

## THE BREATH OF THE SOUL

Today we're going to see how our prayer life can be enhanced by way of the sanctuary. We're told in the Spirit of Prophecy that the sanctuary is the central pillar of our faith; in fact, it's probably the only doctrine that wasn't borrowed from teachings that were held by other Christians in past ages. In other words, the sanctuary is unique to Adventism, and because of that, we should be knowledgeable and aware that the sanctuary is extremely important for us to study and understand.

I like to think of the pillars of our faith as holding up a platform, the central pillar being the sanctuary. This platform is perfectly level, meaning there are no errors or fanatical teachings of any kind, and on top of this platform is a beautiful structure made up of all the other truths we hold dear, and every board that makes up this beautiful structure is a teaching that can in some way be traced back to one or more of the pillars, because they're all related. In other words, if the pillars of our faith are messed with, it will affect the platform and the structure as well. If any of the pillars are kicked out from under us, it will tilt the platform and send us sliding right off, and if the central pillar is removed, the whole thing collapses.

Now, we could spend a lot of time talking about the various pillars of our faith, which are things like the non-immortality of the soul, the Ten Commandments, especially the Sabbath, and the three angels' messages, but the thing I want to focus on this morning is our prayer life and how that relates to the sanctuary, because prayer is the breath of the soul, and if we don't breathe spiritually we will die spiritually, it's just that simple.

Let me read you a couple short statements to show how important the sanctuary is and then we'll talk about our prayer life. ***The Great Controversy, page 409***, "The scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and the central pillar of the advent faith was the declaration: 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.' Daniel 8:14."

That is the longest time prophecy in the Bible, by the way, not the 2520 that some people place so much emphasis upon. If you'd like to know more about this you can go to my website at [gospel-workers.com](http://gospel-workers.com) and look for the sermon titled "A Time Prophecy That's Not A Time Prophecy." Don't be fooled by all the hubbub about the 2520, it's a distraction and an error that will tilt the platform and send you sliding off into other errors. I've seen it happen. Unless corrected, one lie always leads to what? Another lie.

This next quote regarding the sanctuary was a letter written to a Brother and Sister John Wessels. Sister White writes, "Each morning at six o'clock [at the Avondale School], Brother Haskell speaks from the Scriptures, giving a Bible lesson. This is free to all, and there is a goodly company out each morning; for it is a blessing to all. This study lasts for one hour.

These meetings are intensely interesting. The subject thus far has been the sanctuary question, and we are highly gratified to see the interest manifested. All are much interested in the way he presents the subject. He speaks in a clear, simple style, and brings in much scripture to sustain every point. He feels that altogether too little has been said upon this subject; for it is the central pillar that sustains the structure of our position at the present time." **Letter 126, page 4, May 18, 1897.**

So, what we're going to do today is walk through the sanctuary as a priest, because that's what the testimony of scripture says we are. In fact, the priesthood of all believers was one of the cardinal doctrines of the Protestant reformation. We don't need another sinful human being, such as a Catholic priest whose breath is often tainted with tobacco and alcohol and guilty of sexual perversion, to be our mediator. We can come boldly to the throne of grace through the merits of our Saviour, that's what we're told in **Hebrews 4:16**. And in order to prove this point I'd like to read what Peter says about it.

**1 Peter 2:5**, "Ye (**Christians**) also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." **Verse 9**, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light."

It seems only natural that we should, by faith, direct our prayers to the heavenly sanctuary, doesn't it? because that's where Jesus is. When Jesus went back to heaven, He didn't go up there to just sit around and twiddle His thumbs and wait for the day when He can come back. According to the book of Hebrews there's a heavenly sanctuary where Jesus ministers in our behalf, of which the earthly was a pattern of the true, and He is working and pleading His shed blood for every sinner who is willing to come to Him for a total transformation of character, and that's exactly what we need in order to live in the presence of a holy God and not die.

In **The Spirit of Prophecy, volume 1, page 274** it says, "The priest in the holy place, directing his prayer by faith to the mercy-seat, which he could not see, represents the people of God directing their prayers to Christ before the mercy-seat in the heavenly sanctuary. They cannot behold their Mediator with the natural eye, but with the eye of faith they see Christ before the mercy-seat, and direct their prayers to Him, and with assurance claim the benefits of His mediation."

Notice what it says in the book of **Daniel 6:10**, "Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed (**the writing about not praying to any other God but the King, or be thrown into the lion's den**), he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward (**where?**) Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime."

To Daniel, prayer was more important than his physical life. It didn't matter to him that the civil authorities said not to do it. It was a spiritual habit of his and he didn't allow anything to interfere with it, which begs the question, is prayer and Bible study and Sabbath observance so important to us that we would be willing to forfeit life in order to continue doing it? We may very well live long enough to be tested upon these points, and if it's not a spiritual habit now, guess what? it's highly unlikely that we will do it then. Now is the time for us to develop good habits and strong faith so when the time comes, we won't cave to the powers that be.

In *Review and Herald, May 3, 1892* it says, "Daniel did not seek to hide his loyalty to God. He did not pray in his heart, but with his voice, aloud, with his window open toward Jerusalem, he offered up his petition to heaven." Friends, we need to be more like Daniel than we are, amen? I need to be more like him than I am, and if we were, we would probably have been in heaven ere this, don't you think?

So why did Daniel pray toward Jerusalem? Because that's where the sanctuary was; that's where God ordained that His people should come and worship. Granted, there were problems with the church at Jerusalem and that's why Daniel and his friends were captives in Babylon through no fault of their own, but that's where Daniel, by faith, directed his prayers. Not to the leadership of the church or to the organization, but to the temple where God was represented as dwelling, and this is an example for us to direct our prayers to the sanctuary in the heavenly Jerusalem.

Go also to the book of Jonah, **Jonah 2:7**, "When my soul fainted within me I remembered the LORD: and my prayer came in unto thee, (**where?**) into thine holy temple." Now Jonah didn't know which way was up or down or east and west when he was in the belly of the fish, but that didn't matter, because God knew where Jonah was and He zeroed in on him from His holy temple as his faith ascended to the heavenly sanctuary.

In *The Desire of Ages, page 667* it says, "Every sincere prayer is heard in heaven. It may not be fluently expressed; but if the heart is in it, it will ascend to the sanctuary where Jesus ministers, and He will present it to the Father without one awkward, stammering word, beautiful and fragrant with the incense of His own perfection."

Jesus said the Pharisees of His day used to stand on the street corners and pray to be seen of men, but their prayers went nowhere. But when the heart is in it, then we can be sure that our prayer will be heard in the sanctuary above by the prayer hearing God and be answered according to His will. Not according to what we want, or what we think is best, but according to what God knows is best for us, or for those we're praying for.

In *Gospel Workers, pages 254, 255* it says, "Prayer is the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power. No other means of grace can be substituted, and the health of the soul

be preserved. Prayer brings the heart into immediate contact with the Well-spring of life, and strengthens the sinew and muscle of the religious experience. **(Now listen carefully to the next sentence)** Neglect the exercise of prayer, or engage in prayer spasmodically, now and then, as seems convenient, and you lose your hold on God.”

Wow! Is prayer serious? It’s serious, isn’t it? So why do we neglect it more than we should? Why do we begin our day sometimes and forget it, or when we just don’t feel like it, or think maybe we’ll do it later and later never comes? Since prayer is the breath of the soul, and there is a proper and an improper way to breathe for health, don’t you think there is a proper and an improper way to pray for spiritual health? How and what we breathe physically affects the health of the body? And if it physically affects the health of the body, then don’t you think that what and how we pray might affect our spiritual health as well? What happens when we take in a daily deep inhalation of impure air for instance? it affects our health, doesn’t it? Just so, if we don’t pray or pray spasmodically, now and then, wouldn’t we be more likely to inhale error or use some other means, other than the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy, to determine what we shall believe? And if we do, then that will naturally affect our spiritual health. Also, what if we take the word of the pastor over a plain thus saith the Lord? that will also be like inhaling impure air and that will affect our spiritual health as well, won’t it?

In *Ministry of Healing, pages 272, 273* it says, “In order to have good blood, we must breathe well. **(and in order to have good spiritual life, because the life is in the blood, we must pray well)** Full, deep inspirations of pure air, which fill the lungs with oxygen, purify the blood. They impart to it a bright color and send it, a life-giving current, to every part of the body. A good respiration soothes the nerves; it stimulates the appetite and renders digestion more perfect; and it induces sound, refreshing sleep. Superficial breathing **(and since prayer is the breath of the soul, we could say superficial praying)** soon becomes a habit, and the lungs lose their power to expand. Thus an insufficient supply of oxygen is received. The blood moves sluggishly. The waste, poisonous matter, which should be thrown off in the exhalations from the lungs, is retained, and the blood becomes impure. Not only the lungs, but the stomach, liver, and brain are affected. The skin becomes sallow, digestion is retarded; the heart is depressed; the brain is clouded; the thoughts are confused; gloom settles upon the spirits; the whole system becomes depressed and inactive, and peculiarly susceptible to disease.”

No wonder fresh air is one of the eight laws of health, right? And fresh spiritual air is just as important to our spiritual health. Sometimes when I’ve spent a lot of time studying and putting a sermon together, I get to the point where I have a hard time thinking clearly, so I’ll get outside and take a walk in the fresh air and when I come back I’m raring to go; my brain synapses are firing on all eight cylinders, and the Holy Spirit can then work and bring thoughts to my mind as I pray and study that will be of benefit to me and those who hear.

The point is, just as there is a proper way to breathe, there is a proper way to pray, and there's something about the sanctuary that can help us develop the proper technique, and so today we're going to walk through the sanctuary as a royal priesthood.

Turn with me please to **Psalm 100:1, 2**. You'll notice here that this is a Psalm of praise. "Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands. Serve the LORD with gladness: come before His presence with singing." Singing is an act of worship whereby we come before God in adoration and praise and gladness, and as we come before Him that way it prepares our hearts to enter His presence. It's not by accident that the church worship service has special music or a congregational hymn of some kind before the word of God is preached, and it should be no different in our personal time with the Lord. We may not actually sing, but we should come with a song in our heart at least, and be joyful and glad, because we are about to meet with our Creator. And so, this should be our attitude when we first come to Him in our daily devotions.

Look also at **verses 3, 4**, "Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture. Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise: be thankful unto Him, and bless His name." That's how we are to come, and that's the first step as we make our way through the sanctuary. Did you notice that the psalmist uses sanctuary language here? "Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise." And **Philippians 4:6** says we should, "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

As a priest we enter the sanctuary at the east gate with our backs to the rising sun. That's the only way in. All others are thieves and robbers Jesus said. We don't observe a special day of worship on Sunday, we come on the seventh-day Sabbath to worship the One who "made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is", and we come with "thanksgiving"! The word thanksgiving means "elaborate praise", or "an expression of approval, or to boast, or to rave." If we don't come before God with a song in our hearts and thanksgiving and praise on our lips it's like offering "strange fire." The rest of our prayer doesn't matter if we don't come in the right way, because our prayer will be nothing more than gimme, gimme, gimme, if you know what I mean.

Now I realize that sometimes we can come before God with a burden of heart that's almost overwhelming and we may not have the presence of mind to come with praise and thanksgiving upon our lips, I understand that, but normally in our daily routine we should come with the right attitude if we expect God to have the right attitude toward us.

So we are now in the court yard and the first thing we see is the altar of burnt offerings. The altar is where confession takes place. During Old Testament times when someone committed a sin, they were to bring a sacrifice and confess their sin over that animal, which

was then transferred to the sacrifice, and then that sacrifice was killed and placed upon the altar. Only then could the one who had sinned find forgiveness and be given another chance at eternal life.

I'm sure you know what it says in **1 John 1:8-10**, but let's read it anyway just in case you've forgotten. "If we say that we have no sin (**that is, while we're engaged in it, that's the context**), we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us."

The primary meaning of the word "confess" is "to assent", and to assent means "to agree with something, especially after thoughtful consideration." And so, confessing our sins is not so much telling God what we've done, He already knows what we've done. Rather, it's agreeing with Him that we understand that our thought or action was sinful and that we are helpless to withstand temptation in our own strength, and even if we have not sinned, we still come acknowledging that we have a sinful nature and that we are weak and in need of divine help to keep us from falling. So, once we have confessed our sins and the weakness of our fallen flesh, then we go to the laver.

Now, the laver was the water fountain where the priest washed his hands and feet before proceeding further in his walk through the sanctuary, and it's symbolic of having a clean heart before we walk any further, because we're getting closer to the Shekinah glory, or the visible manifestation of God's presence that dwelt between the Cherubim over the mercy seat. And so, the cleansing at the laver is kind of like being baptized and having our sins washed away or participating in the foot washing service during the Lord's Supper so we can be in the immediate presence of God and not die.

Go with me please to **Psalms 24:3-5**, because there's something interesting there. "Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation."

The word "hill" is the key word here, "Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?" In other words, whenever we enter into God's presence we are elevated in character. In **Steps to Christ, pg. 93** we're told that prayer doesn't bring God down to us, but bring us up to Him. That means that you can't be around God without it affecting you for good. When we ascend into the hill, or by faith enter the heavenly sanctuary, we climb above the mundane and commonplace and become more like Christ; He just rubs off on us. Have you ever noticed that you become like the ones you hang around? By beholding we become changed, that's a Biblical principle, and unfortunately it works against us if we spend time with the wrong people.

Notice what happened to the disciples as they spent time with Jesus in **Acts 4:13**. “Now when they (**the religious leaders**) saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus.”

Now this says a whole lot about Jesus, doesn't it? These apostate leaders were acknowledging that Jesus was not unlearned and that He was not ignorant, even though He didn't attend their lower grades church school, their academy or their colleges. There's something else that jumps out at me when I read this text, and that's boldness. You know, a lot of times it seems like we are afraid to be bold about the truth, and as a result, people have no idea that we're Christians. And I'm preaching to myself here, because there have been many times in the past when I have been timid, for whatever reason, and as a result I missed the opportunity to lift up Jesus that others might be drawn to Him. Because of their boldness, there was no doubt about where Peter and John stood and who was there mentor. Worldly people have no misgivings about the way they act and what they say to complete strangers, because they just assume everyone else is like them, and do you suppose it would make a difference if we would talk and act as if others we meet are Christians. I think it would be good to experiment with this to see what would happen. I can tell you already that some people will think you're just plain crazy, but I'm quite sure that there would be some, albeit few, who might think seriously about the One you've been with.

Let's take a look at what it says in **Psalms 51:7-10**. David says, “Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean: wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Make me to hear joy and gladness; that the bones which thou hast broken may rejoice. Hide thy face from my sins, and blot out all mine iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” This is what happens when we come into the presence of God for cleansing and a pure heart. We get washed, and let me tell you, it feels good to be clean, and once we're clean we can then move on in our walk through the sanctuary.

The Bible says the veil that separated the court from the holy place hung from five pillars. We're not told in the Bible or Spirit of Prophecy what these five pillars represent, because everything about the sanctuary represented something significant, but in my prayer I think of them as my five senses. Before I part that curtain and walk into the Holy Place I ask God to help me not to look at, listen to, taste, touch, or even smell that which would distract me from a life of total consecration to God. In this frame of mind then we walk into the Holy Place where we see the seven-branched candlestick to the left, or on the south wall, and it's there that we make our first stop and ask for the refreshing and outpouring of the Holy Spirit.

Notice what it says in **Leviticus 24:1, 2**, “And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, command the children of Israel, that they bring unto thee pure oil olive beaten for the light, to cause

the lamps to burn (**how often?**) continually.” We know from other texts in the Bible that the oil and the flame and the light they produce represents the Holy Spirit, and I’ll read that to you in just a minute, but what we want to understand about this is that the Holy Spirit is available continually, or at all times, and continual means inexhaustible. In other words, we can have no power and no spiritual discernment without the Holy Spirit continually living within. Because the Spirit is available continually, we need what He has to offer continually, and that’s the first thing we need before we walk any further through the sanctuary.

Turn to **Zechariah 4:1-6**, “And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep, and said unto me, what seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof: and two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof. So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, what are these, my lord? Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord. Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, **(and put your own name in there)** Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.”

Not by human might or human power can we live the Christian life or accomplish what the Lord has called us to do. It’s only through the Spirit that we can live for Christ; it’s only through the Spirit that we can rightly divide the word of truth; it’s only through the Spirit that we can have anything worthwhile to share with others, it’s only through the Spirit that we can stop sinning; and it’s only through the Spirit that we can be successful in whatever capacity the Lord has placed us.

We won’t take time to read it, but in Acts chapter 2 there’s another evidence that the oil and the flame and the light they produced at the candle stick represents the Holy Spirit, and that’s when on the day of Pentecost those that were assembled had tongues of fire descend upon their heads, and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and that’s exactly what we need before we take the next step in the Holy Place.

So why go to the candlestick before we take our next step and walk over to the table of showbread on the north wall? ***The Great Controversy, 599, 600*** “The Bible should never be studied without prayer. The Holy Spirit alone can cause us to feel the importance of those things easy to be understood, or prevent us from wresting truths difficult of comprehension. It is the office of heavenly angels to prepare the heart so to comprehend God’s word that we shall be charmed with its beauty, admonished by its warnings, or animated and strengthened by its promises.”

As we walk through the sanctuary it’s only after we’ve asked for the Holy Spirit for divine



enlightenment that we can comprehend what we're about to read from God's holy book, and even the presence of holy angels have something to do to prepare our hearts for what we're about to read. So, after we receive the Holy Spirit we walk over to the table of shewbread, or "the bread of the presence", which represents our dependence upon God for spiritual food and points us to Christ, "the living bread that came down from heaven." Now that we have partaken of the Holy Spirit, we are now in the proper frame of mind to understand the true meaning of God's word, and the same Spirit that inspired holy men of old will now inspire us. By the way, the Bible says that God's throne is in the sides of the north, you can read that in **Isaiah 14:13**, and it's no coincidence that the table of shewbread was also on the north side in the Holy Place.

Now, before we move on I want to digress for just a minute, because there's the argument by some that the Holy Spirit is not a personal being, not the third person of the Godhead, and that the Spirit is actually Jesus or an influence that proceeds from the Father and the Son, but I want you to consider something for a moment, because the sanctuary doctrine, being the central pillar of our faith, has something to say about this subject that we should understand.

Notice the following quote from the ***Day Star, March 14, 1846***. Ellen White is writing here to a Brother Jacobs who is the publisher of the Day-Star paper, and she says the following: "God showed me the following, one year ago this month: I saw a throne, and on it sat the Father and his Son Jesus Christ. I gazed on Jesus' countenance and admired his lovely person. The Father's person I could not behold for a cloud of glorious light covered him. I asked Jesus if his Father had a form like himself; He said he had, but I could not behold it; for, said he, if you should for once see the glory of his person, you would cease to exist." **(Then a little farther down in the article she says)** "I saw the Father rise from the throne **(which is in the Holy Place)** and in a flaming chariot go into the Holy of Holies within the vail, and did sit."

And so, the Father and the Son are both represented as being in the Holy Place, and that's an important point, because there were how many stacks of shewbread? Two, and these two stacks of shewbread represent the Father and the Son. Are you following me? Then a little farther down, Jesus, referring to His people says, "I am going to my Father to receive the Kingdom. Keep your garments spotless and in a little while I will return from the wedding, and receive you to myself. And I saw a cloudy chariot with wheels like flaming fire. Angels were all about the chariot as it came where Jesus was; he stepped into it and was borne to the Holiest where the Father sat."

Now here's the point: we're in the Holy Place where both the Father and the Son were before they moved to the next apartment of the sanctuary, and they are represented by the two stacks of shewbread. The Father leaves the Holy Place and goes into the Holy of holies, and then a little while later Jesus follows. So, in the Holy Place we have three

separate entities. We have the Holy Spirit at the Candlestick and the Father and the Son at the table of shewbread. Do you see that? This is another evidence that there are indeed three separate persons in the Godhead and not just two. There are very clear statements in the Spirit of Prophecy that state plainly that there are three persons in the Godhead, sometimes referred to as the heavenly trio, and this truth in the sanctuary, which is the central pillar of our faith, is another evidence that debunks the two-person Godhead theory.

There was a time early on in her ministry when people were saying Ellen White's visions were the result of mesmerism, or hypnotism, and notice what she says about this in ***Testimonies for the Church, volume 1, pages 71, 72***, "These things wounded my spirit, and wrung my soul with keen anguish, well nigh to despair. Many would have me believe that there was no Holy Spirit, and that all the exercises that holy men of God experienced were only the effect of mesmerism or the deception of Satan."

This was written in 1855! So, the idea that there is no Holy Spirit has been around for a long time. The meaning of the word "spirit" in the Greek refers to that which gives life, and that all spirits are living beings. It's that part of every person that no one can see, but nonetheless it's there, it's real, it's what makes us individuals. In other words, every being has a spirit, and if the Holy Spirit wasn't a being, then there would be no Holy Spirit, and that's the same thing Ellen White was told by those who wouldn't accept her visions, and she says clearly that the Holy Spirit is one being of the heavenly trio. If you would like more information about this you can go to my website and click on the sermon titled "Trinity or Trio." By the way, the Trinity is a Catholic doctrine and is more closely aligned with those who teach that the Holy Spirit is not a personal being. The Adventist church today teaches the trinity and its error, just so you know.

OK, back to our prayer walk through the sanctuary. Once we've partaken of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God we move to the altar of incense where we begin to intercede for others. In ***The Great Controversy, page 525*** it says, "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." Did you get that? Let me read it again and listen carefully. "It is a part of God's plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which He would not bestow did we not thus ask." This is a principle that holds true whether we are praying for ourselves or for others. God is a gentleman, and He will not force Himself upon anyone. Think of this when you're praying for that friend or family member, or for God's cause or for the leaders of our nation, which we should be doing by the way. Our prayers for others gives God permission to work in their lives. If not, we have a great adversary who will cry foul. What do I mean by that? I'll give you an example. When Cindy and I pray in our morning devotions together, we always give God permission to work in the lives of those who we know aren't praying for themselves. For instance, we have loved ones who we know are not studying and praying

for themselves, and if God intervenes in that person's life without them asking, the devil can come and say, what are you doing here God, you have no right to bless this person or keep me back from causing havoc in their life. Then God can say, it's true, they didn't ask, but Jack and Cindy prayed for them, and that's all the permission I need, get thee behind me Satan. When you look at it that way, how important then is intercessory prayer at the altar of incense? It's eternally important, isn't it?

Our last stop in our walk through the sanctuary is in the glory room, the most holy place. Here we look upon the ark of the covenant. Inside is the will of God for every person. In **Psalm 40:8** David says, "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." The Ten Commandment law is God's will for you. Because we have followed Jesus by faith into the most holy place, the Ten Commandment law has been written on the fleshly tables of the heart, and when it's in the heart to obey, keeping the commandments becomes a reality, and will not be a burden or an impossibility. The only time keeping the law becomes an impossibility is when we try to keep it in our own strength.

We're told plainly in ***The Desire of Ages, page 172*** that the one "who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility." When we want to do something, and that's what heart obedience implies, it's hard not to do it. But if it's not in the heart, obedience becomes a burden, and burden obedience will not save you.

Let's take a look at **1 John 5:3**, "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous." In other words, if we truly love God, keeping the Commandments will not be a burden; they will not be hard to keep. If we are finding it difficult to obey what is for our own good, and by the way, that's why God gave us the Ten Commandments, they are for our own good, then that is saying something about the condition of our heart and we should think seriously about finding the remedy, which is to receive a new heart. We must be willing to trade the carnal mind for a new mind, even the mind of Christ, and this necessary change can be brought about only by the working of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Godhead.

Prayer is one of the most important things we can do, and we need to realize this while we still have opportunity to take advantage of it. Notice what it says in ***Steps to Christ, pages 94, 95***, "The darkness of the evil one encloses those who neglect to pray. The whispered temptations of the enemy entice them to sin; and it is all because they do not make use of the privileges that God has given them in the divine appointment of prayer. Why should the sons and daughters of God be reluctant to pray, when prayer is the key in the hand of faith to unlock heaven's storehouse, where are treasured the boundless resources of Omnipotence? Without unceasing prayer and diligent watching we are in danger of growing careless and of deviating from the right path. The adversary seeks continually to obstruct the way to the mercy seat, that we may not by earnest supplication and faith obtain grace and power to resist temptation."

In other words, Satan is continually trying to keep us from reaching the mercy seat, and he will be successful if we neglect doing the things that lead the way to it. If we don't accept the sacrifice of Christ at the altar and lay self on the altar and receive forgiveness, and the cleansing at the laver, and the holy Spirit at the candlestick, and the word of God at the table, and if we don't have a burden for others at the altar of incense, we will not be inclined to heart obedience at the ark, and we will not receive the mercy that is there offered.

In our prayer walk through the Sanctuary, in the court we are justified; in the holy place we are sanctified; and in the most holy place we will be glorified when Jesus returns, because we have developed a righteous character through heart obedience to the law in the golden box, if indeed loving obedience is the motivating force behind all our actions. It's true that the Most Holy Place is a place of judgement, because that's the place where the Father and the Son moved on October 22, 1844; that's when the investigative judgment began according to **Daniel 8:14**. The law pronounces death upon the transgressor; but remember, above the law is the mercy seat where the presence of God is revealed, and from which, by virtue of the atonement, pardon is granted to the repentant sinner. When our name comes up in review before God and it's recorded there that we have been found worthy of eternal life because the shed blood of Christ covers our sins, then glorification will come, because those sins will have been blotted out.

So, let's do a quick recap, and I'll make it personal. In my morning devotions as part of the royal priesthood, I enter through the only opening into the courtyard, and that opening, or that door, is Jesus. In **John 10:9** Jesus said, "I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved", and as I realize that, how can I not enter His court with thanksgiving and praise? Then I see the altar and I accept anew the sacrifice of Jesus in my behalf and at the same time I lay my life on the altar, because Jesus said, unless I take up His cross and follow Him, I cannot be His disciple. Then I go to the laver and have my sins washed away, which then prepares me to enter the Holy place where I ask for the Holy Spirit to give me wisdom and understanding as I then partake of the word of God at the table of shewbread, and this is where I just pause for a little while in my walk through the sanctuary and actually take some time to read and study God's word. Then, because my heart is now better prepared, I can continue my walk by moving over to the altar of incense where I begin to intercede for those who may have asked me to prayer for them, and for my loved ones and personal friends. Then as I pray my prayers get all mingled with the righteousness of Christ, because that's what the incense represents, and this is what makes them acceptable to the Father. Remember how the cloud of incense ascended with the prayers of Israel? it represents Christ's righteousness that alone can make the sinner's prayer acceptable to God.

And friends, once we take advantage of all the truths contained in the courtyard and the Holy Place, then we can part the inner veil as a priest of the Most High God and enter the

Holy of Holies where we will have a heart to obey the Ten Commandment law contained in the Ark of the Covenant, because our mind is now prepared and empowered to obey from the heart.

The mercy seat is available there for all who have violated the law to find forgiveness and power to live a victorious Christian life, but mercy isn't available unless we've taken the previous steps. The new covenant has to do with God writing His law upon the fleshly tables of the heart, making it a delight to do His will, but that won't happen if we haven't experienced the court and the Holy Place first. So, that law in the Holy of Holies will either condemn you or vindicate you. Condemn you if you've tried to keep it in your own strength, which is an impossibility, or find you guiltless if your sins are covered with the precious blood of the Saviour.

When ancient Israel journeyed through the wilderness, the ark of the covenant went before them, and when they did what the tables of Stone in the golden box said, they could not be defeated by their enemies. Do we have an enemy? Absolutely, and if we obey from the heart what's in the golden box we cannot be defeated either, it's just that simple.

Once my walk through the sanctuary is complete, I then reverently back out of the sanctuary and never turn my back on God, and as I leave I will then be prepared for the activities of the day. Then my life can bring honor and glory to God, and people will take notice of me, that I have been with Jesus.

Friends, I've shared this information with you today that your prayer life might be enhanced. You don't have to pray through the sanctuary like this, but this might be a tool for you if you are finding it difficult to know how to pray and what to pray about.

**Psalm 77:13** says, "Thy way O God, is in the sanctuary." The way of salvation is there, and if we want a better understanding of how it all works, then we need to be familiar with the step by step process. Sister White didn't name one of her best loved books ***Steps to Christ*** for nothing. Come to God in the prescribed manner and you will have a new found faith that will equip you for service as witnesses for the Master and something that will help you to stand through the last great conflict that is right around the corner. Last day events are fulfilling rapidly and we need to make sure that we're standing on a solid and level platform that's held in place by the central pillar of our faith.

Look around, the world is fast changing, and it's not a change for the better, and if you don't want to change with it by partaking of its spirit, then you must take time to pray. Neglect prayer and you will lose your soul, it's that important. Take time in your prayer closet every day and you will not only be strengthened and empowered to victory in your own life, but you will make a difference in the lives of others by giving God permission to do what He would not otherwise do.