy declares. And not only that, but we've been warned that even our own relatives will disown us in order to save their own skin, just like the blind man's parents, and to keep from being ostracized from their apostate brethren.

Well, after the answer the parents gave regarding their son, the Pharisees were beginning to face a dilemma, because the eyes of the multitude were beginning to be opened to the true character of those they had been taught to reverence and look upon as the voice of God. The people knew that Jesus had performed many miracles in public, and His work was always to relieve suffering. And so, the question in many minds was, would God do such mighty works through an impostor, as the Pharisees insisted Jesus was? Something just didn't add up, and so they questioned.

The Pharisees had enough sense to know that things were not going well for them and that they were giving publicity to the work done by Jesus. They couldn't deny that a miracle had been done. Here was the formerly blind man filled with joy and gratitude, as you can imagine, and he was freely relating his experience to everyone he met, and so again they tried to silence him in **verse 24** by saying, "Give God the praise: we know that this Man is a sinner." You see, the Pharisees knew that "This man" was Jesus, but the blind man had not yet laid his new eyes on Him, and so he answered, "Whether He be a sinner or no, I know not: one thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I see."

What a simple testimony that was doing its work on the minds of those who were listening to all this back and forth questioning. A personal testimony is a very powerful thing. When you share your personal testimony, people might disbelieve you or think you're a little crazy, but they can't prove you wrong unless your experience is not according to the word of God, and this man's testimony couldn't be disproved that way. And so, the Pharisees questioned him again, "What did He do to thee? how opened He thine eyes?" With all kinds of words they tried to confuse him so he might think himself deluded. And you can be sure that the angels of God were there to bring conviction to people's minds and also the evil angels trying their best to counteract the good that was being done.

You see, the Pharisees thought they were just dealing with another uneducated peasant who had been born blind, but they didn't realize they were also dealing with holy angels and the Holy Spirit that shone divine light into the chambers of the blind man's soul.

There's a statement in the Spirit of Prophecy somewhere that says, "the Holy Spirit can teach a person more in a moment than they can learn in a life time", or something to that effect, and that's exactly what happened to this blind man. Because he was born blind, all his life he had been at a disadvantage when it came to schooling, but he was learning quickly in the higher school, so much so that he befuddled the great men of learning.

Now, I want to make it clear that there's nothing wrong with education, but if we don't have spiritual eye sight, all the learning in the world will never cause even one person to be able to pass through the pearly gates into the kingdom of God. That's why in ***The Great Controversy, page 606*** we're told that in these last days, "laborers will be qualified rather by the unction of His Spirit than by the training of literary institutions." The prophet wrote these words because she knew that all the literary institutions in the last days would be teaching Babylonian doctrines. That's why God can't use men and women who have been trained by institutions that have lost their way. Rather He uses men and women who are moved by the Holy Spirit and are simple enough to do and believe what God says. Men and women who have not had their brains scrambled by being brainwashed with false teachings.

As these institutionally trained Pharisees, and by the way, that's why John the Baptist and Jesus weren't trained in the church schools of their day, and that's why we're told that history is being repeated today. As these Pharisees tried to make the blind man

disbelieve, God helped him to show, by his simple and pointed replies, that he was not going to be ensnared by these phony religious leaders, and he answered in **verse 27**, “I have told you already, and ye did not hear: wherefore would ye hear it again? will ye also be His disciples?” Then they reviled him, by saying, “Thou art His disciple; but we are Moses’ disciples. We know that God spake unto Moses: as for this fellow, we know not from whence He is.” But they could have known if they were honest men who wanted to know the truth. Jesus was very plain spoken and He had told them many times who He was and where He came from, but they were too worried about their own position as leaders of an apostate church to listen with an open mind. Some things never change.

The Pharisees claimed to be the expositors of Scripture, the religious guides of the nation; and yet here was Jesus performing miracles, and they confessed they were ignorant as to the source of His power, and as to His character and claims. And so, these men were not ignorantly blind, but willfully blind, and that’s what makes the difference. And that’s the reason these men are going to come up in that special resurrection of those who pierced Him.

Now listen to with what boldness and clarity the man answered his questioners. **John 9:30-33**, “Why herein is a marvelous thing, that ye know not from whence He is, and yet He hath opened mine eyes. Now we know that God heareth not sinners: but if any man be a worshiper of God, and doeth His will, him He heareth. **(That’s pretty good theology, isn’t it?)** Since the world began **(he says)** it has not been heard that any man opened the eyes of one that was born blind. If this Man were not of God, He could do nothing.”

The man’s reasoning was unanswerable and spot on, was it not? And the Pharisees were so taken aback by what this uneducated peasant said, that they had nothing more to say. Spellbound before his pointed words all they could do to try to save face was to kick him out of the synagogue and then try to scare the rest of the people by making them think their salvation was connected to their church membership. That’s a Catholic doctrine by the way, and they got it from the kind of Pharisees we’ve been reading about here.

Friends, this man’s salvation had nothing whatsoever to do with his relationship to the clergy or to the synagogue 2000 years ago, and it has absolutely nothing to do with your relationship to your pastor or your church today. Your only hope of salvation has to do with your personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, and if that is what it ought to

be, then you are a member of the body of Christ, and that's the only church that counts. As long as our names are registered in heaven, getting disfellowshipped from a Pharisaical apostate church down here will not cause even one soul to be lost.

Now this is not to say that being a member of a church down here has no value. But, your membership has to be in a church that is teaching and living the truth. If it isn't and you continue to hold membership, then you become corporately accountable for what the other members of that church are doing and teaching, but that's a subject for another day. You can study that out for yourself.

After this man responded to the Pharisees questioning, *The Desire of Ages, page 474* says, "For a few moments there was silence. Then the frowning priests and rabbis gathered about them their robes, as though they feared contamination from contact with him; they shook off the dust from their feet, and hurled denunciations against him, 'Thou wast altogether born in sins, and dost thou teach us?' And they excommunicated him."

What pompous, arrogant, self-important, condescending men the Pharisees were. They were not only spiritually blind themselves, but they were leaders of the blind. In God's eyes they were far worse off than the man born physically blind, because they were spiritually blind, even though they were in good and regular standing with their church.

Do you think this man was worried and discouraged about being excommunicated? Do you suppose he wondered if he had said the right thing? Do you think he might have had second thoughts about being so bold as to talk to the religious leaders the way he did? Perhaps. But did he do the right thing? that's the question. Absolutely he did!

When something similar happened to me nearly 26 years ago now, I know I had second thoughts. I wondered if I had said and done the right thing, but in retrospect, did I do the right thing? I have no doubts that I did. And as time has gone by I'm more sure than ever that I did the right thing as I have observed the downward spiral of the church I was once a member of. But in spite of that, I know my name is registered in heaven, and that's all that really matters.

In *The Desire of Ages, page 675* Jesus said, "I am the true Vine." The Jews had always regarded the vine as the most noble of plants, and a type of all that was powerful, excellent, and fruitful. Israel had been represented as a vine which God had planted in the Promised Land. The Jews based their hope of salvation on the fact of their

connection with Israel. But Jesus says, I am the real Vine. Think not that through a connection with Israel you may become partakers of the life of God, and inheritors of His promise. Through Me alone is spiritual life received.”

Well, Jesus heard what had been done to the man born blind, and He searched him out soon afterward and asked him, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” This was the first time the blind man looked upon the face of the One who had restored his sight, and what a difference he saw in the Countenance of Jesus when compared to that of the frowning faces of the rabbis and the perplexed faces of his parents.

To the Saviour's question, “Dost thou believe on the Son of God?” the man replied by asking, “Who is He, Lord, that I might believe on Him?” And Jesus said, “Thou hast both seen Him, and it is He that talketh with thee.” And with that, the first thing this man did was to cast himself at the feet of Jesus in worship; no questions asked. Not only had his natural sight been restored, but the eyes of his understanding had been opened as well. Christ revealed Himself to his soul, and he received Him as his personal Saviour.

So, did he do the right thing? I'll say he did. And friends, everyone who has the courage to make the same kind of decision that this man made will know that they did the right thing as well, because the Holy Spirit will witness to their spirit and give them the same assurance that this man received from Jesus. But here's the thing; the eyes of their understanding will be opened only as they move out in faith and not allow their feelings to get in the way of the weight of evidence that they see all around them. If this man did not do what he did, and say what he did; if he would have caved like his parents did, he never would have had the wonderful experience that he did, and it's no different with us today. Step up and do the right thing, no matter what everyone else does, and you will be blessed as he was blessed.

In **John 9:39** Jesus said, “For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made blind.” At first reading it almost sounds like Jesus was responsible for blinding the eyes of the religious leaders and that He wanted to keep them blind, but that's totally contrary to God's nature. God wasn't responsible for their blindness any more than it was His fault that Pharaoh's heart became hard. It all depends on the material God has to work with. When the sun beats on wax it becomes soft and pliable, but when it beats on clay it makes it hard, doesn't it? That was the problem with both Pharaoh's heart and that of the Pharisees. Their heart material was a result of their own doing; their own choices in life, and the result

was self-inflicted blindness. We don't want a heart of stone, but a heart of flesh, that way the Holy Spirit can mold and fashion it according to God's likeness.

Well, the same manifestation of divine power that had given to the blind man both natural and spiritual sight, had left the Pharisees in yet deeper darkness. Some of Christ's hearers, feeling that His words applied to them, asked, "Are we blind also?" And Jesus gave a very interesting answer in **John 9:41**. He said, "If you were blind, you should have no sin." In other words, if God had not made it possible for them to see the truth, their ignorance would involve no guilt. "But **(Jesus said)** now you say we see, therefore your guilt remains." And so, sins of ignorance God winks at, but once the truth is known, or even if one has had the opportunity to know, but has neglected that opportunity, then they are found guilty.

The clear evidence of Christ's divinity was right before their eyes, but they rejected the means through which alone they could have received their spiritual sight. And here's another thing; the Pharisees didn't think they had a need, and because of that they refused to come to Christ, and as a result they were left in blindness, a blindness for which they were themselves responsible. That's why Jesus said, "Therefore your sin remains."

When the disciples asked Jesus, "Who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind", it was not only significant that He corrected their faulty understanding when He said, "neither one sinned, but that the glory of God should be revealed", but He also told them something that we shouldn't just gloss over without serious thought. In **John 9:4** Jesus said, "I must work the works of Him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work."

Friends, the time is not far distant when human probation will close, and when that happens, the Holy Spirit can no longer bring conviction to the heart and the destiny of all will be forever fixed. Jesus said, "I must work while it is day" and if we are not blind; if we have received our spiritual eye sight, we will recognize in these words that "we must work while it is day" as well. We must work while there's opportunity to work, because that opportunity will not always exist.

In ***Testimonies For The Church, volume 9, page 135*** it says, "The end is near, stealing upon us stealthily, imperceptibly, like the noiseless approach of a thief in the night."

I think it's correct to say that we were all born blind, that's why we must be born again. But the question is, are we still blind today? Spiritual blindness equates to not having been born again; to being unconverted; to not having partaken of the divine nature; to having a knowledge of the truth, but not living and obeying it.

We may know the truth, but if we keep failing to live the truth; if we keep stumbling over the same sin and we don't stop; I have to tell you that we will never be saved in God's eternal kingdom. But here's the encouraging part, Jesus knows the circumstances of our souls. You might say, I'm sinful, very sinful, and you may be; but remember this one thing, the worse you are, the more you need Jesus. He will never turn you away if you just come to Him and ask for help. He bids every trembling soul take courage. He will pardon you freely when you ask Him for forgiveness and restoration, because you see, the gospel has two parts, not just one. It's forgiveness and restoration.

First He will justify you, or treat you as though you had never sinned, and that's a wonderful truth, but that's not all, He will then sanctify you, or give you the strength and motivation to actually live a holy life. In other words, He will give you the power to stop sinning, and I know that's a foreign thought to most Christians today, and an unpopular teaching even within Adventism, but it's true, and I will never apologize for telling you the truth. Only the Holy Spirit can open blind eyes to this truth, and once our eyes are opened, we have something to do, but God doesn't expect us to do it in our own human strength, which is really no strength at all.

In **1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24** the Holy Spirit says, "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." So, do we have to try to live a holy life in our own strength? No! I know this may be an over simplification, but all we have to do is make Jesus first and last and best in everything, and if we do that, He will see to it that we succeed.

I just read to you that "The end is near, stealing upon us stealthily, imperceptibly, like the noiseless approach of a thief in the night", and unfortunately most professed Christians don't realize how near the end is.

Just think of a few of the things that have happened in just the last few days and months. Just a few days ago the State of Utah legalized fornication, and for those of you who don't know what that is, it's sexual relations between unmarried persons. It's not like

that's not been happening for decades already, but when a State legalizes it, that says something about immorality rising to a new level.

In January of this year, New York State legalized infanticide. Abortion is bad enough, but to be able to legally murder an infant after it has been born is also a new low, and the law makers of that state cheered when it passed, and from what I hear, and make no mistake, Adventist leaders and institutions are being complicit with it in their support of abortion.

And have you noticed the push for a socialist form of government here in the good old USA lately? We have a couple new lawmakers in Congress who are pushing very hard for it to happen, and the Democrat party as a whole refuses to push back. A new generation of liberals are taking control and most of the 20 or so presidential candidates on the Democrat side for 2020 seem to be in agreement with this radical position. And haven't we been told that "every principle of our constitution will be repudiated"? Friends, this prophecy is being fulfilled as I speak and yet Seventh-day Adventists are living as if this world is going to continue on indefinitely.

You also here a lot about anti-Semitism lately, and once again it's coming from the liberal wing of the democrat party. Now it's true that the Jews have called down destruction upon their own heads when they said, "His blood be upon us and our children", but to hate a whole race of people for what their forefathers did is not in keeping with the gospel that is to go to the whole world. The Jewish nation may have been rejected as God's chosen people, but individual Jews can still be saved if they are willing to come to Christ for salvation.

And the last thing I'll mention is the absolute hatred for our current president from those across the aisle, and even from some within his own party. They are willing to make up whatever stories they can fabricate in order to bring impeachment charges against him, and no matter what you may think of Trump, he is our president, and **Romans 13** makes it clear that we should be praying for him.

Politics has always been a dirty business and that's why we're told not to get involved with it, but during the last 2 years it has reached fever pitch, and all these things are screaming at us to get ready, get ready, get ready, because soon Jesus will come to put an end to this present world as we know it, and I say praise the Lord! But, only those who have had their spiritual eyesight restored like the man born blind will be going back

to heaven with Jesus when He comes. So with this in view, we need to do what we can to prepare ourselves to be among the 144,000 souls that will see the Lord coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And if you want to be among that number, I invite you to kneel before the Lord our maker as we close with prayer.