

## THE LEGACY OF FORD

Desmond Ford changed the theological landscape of Adventism in the areas of the gospel and the sanctuary. What were his actual teachings about the method of salvation, and how has this impacted the thinking of Adventists during the last 30 years?

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The most confused and divisive subject in the Seventh-day Adventist church today is not the ordination of women or Christian rock, but the subject of how a person is saved by the sacrifice of Christ. Isn't it amazing that the most basic and simple truth of the Bible has been so twisted by Satan that very few understand how salvation works? We glibly talk about the gospel, and each person has a different understanding of the word. In this paper we are going to review the past thirty years in Adventist thinking about justification and sanctification. The first time I was aware that there was controversy was when Desmond Ford came to teach at Pacific Union College. Suddenly there was no clear certainty about how justification works.

We are going to look at Dr. Ford's understanding of the gospel as he expressed it in his book, Right With God Right Now. It is subtitled, How God Saves People As Shown in the Bible's Book of Romans. "The bad news in the book of Romans is that every thought we have is defiled. Every motion of our heart, every tendency of our mind, and every inclination of the flesh is tainted—in every one of us—until the second coming of Jesus and glorification... Sin remains in the Christian until glorification." (pp. 1, 15) In other words, the gospel does not remove sin from our lives. It can only take away our deserved condemnation, while every act and thought of our lives continue to be sin.

Let us look at some verses in the book of Romans. "But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness....But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life." (Rom. 6:17, 18, 22)

When we transfer from being servants of sin to being servants of righteousness, we are made free from sin. Freedom from sin and holiness are linked closely together. This is quite a different picture than the "bad news in the book of Romans" described by Ford.

Ford continues this theme: "We've all been selfish. We still are selfish... There's not a single inclination of

the heart...that isn't tainted by our selfishness, even after conversion." (pp. 17, 68) In this view, conversion does not really change us, it just changes God's evaluation of us. Contrast this with two statements by Ellen White. "By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him." (6BC 1098) "Having made us righteous through the imputed righteousness of Christ, God pronounces us just." (1SM 394) I have never read in any inspired source that Christ was selfish, and we are told here that we will become like Christ through imputed righteousness, which means that we are made righteous. Conversion really does change the life from selfishness to unselfishness.

Now to the word justification, from Ford's perspective. "This word 'justify.' It never means to make righteous inside. It means, strictly, to count righteous...The whole of true religion revolves around this issue... Justification is over you all the time, like the sun... Justification is over you all the time." (pp. 19-21) He believes that justification covers us all the time because we are sinning all the time. Once again from Ellen White: "God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart." (MB 114) Forgiveness is synonymous with justification, and it is more than counting righteous, or being free from condemnation. It is the transformation of the heart from selfishness to love.

In Ford's view the new birth is not salvation but only the result of salvation, which is solely being declared righteous in justification. But this does not seem to square with Titus 3:5-7. "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life." The fact of justification is preceded by inward regeneration and renewing, and this is accomplished by the Holy Spirit. Justification in the writings of Paul is much more than counting or declaring righteous. It is very simply, inward transformation.

Dr. Ford contrasts justification and sanctification: "Justification has to do with your status. Sanctification with your state... Your status is always the same in Christ—perfect. Your state is up and down, in and out, a mess... One is based on what Christ did for me. The other is based on what Christ does in me. The first is perfect, complete and 100 percent. The second isn't, because God is doing it in me... The Christian message is Christ for me—what Christ has already done. The Christian life is Christ in me—what happens

after conversion." (pp. 21, 22) Please notice that we always remain justified even when our life is a mess. Justification remains in place when sanctification is up and down, in and out.

Now we must look closely at some statements which are totally rejected, even hated, by those who hold Ford's view. They run counter to every facet of this popular gospel. "Every transgression brings the soul into condemnation." (4T 623) "The helpless sinner must cling to Christ as his only hope. If he lets go his hold for a moment, he imperils his own soul... The commission of any known sin...will...disconnect the soul from God." (FLB 138) "The commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God." (GC 472) Clearly, we lose our justification when we sin. Justification is not constantly over us like the sun even when we are knowingly sinning. We are simply not saved while we are sinning.

In addition, the distinction between justification being for us and sanctification being in us is never made in Scripture. Justification is both what God does for and in us. Both justification and sanctification are by faith alone, and are produced by the Holy Spirit in both cases. Our status with God is not right unless our spiritual state is right. Justification is conversion, the new birth experience. It is totally wrong to separate justification and sanctification by making one the salvation experience and the other the result of salvation.

This leads us to 1844: "The Old Testament Day of Atonement pointed to the Christ event, to the cross of Calvary. It is wrong to indulge in calendrical shuffling, trying to bring the fulfillment of the Day of Atonement down to the nineteenth century. The ancient Day of Atonement is not talking about the nineteenth century. It points to the cross of Christ. That's where the final, full atonement was made... We look only to Calvary, not to an event or date invented by man." (p. 55) Why does Ford have to reject the final atonement taking place after 1844? It is very important to understand that his view of salvation has led him to reject the Adventist interpretation of Daniel 7 and 8. It is his gospel premise that forces him to reject the pre-advent judgment message. He says, "We were all in Adam and Eve when they sinned... By the sin of one, condemnation came on all of us. We were born dead... Sin does remain... There is residual sin in our lives." (pp. 87, 102) Since sin is as constant as breathing we can never live without sin or stand without sin in the judgment. "Because we are born in sin, because we are born without the Holy Spirit,...we cannot perfectly obey a holy law. Not even after conversion... So even after conversion, never for one day do I fully fulfill the law of God. That's because I still have an old nature." (pp. 241, 242)

Of course, Romans 7 is referenced. "In the gospel there is no condemnation even when we fail to meet God's standards... Romans 8 is not about a person different from the one found in Romans 7... It's wrong when people say, 'We need to get out of Romans 7 and into Romans 8.'" (pp. 161, 177, 178) In other words, Romans 7 is the normal Christian experience, since we are not condemned even when we are sold under sin. But let us look again at Romans 8:1,2. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death." Isn't this a clear contrast between the hopelessness, the despair, the frustration, and the wretchedness of the man of Romans 7? The two chapters are like night and day contrasts in personal experience.

One other aspect must be noted. "We do not confess in order to be forgiven. You have already been forgiven by the cross of Christ." (p. 316) This says that forgiveness is ours before we confess our sins. But what does the Bible teach? "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 John 1:9) "He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh them shall have mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) One of the clearest teachings of the Bible is that we are forgiven *when* we confess our sins. In summary, the Ford gospel makes the following major points:

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- Justification is only a legal declaration in heaven where the righteousness of Christ is counted for the believer. Justification is God declaring us righteous, not making us righteous.
  - Justification is always over believers, like an umbrella, even when they are sinning. Our salvation is assured even when we are sinning, as long as we still believe in Jesus.
  - We don't confess our sins to be forgiven.
  - The new birth is the result of justification. The transforming work of the Holy Spirit is excluded from justification.
  - The view that justification is the new birth is Roman Catholic teaching.
  - Justification has to do with status or legal standing with God, not with spiritual state. Sanctification has to do with state.
  - When God justifies the ungodly they remain ungodly.
  - Sanctification is not by faith alone. Only justification is by faith alone.
  - Sanctification is the result of justification, and it is by faith plus human effort.

- The law of God cannot be perfectly obeyed even by those who are converted. Everything the believer does is tinged with sin. The believer is sinning all the time. Justification is a legal umbrella over him, ensuring his salvation, despite the sins in his life.
- We are not condemned, even when we fail to reach God's standard. David did not lose his justification when he sinned.
- In respect to sin there is no difference between the religious and the irreligious person.
- The Day of Atonement was completely fulfilled at the cross. It had nothing to do with 1844 and the judgment that followed. His teaching on righteousness by faith is the premise on the basis of which he rejects the investigative judgment. If salvation is a legal declaration that is always over believers, why would the Lord judge us by our works?
- Christ is our Substitute in the judgment. Because Christ is perfect, and His perfection is counted for us, we can be vindicated in the judgment.

(I am indebted to a concise summary of these points provided by Dr. Erwin Gane in a booklet entitled [An Examination of Desmond Ford's Book](#), available from Orion Publishing)

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## **Fruitage of Ford's Gospel**

Since the major points of this teaching were never clearly addressed and refuted, the seeds planted in the 1970's bore a rich harvest in the thirty years following. His ideas have kept popping up in books and articles and sermons on the gospel. Many today who would never dream of following Ford continue to promote his view of salvation, especially to our young people. An example of this is a recent book by George Knight, entitled [Cross of Christ](#). Major points of emphasis in this book are as follows:

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- We are born at enmity with God.
- The selfish nature we inherit is sin.
- We cannot break all our bad habits.
- Christ's death is the central part of the plan of redemption, not His life.
- Justification is declaring a sinner righteous.
- The judgment is about whether or not we have accepted Christ's sacrifice.
- The 144,000 are not part of the atonement process.
- The atonement is completed apart from human participation.

All of these points are identical to Ford's understanding of the atonement and the method of salvation. Ford's gospel has been accepted by many Adventists in the decades following his trial and loss of ministerial credentials. We must remember that the heart of his theological emphasis were the issues of righteousness by faith outlined in the previous section, not his statements about 1844 and the investigative judgment. These were only the natural fruit of his understanding of the salvation process.

In Ministry magazine, January and March, 2008, a two-part series was published on the subject of righteousness by faith. The author was Dr. Roy Gane, professor of Hebrew and Near Eastern Languages at the Theological Seminary. He stated, "Not all human imperfection, even in the sphere of conscious activity, can be regarded as sin. Human life is fraught with all kinds of non-sinful imperfections due to our limitations of skill, knowledge, memory, physical coordination, and so on." Dr. Gane made an important distinction between "sin" as fallen nature and "sin" as violation of God's law. Our birth state of fallen nature has produced much imperfection and impurity, but this *result* of Adam's sin must be sharply distinguished from violations of God's commands, which cause a breach in one's relationship with God. While our birth state needs the atoning blood of Christ and healing, *it does not need forgiveness*, which applies only to moral violations of God's expressed will. Thus the terms *justification*, *sanctification*, and *righteousness by faith*, as normally used, do not apply to our birth state as the result of Adam's sin. Fallen nature needs re-creation by means of Christ's sacrifice, while moral violations need forgiveness through the same sacrifice.

Then Gane asked the question, "Is justification by faith only a declaration that by faith a sinner stands just before God, or does it involve something more?" He answers, "When God regards those who have faith as righteous,...His declaration is so because His creative Word has made it so." On the relation between justification and sanctification, he wrote, "While justification and sanctification are theologically distinct, they are experientially interlinked from the time of conversion. Both have ongoing aspects, are essential aspects of salvation, and are gifts of God's grace."

What was especially interesting about this series of articles were the letters sent in by readers to Ministry about his points. One person wrote, "Dr. Gane's article simply presented another attempt to justify the righteousness by character development harvest theology that has been confusing our people for decades... He tries and fails to make a case for the Holy Spirit infusing righteousness in us to the point where we don't sin any more and are kept from falling, not by God's grace and Christ's accomplishments, but by our obedience—

implying that it is possible for us to never sin again through this infusion. The idea that people must achieve character perfection through the Holy Spirit to be saved is identical to the Catholic theologian who teaches you must have infused good works to be saved... If we can only be saved from our sins and not in our sins, we are all doomed." (March, 2008)

This response needs a little unpacking. Harvest theology is the teaching that when the character of Christ is perfectly reflected in His people, He will return. (COL 69) There has been intense opposition to this belief since the time of Ford. This is not "righteousness by character development" but righteousness by faith which leads to character maturity. "Infusing righteousness in us" is the Catholic version of imparted or shared righteousness. It says that we can fill up on righteousness like a gas tank, which is then our possession, on the basis of which we can do good works which merit salvation. Imparted righteousness is the moment by moment sharing of Christ's righteousness with us as long as we abide in Him, which produces a Christ-like character in us. Gane never even hinted that we can be infused with righteousness. Gane never suggested that we are kept from falling "by our obedience." *Our* obedience will get us no farther than the obedience produced by the Pharisees. It is obvious that there are several "straw men" in this letter — incorrect allegations to make the author's points seem silly. One point has become very obvious in past ten years. Any emphasis on inward righteousness and victory over sin is being labeled as Catholic theology—again to cause the listener or reader to reject such concepts. One telling statement in this letter is his belief that we must be saved "in our sins." All of the above is a clear demonstration of the legacy of Ford in current Adventist thinking.

Another letter said, "Although dotted with lots of Scripture, Dr. Gane's position more closely reflects the pre-Reformation theology (*faith plus*) than the Protestant position (*faith alone*)." Note again the linking of Gane's theology with Catholicism to recommend an immediate rejection of such theology. Another writer said, "The Bible and all of the great Protestant Reformers teach that there is absolutely no justifying merit whatsoever in anything we do, in anything God does in us, in anything God does to us, in anything God puts into us, or in anything God develops in us!" (May, 2008) Even if God does it by His grace and Christ's righteousness, if it is inward (in us), it is not saving justification.

Dr. Gane responded briefly to the letters received. "Tom Hughes misrepresents my approach and misidentifies it as the Catholic philosophy of infused righteousness, which holds that the intrinsically righteous born-again 'soul' is capable of performing works that partly merit their salvation... Regarding Christ's work of saving us *from* our sins,... while we will not be relieved of our sinful natures until

glorification, Christ through the Holy Spirit provides the opportunity for progressive victory over sinful choices (=purification of our characters)." Responding to another letter, Gane said, "Many 'imperfections,' including many mistakes that are impossible for human beings to overcome in this life due to their physical and mental limitations (e.g., memory loss), are not included in the biblical definitions of sinful action and thinking...as moral faults violating God's law. 'Imperfection' is a larger category than 'sin.' All sin is imperfection, but not all imperfection is sin." Referring to Gordon Collier's letter, Gane states that he uses "selective, and rigid reading of Scripture that severs the dynamic relationships between justification and sanctification and between the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit... Collier exemplifies the kind of unbalanced approach that my two-part series was designed to counteract." (May, 2008)

The letters responding to Gane's articles are representative of Ford's gospel in its pure form, and this gospel is now being promoted widely in our schools and churches. A very interesting perspective on these issues comes from an evangelical scholar from Biola University, J. P. Moreland. "What was the essence of the gospel?...Since the Protestant Reformation, the gospel has been identified with justification by faith... We are declared righteous through our trust in the accomplished work of Jesus... For the first 20 years of my Christian life, this was the gospel I shared with unbelievers... I found it difficult to connect sanctification and spiritual maturity and growth to this gospel. About all I could say was, 'If Jesus is now your Lord, you should obey Him.'" But in the 1980's he found a broader gospel. "The point of becoming justified? Justification is the way one begins a life of sanctification. The gospel invites us to an entirely new, rich life... I become justified so I can learn this new life, a life that will be mine forever... One accepts the free grace of God in justification in order to enter a life of progressively having Jesus as my Lord in this life and the next." (Ministry, May, 2009) I found this to be a rather amazing statement from an evangelical scholar, especially since all of our confusion on this subject has come adopting the evangelical gospel into Adventism.

In other words, justification is not the sum total of righteousness by faith, but the opening of the door to righteousness by faith. When Jesus is accepted as our Lord, His righteousness is both our justification and our sanctification. Unfortunately, sanctification has been denigrated as just a fruit of the gospel or a result of being saved, when it may be more biblically accurate to say that sanctification is really the heart of the gospel. Justification is the only way that we can access a Christlike life, which is what the gospel is really all about.

I am going to share extended excerpts from an outstanding article written by Fernando Canale, professor of theology at the Theological Seminary.

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In recent times, some have come to view ministry as one of proclaiming salvation rather than a call to holy living... Luther deduced that sanctification, holiness, and obedience to God's commandments are not integral to salvation but the result of salvation... Ministers have tended to adopt consumer-oriented approaches that will attract the most people of all cultures. Such approaches do not hesitate to employ rituals, contemporary cultural tastes, and secular theatrical attractions (in music, for example), so long as the public events generate a large audience where the proclamation can take place and instant salvation administered.

Pastors who think, operate, and minister in such an atmosphere may have the satisfaction of seeing hundreds raise their hands in an emotional response of accepting salvation. However, I do not believe such respondents understand or experience the basic ingredient of the Adventist understanding of salvation: that salvation comes from an experience of faith leading to obedience... Proclamation of faith, I maintain, without a call to holiness and obedience is absolutely foreign to the essentials of Adventism.

Paul's statement stands out forcefully: "Make every effort to live in peace with all all men and *to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord*" (Heb. 12:14)... "Be ye holy," says God, "for I am holy" (1 Pet. 1:16)... God's plan of salvation brings holiness back to human lives. The experience of holiness in faith and obedience restores in humans the image of God and generates the joy of salvation.

Faith and obedience are two inseparable components of the same act of free human trust in God. The free human decision to respond to God's call of salvation...is not the cause but the necessary condition for salvation to exist... The same faith and obedience by which we accept and receive His forgiveness (justification by faith) simultaneously and necessarily involves a willful and joyful obedient lifestyle (holiness). According to Scripture, we cannot have one without the other. Before God, we cannot have forgiveness of sins without simultaneously being obedient and becoming changed progressively into His image.

"Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Cor. 7:1). The biblical teaching that a holy

lifestyle (holiness, sanctification) is necessary for salvation runs against the view held by some. (Ministry, May, 2009)

This was an excellent call to a balanced understanding of justification and sanctification. It differentiated very well the difference between causes and conditions of salvation. The causes of salvation are always the grace of God and the atonement of Christ. The conditions of salvation are our choices to believe, accept, surrender, and repent. None of these conditions merit or earn salvation for us, but without these choices we cannot be saved.

But despite this balanced approach, sure enough, this article got negative responses from two pastors. "I was disheartened to read Fernando L Canale's article." He characterized it as "a blurred or partial understanding of the gospel... This article could be understood to teach...works-oriented salvation... Only the saved are sanctified... It is only the saved that are made new creatures, are called to have the mind of Christ." This is saying that we are saved *before* being sanctified, we are saved *before* being made a new creature, and we are saved *before* receiving the mind of Christ. In other words, none of these things are necessary for salvation. "Fernando L. Canale's article sounds more like a paraphrase of a declaration from the Council of Trent... How sad to have an article like this appear." (Ministry, July, 2009) Once again we find that any call to holiness as *part of the gospel* is being labeled Catholic.

This has been a rather technical study of justification and sanctification made necessary because of the subtle, well-reasoned, and even common sense attacks on the true gospel. Desmond Ford's legacy has been carried forward at many levels of administration, scholarship, and the pastorate. Although he is no longer central to Adventist thinking, his gospel has been winning the day in Adventist theology.

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## Practical Suggestions

I am going to conclude this paper with some practical suggestions for living, and not just teaching, sanctified living. Paul says, "Bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." (2 Cor. 10:5) We must internally take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ. That's huge! Do you sometimes find that the more you try not to think about some things, the more you think about them? The apostle is talking here about the highest level of Christian maturity. Who is able to accomplish this, confronted as we are with every kind of distraction and enticement literally everywhere we turn today? Who can keep their thoughts secure and inviolate? But remember Jesus' response when His disciples asked Him, "Who then can be saved?" He answered, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things

are possible." (Matt. 19:25, 26) It is in God's strength and His alone that we are able to take captive every thought to the obedience of Christ.

I need to see in my mind's eye the picture of all kinds of aberrant thoughts marching in procession behind Christ the Conqueror, as prisoners of war: prideful thoughts, discouraging thoughts, immoral thoughts, lustful thoughts, thoughts of superiority over others, thoughts of inferiority to others, thoughts of secret vices, thoughts of rebellion and insubordination. I must see all these thoughts that molest and defeat us marching with their tails between their legs behind our Liberator, subdued and defeated by His power. We may not be there yet. But if we never think it, we'll never yearn for it. And if we never yearn for it, we'll never plead for it. And if we never plead for it, we'll never experience it. Empowered by a force beyond ourselves, we may move out into a broken world with the healing power of the gospel—taking every thought, external and internal, captive to the obedience of Jesus Christ.

Thomas Davis emphasized one point that is central to sanctified living, without which no obedience or holiness is possible.

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If salvation comes free, is it not contradictory to point out that actually we must pay a price?...Where do we place surrender, which seems to suggest the giving up of freedom?...Jesus made the demand for self-surrender unmistakably plain. "If any man would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me" (Matt. 16:24)... James counsels his readers to "submit yourselves...to God" (James 4:7)... Surrender may be characterized as a response to God's convicting, wooing love so that He can shatter all of our inner resistance to His will, change our minds, and radically re-channel our attitudes, motives, desires — the whole heart—so that our selfish "rights" are abandoned and His will continuously sought... In surrender, then, we recognize God's claim upon every facet of our lives and willingly give Him the right to expect us to conform to His pattern in all respects...

But let an interpersonal confrontation stir to anger, retaliation, and resentment; let someone frustrate our wills, question our opinions, challenge our "rights," or "let us down;" let someone seem to diminish our self-importance or fault our appetites, and the attitude may be quite different. When we become caught up in a situation in which we have to wrestle with surrendering resentment, anger, or whatever, we are struck by the abysmal sinfulness of our natures, the strength of sin, the price surrender demands, and our proclivity to resist surrendering to the Spirit...

Is anything required of the sinner to obtain forgiveness? A number of texts come to mind. "If my people...shall humble themselves,...and...turn from their wicked ways; then will I...forgive their sin" (2 Chron. 7:14). "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive [you]" (Matt. 6:15). "Repent...for the forgiveness of your sins" (Acts 2:38). "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive our sins" (1 John 1:9). There are requirements, then, that we must meet to receive God's saving forgiveness...

"Christ is represented in the Scriptures as a gift. He is a gift, but *only to those who give themselves, soul, body, and spirit to Him without reserve*" (COL 116, emphasis added)... Christ, then, does not justify us on the basis of our surrender, but He cannot justify us *until* we surrender... We must pay a price for justification—that price is not in the good works we do or in the merits we have, but in our unreserved surrender to Jesus... To teach or preach justification without also clearly showing the obligation to surrender self to Jesus...leaves the teacher or preacher open to the accusation of selling a cheap gospel. (Ministry, June, 2009)

This is the heart of all human activity for salvation, and it is necessary for salvation to occur. Without absolute surrender no salvation is possible. "If we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our 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... Our hearts will often burn within us as One draws nigh to commune with us as He did with Enoch. Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue. And they will receive not only wisdom, but strength. Power for obedience, for service, will be imparted to them." (DA 668)

"Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting" (Ps. 139:23, 24). Does every Christian fight an inner fight, trying to slap away evil thoughts? The woman who patiently coaxes hymns out of the old organ every Sabbath? The president of the nearest Adventist college? The businesswoman who comments thoughtfully during the Sabbath School lesson study? Pastors? Absolutely. We all struggle with the hygiene of thought in some area. Each of us knows deep down that we've had these negative thoughts.

Here are some practical ways to deal with our thoughts:

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- Give yourself completely to God, moment by moment, day by day.
- Practice ways of bringing your mind back to Him during the day, pausing at habitual times to pray silently.
- Keep your appointment with devotional time.
- Cultivate humility, which means being willing to change when shown that you need to change.
- Avoid evil thoughts when you're well aware where they lurk, as Paul suggested, "Set your minds on things that are above."
- Seek help from a friend or counselor.
- Paul's principles still guide our thoughts. "Whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things." (Phil. 4:8)

Finally, a bit of encouragement for weary Christians who feel that they are fighting alone, losing the battle against unrighteous thinking. An accomplished Warrior has fought and won the war already, and He has promised that His peace will "keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

May justification and sanctification be more than a theological doctrine? May it be a life changing miracle?

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