

## ***Sabbath School Today*** **With the 1888 Message Dynamic**

### ***Garments of Grace: Clothing Imagery in the Bible*** **Lesson 1: “In the Loom of Heaven”**

For thirteen weeks millions of Christians worldwide will be studying the Bible symbolism of “garments of righteousness.” There is only one gospel which is in harmony with God’s law. It is the gospel which teaches “that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us” (Rom. 8:4).

The 1888 messengers focused attention on justification by faith united with the unique Seventh-day Adventist understanding of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary—the one and only gospel which manifests itself in obedience to all the commandments of God (“... It invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God,” *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 92). All other “gospels”—whether Protestant, Arminian, or Catholic,—are “anti-law” gospels.

It has ever been Satan’s strategy in the great controversy to accuse God of demanding obedience to His law which he claims is impossible for sinners to render. He has been successful in convincing the vast majority of Christians that perfecting a character is impossible for those born in sin. Therefore Jesus could not possibly have been born like us and wrought out a perfect righteousness in order to save sinners. Therefore, Jesus’ imputed righteousness legally pardons the sinner when one activates the “offer” of salvation by believing. Justification by faith is the perfect righteousness of Christ. Distinct from that, say the “evangelicals,” is the work of the Holy Spirit in us, which sanctification never rises to the level of justification by faith. This is an “anti-law” gospel and a contradiction of the cleansing of the sanctuary truth.

The same righteousness by which Christ justifies a sinner also sanctifies him. There is no distinction between the two. “For Christ is the culmination of the law as far as righteousness is concerned for everyone who believes. For Moses writes about the righteousness that comes from the law as follows: ‘The person who obeys these things will find life in them’” (Rom. 10:4, 5, International Standard Version).

God’s gift of love in the forgiveness of sins moves upon the heart to believe so that Christ dwells within by faith through the Holy Spirit, and the sinner in reality obeys the law “because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us” and “love is the fulfilling of the law” (Rom. 5:5; 13:10).

E. J. Waggoner saw this Scriptural truth. “There is but one thing in this world that a man needs and that is justification—and justification is a fact, not a theory. It is the gospel. That which does not tend to righteousness is of no avail, and not worthy to be preached. Righteousness can only be attained through faith; consequently all things worthy to be

preached must tend to justification by faith” (*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 11, 1891, p. 74).

The “in the loom of heaven” statement, quoted in our lesson, taken from the *Youth’s Instructor*, is “interpreted” to mean the legal garments of Christ’s robe of righteousness. This is an attempt to distinguish legal justification from sanctification. “What a wonderful image of the righteousness of Jesus, the righteousness that covers anyone. ...” (Sabbath). “We must keep distinct, theologically, the imputed righteousness of Christ—the righteousness that justifies us—from the work that the Holy Spirit does in us to change us” (Thursday).

However, Ellen White used this beautiful metaphor in *Christ’s Object Lessons* and explains what she means by “in the loom of heaven.” “This robe, woven in the loom of heaven, has in it not one thread of human devising. Christ in His *humanity* wrought out a perfect character, and this character He offers to impart to us” (p. 311). “The loom of heaven” was “His humanity.” It is not alone a legal righteousness that He imputes to sinners. It is “a perfect character” He “impart[s] to us.”

She continues to explain, leaving no doubt that she teaches the gospel that is in harmony with God’s law. “By His perfect obedience He has made it possible for every human being to obey God’s commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged with His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness” (p. 312).

“The loom of heaven” is the “humanity of Christ.” In what kind of humanity did Christ come to earth? The Apostle defines it: “For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of *sinful flesh*, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (Rom. 8:3, 4). Christ lived on earth with like “sinful flesh” as ours. He “suffered being tempted” (Heb. 2:18). He “was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin” (Heb. 4:15).

Thus, He “condemned sin in the flesh”. He outlawed sin right where it had taken up residence, by denying *himself* (“not as *I* [ego] will, but as thou wilt,” Matt. 26:39) and living “the righteousness of the law.” He is the gospel in harmony with the law. It is this very “righteousness of the law” which “might be fulfilled in us”. There is only one righteousness, both pardoning and obedient, which is what Christ worked out for us “in the likeness of sinful flesh.” This will disprove the argument of Satan in the great controversy that the law cannot be kept by sinners. “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame” (Rev. 3:21).

It is an “anti-law” gospel which teaches a legal justification *alone*, that fails to grasp the self-centered motivation for the sanctified life. Such an egocentric concern is not according to the law of God. “... If, in the end, *I* am to be saved, if *I* do indeed ‘endure to the end,’ ... *I* make it into God’s eternal kingdom, then there isn’t a doubt in my mind that

it will be only because I am covered in the robe of Christ's righteousness, a righteousness that is woven in the loom of heaven and that covers me completely [legal justification]. / I can overcome sin, and through the grace of God / I have had many victories; / I can overcome character defects, ... / I have; / I can learn to love all sorts of people, even my enemies. ..." (Tuesday).

God never imputes a cloak for sin that covers it up. He whom God justifies He also sanctifies with the same righteousness. It is not alone an "as if we have never sinned, as if we have always been completely obedient to God's commands, as if we were as holy and righteous as Jesus Himself" (Monday) legal justification that Christ imputes to the sinner, but consistent with such perfect justification, He imparts the robe of Christ's righteousness that is like our own skin.

The lady wears a leopard skin coat, but it is not a part of her. It cloaks and hides what's underneath. But the leopard wears a leopard skin that is a part of him. This is justification by faith which is consistent with and parallel to the unique 1888 (E. G. White, A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner) understanding of the cleansing of the heavenly sanctuary. It is justification by faith, "the third angel's message in verity" (*The Review and Herald*, April 1, 1890; *Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 372).

—Paul E. Penno

**Note to Readers:** Pastor Paul Penno is now teaching his Sabbath School class at the Hayward (California) Seventh-day Adventist Church a week early so that it can be posted on You Tube. You may view part 1 of this week's lesson, "In the Loom of Heaven," at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=W25yj3ZxiG0>

Click on "88denver99," and you will be able to access parts 2 and 3.