

The Relational Nature of The Atonement

Adrian Ebens – Dec 21, 2017

Let's start in Romans 7, a good place to start, verse 14; Romans 7:14. We just want to spend a little bit of time analyzing what Paul is saying here. For we know...the question is today, do we know? For we know that the law is what? Spiritual. So what does that mean? What does it mean that the law is spiritual? It's holy and just. Yes, it says that earlier in verse 12. "Wherefore, the law is holy." What does that mean? It's good and just. So, holy, just, and good; that's godly. But aren't we talking about letters on stone? Aren't we talking about words that I could write up here? If I were to write them up here, does that make the board holy, just, and good, also written in our hearts? Okay, they are written in our hearts, and this is the point. This is where it only can be written. So it's not written in our minds, it's written in our hearts. The heart-mind, a good divine pattern. It becomes holy, just, and good when it is written in the heart and it manifests itself in this way. To be written down and to rub it up and down in your face, it doesn't do any good. It has to be internalized, and the only way it can be internalized is if God dwells there. If God doesn't dwell there, then it's certainly not in us. Then it has to be, therefore, external. So when it is external the law is a schoolmaster. That's good, isn't it? Yes. It doesn't feel good. That's because it beats you up. But a schoolmaster shouldn't beat you up. Were you ever beaten by the schoolmaster? I was, but I was a different generation. It's interesting that we think that the teacher is always bad. That's our perception of it. It's almost a self-beating up because of what we see in that we misunderstand the teacher, and that misunderstanding gives us our reaction to the teacher.

Romans 7:6, "But now we are delivered from the law. That being dead..." Who's dead, us or the law? Us. We being dead, wherein we were held...It says that we should serve in newness of spirit and not the oldness of the letter. Okay, there we go, the newness of the spirit; this is where the law of the wise is a fountain of life. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. In John 6:63 Jesus says this. The law says, "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." The law is spiritual, and this is the point. Thou *shalt* love your neighbor as yourself. When you have the spirit of Christ in you this is how it manifests itself. Now, unfortunately, the Catholics have taken hold of this word "natural law". There's all kind of theology with that, but it is a law of nature. Spiritual nature manifests itself in the Ten Commandments. The Ten Commandments are a transcript for the character of God. One of the critical components of the journey that we have been on, and I want to just reference it back to the beginning, is in the Identity Wars platform, telling us it is a relational based value system. It is a spiritual value system, not just a legal code. The emphasis is on the spiritual.

In the emphasis on the relationship, in some of the early presentations when we were just down the road, we talked about the relational implications for the Sabbath. What is the Sabbath all about? To give us an idea, is the Sabbath spiritual or is the Sabbath ritual? For many of us growing up with the Sabbath, the Sabbath was a list of do's and don'ts; you can do this and you can't do that; and endless discussions as young people about what is right to do on the Sabbath and what is wrong to do on the Sabbath. What can we get away with and what can't we get away with? This all speaks to a legal mindset in reference to the law, not a spiritual mindset. What is the purpose of doing what you're doing? It is to enhance the relationship that you have with your Father, to listen, and to hear his voice. It is to place yourself in a position where you can hear his voice. Obviously, if you're deeply involved in activities of your own pleasure and your own interests, your mind is not as well open to the voice of your Father in heaven. I focus on this because it was part of our Adventist psychosis about is it right to swim on the Sabbath? It really distills the issue, doesn't it? Is it right to swim on the Sabbath or not? This is the legal framework or the relational framework; what is your motivation for doing what you're doing, and all of the things that go with it.

I remember when I was in Sydney in 1994. Sydney was basically ringed in fire in 1994. I remember driving around in a little car with all of our wedding photos in the car for about a week. We weren't sure if we were going to have to take off. There were some firefighters who were fighting not far from us. I think it was in

Mount Ku-Ring-Gai National Park; it was a long time ago. We wanted to support the firefighters and it was on the Sabbath. We thought, "Should we go into the shop and buy food on the Sabbath to help support these firefighters or not?" These are the types of questions that we had at that time as Adventists. There we were running through Woolworth's grabbing food so we could feed these firefighters. We wanted to do our bit. Do you not know that the priests profane the Sabbath and are blameless, and David took the showbread, which is not lawful to do? This is because of the principle of relationship, to care for your brother. As Jesus said, you will dig your donkey out of the ditch, but you'll leave a man on the side of the road. It's the Sabbath. Sorry, brother, I can't help you. The law says so. This is the great challenge.

Of course, when we look through Christianity, and as I reflect on the history of the church, if you look at Roman Catholicism, after some time, particularly during the time of what they call their own Babylonian captivity when the Papacy was actually moved to Avignon, the church was basically run by lawyers. The lawyers ran the church; they made the laws, and they made the stipulations, the case law. It was all law based on penalties, transgressions, enumeration, and restitution; and Rome was run by lawyers. It's no wonder that much of the Christian discussion about the gospel is framed in legal language, but you'll never find that term. Do you find that term, 'legal justification?' Does that term exist in your own Bible? No. We think about it this way. If a father and his child have a misunderstanding and a disagreement, does the father take his son to court to sort it out? No. Is that how you resolve the dispute, you take your child to court? What can we do? How would the legal system work if your father is the judge, and the judge himself is taking his son to court? How does that work? Is there a conflict of interest there? It's problematic, isn't it? Who's the judge? And everyone just says, "Well, he's God. He's the judge. He can do whatever he wants." But in the spiritual setting, in the spiritual sense, that's problematic. It's problematic in how you would prosecute that and actually win back the heart of your child. This is the whole point of atonement.

Is atonement simply a legal gratification, legal restitution; it just gets done on paper and it's alright? Does that change the heart? This is the question we want to get to in reference to the atonement. Is the atonement essentially a legal transaction, or is it a restoration between God and his wayward children? These are the questions. How would that atonement come about?

We've been studying all about that. But, before we go there, I remember when I was doing the Identity Wars series in 2006 and I did a presentation called "The Ten Commandments Defined." I wrote about it in the book, Life Matters, called "The Protection of the Channel of Blessing." Do you remember this one, when I talked about the Canadians, the Americans, and the ship? Alter your course 10 degrees. You didn't know the identity, but when the identity of the person was understood, then there's the understanding that I am the lighthouse. Then we talked about the Ten Commandments in terms of being a definer of our relationship. It's a protector of relationship. It's not simply a legal code to bash you over the head with. That presentation, which is in chapter 14 of Life Matters, was a pivotal part of this message. It's saying that the law is spiritual. That's simply what that is saying. It's just a confirmation of Romans 7:14. The law is spiritual. The law is a transcript of God's character. That's spiritual. When you have this understanding of the spiritual nature of the law and the relational nature of the law, you are looking in a relational direction to resolve things, not in a legal direction. With a legal direction, a legal ratification, when people go to court they get an outcome, but are men's hearts reconciled through that process? No. It just makes them more bitter, and more determined. They make appeals, and more appeals, and the lawyers laugh all the way to the bank in terms of this process. When we understand that the law is spiritual, then this is a relational framework.

Another aspect that we looked at is the investigative judgment. We've all read Great Controversy, Facing Life's Record. Do you remember reading that? For those of us that have had the joy of being raised as an Adventist, and you were encouraged to read Great Controversy, and as a young person you were reading, Facing Life's Record, it's pretty frightening stuff. Every idle word you will speak, you will give account thereof in the day of judgment. With every secret thing, with every...it's all written down, sins of omission and commission; it's

pretty frightening the emphasis that's given there. No wonder there's a lot of psychosis in Adventism. But when you look at the relational understanding of the investigative judgment, the investigative judgment is when two people are deciding whether they want to live with each other for the rest of eternity. Isn't that investigative judgment? When prospective bride and groom are checking each other out, that's an investigative judgment, but it's in a relational context. It has a very different feel about it in terms of the context here. The context in judgment is not to nail you to the floorboards. It's to provide a way of reconciliation so that we can live together forever. That's a relational approach. So judgment is actually about leading up to a wedding. Judgment is a good thing. God has made a way for us, as sinners, to be able to go through that process. It's called justification by faith.

In a lot of my material in 2004, 2005, 2006, I just began to think about the relational principle of the law and I just began to apply it to different doctrines of Adventism such as the nature of Christ, and the concept of victory over sin. Is it performance, or is it relationship? I just kept on going like this. Then I happened upon a thought in my mind. The position of Jesus Christ in relation to the Father: Does he hold it by performance or by relationship? By relationship. It was just like "Whoa!" That just unlocked everything! That question in my mind was just like "Whoa, hang on a minute. This is big. This is really big." What was all this focus on omnipotence, omniscience, and equality?

I like to tell this story. I remember when I was 8, and my sister being a bit younger, and I was given the duty of pouring out lemonade for both of us. I had to make sure that nobody was getting more than anybody else and it was exactly equal. I had just that mindset because everybody was watching. I had to make sure it was exactly equal. No one's getting any more than anyone else. But if everyone was turning away, I'm filling mine a bit more. It was this performance based mindset. Then there is this thought. Is Jesus equal with the Father because of his performance or because of his relationship? That question alone just shattered my whole foundation. It completely destroyed it with one question. It has to be the relationship. Jesus is equal with the Father through the relationship, and that is what started everything for me. That was the beginning.

Apparently, this little book, so innocent and so gentle, is deadly for existing church organizations in a power/performance based model. It's not very good for them. The book is very threatening. What did Paul say, "These that have turned the world upside down have come here also." Just a single thought, and in that single thought, "Is Jesus equal with God because of performance or relationship," immediately opened up the relational nature of righteousness by faith. Am I valued in the sight of God because of my performance or because of my relationship? Again, it just shattered everything in my former understanding with one thought. It's through the relationship that I have everything that I need, not by works and deeds. I knew that before, but my understanding before was like on ice skates. It was just all over the place because there were bits missing, and it's just like, no, my standing with the Father is in Christ, and his standing with the Father is in his Father's word alone; the word of God alone, faith alone. All of this fits beautifully together. That's why people who are coming into this message, who don't grasp this point, struggle to understand this cornerstone relationship. This is all based on the text, "The law is spiritual." The law is a transcript of the character of God. The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life. They're not just empty words. They speak. They are a manifestation of relationship, and that is a critical point.

Now with that in mind, I want to take that relational point into the atonement and I want to read to you from, God is Love, by George Fifiield, an Adventist minister. I did a little bit of research on Fifiield. The first time I've seen his name he was involved in evangelistic efforts in 1881. I believe he was at the 1888 conference. In 1889, it is said that he did some presentations that were quite significant in reference to the gospel and the sanctuary, and he was speaking alongside AT Jones. I think he was ordained into ministry in 1889, and he was working in New England. I believe he was the secretary of the conference in New England. So with that background, this book, God is Love, starts with some of these chapters: Knowing God; The attributes of God; Love, The Source of Righteousness; Satan's Effort to Hide God's Love From Hungry Human Hearts; The

Fatherhood of God; The glory of God. The emphasis is on God as a father. It's moving in a spiritual direction, and it talks about the unity of the law and the gospel. He's taking 1888 concepts and he's starting to bring this into a family principle. As I read some of these things, I could see a lot of the things that we had been learning in what he's writing here, which is quite interesting. The Nature of The Divine Government; The Law of Love; The Design of The Law; How Man Misunderstood His Maker; and then chapter 13, The Atonement.

Now I want to read to you from this chapter. As I thought about this, again I had that shattering impact on my mind of the relational framework like I had before, and it opened a door. This is big. This is really big. Our understanding of the atonement is critical because of an Adventist teaching called 'final atonement.' Whatever you understand of atonement has an impact on your understanding of the final atonement. Ellen White says things like, "The work of Jesus in the judgment is just as important as his work on the cross." Whoa! These kinds of statements are an embarrassment for Adventism regarding this final atonement doctrine. It was all done at the cross. Yes, and in the divine pattern it was all done at the cross, but the purpose of it should be manifested in these last days. That's part of it. So let me just read some of this for you. "The word atonement means at-one-ment. Sin had brought misery, and misery had brought a misunderstanding of God's character." So he's right on it. "Thus men had come to hate God instead of loving him; and hating him, the one Father, men also hated man, their brother. Thus, instead of the one family and the one Father, men were separated from God and from each other, and held apart by hatred and selfishness. There must be an atonement." You see how he's talking about atonement in relational terms. There's a separation of relationship and he's saying there must be atonement in this context of relationship. The way he's setting this up, sin had caused misery and had brought a misunderstanding of the character of God. He's saying here that a misunderstanding of the character of God needed to be atoned for. There needed to be an atonement for this misunderstanding of the character of God, which means that understanding the character of God is critical to our understanding of atonement. Pennies dropping? We must understand atonement, "Be ye reconciled to God." You can't be reconciled to God if you have a misunderstanding of his character. It's just not possible. "An atonement can be made only by God's so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men's hearts will be touched to tenderness; and they, being delivered from Satan's delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misunderstood the divine One, and so have done despite to the Spirit of grace. Thus they may be led, as returning brethren, to come back to the Father's house in blissful unity." Do you see the sequence? He's describing atonement. "An atonement can be made only by God's so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men's hearts will be touched to tenderness." This is a relational description of atonement; that his heart is changed when he sees the love of God. When he sees how much grace that God has manifested, it works within him repentance and his heart is reconciled to God. This is atonement. This is what he says next. "The atonement is not to appease God's wrath so that men dare come to him, but it is to reveal his love so that they will come to him." That's the atonement. If you know anything about Christian history, if you know anything about Christian dogma, what he's saying here is absolute revolution in thinking compared to Roman Catholicism, Protestantism, and all these types of things.

"The atonement is not to appease God's wrath, so that men dare come to him, but it is to reveal his love, so that they will come to him." This is the atonement. So if someone in a relationship does wrong, it's a form of reconciliation that the party that has not done wrong has the power to reconcile. That's what we're talking about, isn't it? He has the power to reconcile, to show forbearance, love, and grace towards the offending party, and that's what atonement is. Isn't it the prodigal story all over again? It's definitely in there, isn't it? You can see the father yearning for his son. He gave him his living; he gave him his life. When you read it in the Greek, he gave him his life and let him take it and do whatever he wanted with it, and when he came back, he threw his arms around him. He didn't say anything about the money, nothing about the money. That is atonement. It's about the heart.

But there's always a risk, isn't there? If you shower others with love some will realize, "I have to repent. I have totally misunderstood you. I have twisted my understanding. I have said things about you that are false. I have to repent." When the soul comes to that point, if there's pride in that soul, rather than repent, it will turn and more intensely accuse the giver of the falsehoods that it had believed all along. In order to push off, we need to repent. And this is the danger of doing such a thing. It can actually make them more hostile. The law worketh wrath. The more God's grace is revealed, the more the heart of man is angry, because it's showing him his wickedness in abusing God's grace in his life.

I want to read to you a little bit more in terms of final atonement, a relational understanding of atonement, where there is a manifestation of God's love. God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son. This is atonement. Just read this statement again. "An atonement can be made only by God's so revealing his love, in spite of sin and sorrow, that men's hearts will be touched to tenderness." This is atonement. Not in legal terms, not in the terms of Rome, not in the terms of lawyers, but in terms of the heart. This is what it's talking about. "And that they, being delivered from Satan's delusions, may see how fully and terribly they have misunderstood the divine One." Hasn't this been our experience? As we are studying the word of God we see that we have misunderstood the sonship of Jesus; we have misunderstood the covenants; we have misunderstood the gospel; we have misunderstood his appointments; we have misunderstood his character, and then we think, "Oh, Lord."

We look at the cross and we see the suffering that he has endured for 6000 years and we're beginning to realize there's a repentance coming. God is going to give us the gift of repentance to be able to stand up and look all of our sin in the face and say, "Yeah, that's me. I accept it. I accept all of this. I confess to you. I throw myself at your feet, and I ask you to forgive me. I weep before you, Father, that I would ever believe these lies against you. I'm ashamed, terribly ashamed, that I would ever entertain any of these ideas. But I did, and I'm sorry." That's atonement. That's it, and then the sealing. When you're sealed in that, this is the point, when you're able to face all of your sinfulness, to have it all laid out before you, and you simply say, "I acknowledge it all. I acknowledge all of this. I have believed such lies about you. Therefore, because I have believed lies about you, I have done things to my brothers and sisters that are unrighteous. I have manifested my natural rebellion towards the false understanding I had of you. I have manifested it on my brethren, and I'm asking for forgiveness." That's atonement. That's final atonement.

Let's go into that a little bit. It is an atonement that doesn't need to be atoned for, an atonement that needs nothing added to it. It's a complete atonement. Apologies to Leroy Froom. "Thus it was revealed that misery was not God's will, the result of his wrath, but that it was the devil's will, the result of sin. Christ's whole life, from Bethlehem's manger to Calvary's cross, was a life of untarnished, unadulterated love. But who was Christ? The word means "anointed." He was the anointed of God, anointed with God's spirit to live God's life on earth. Said the angel: "They shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us." So he's moving into an area here about atonement. When people think about atonement, they typically think only of one event...the cross. But he's moving into somewhere else here...the manifestation of his life, his ministry, enduring such contradiction of sin as against himself. This manifestation of love, in the face of those who hated him and wanted to kill him, was manifesting the love of God, and this was working reconciliation and bringing atonement. So his life is part of this atonement, this self-denial. Jesus says, "He that will follow me, let him deny himself...take up his cross." So where is the cross? Self. It's every day. Christ is on the cross every day denying himself with those who mocked him, those who derided him, and those who were trying to kill him. As we know and have read in Desire of Ages, all the Pharisees were coming to Mary saying, "Keep that boy under control. He's too independent." Mary was placed in a really difficult situation. "Come on, Jesus, here we go. Try and fit in with everyone." But he just didn't fit in with that mind, did he? He couldn't fit in with that mind, and us with our carnal mind.

Let me just read a little bit more. "Ah, yes! There had been gods enough before Jesus came to reveal to the lost world the knowledge of the Father. In Egypt it was said at one time that it was easier to find a god than a man; so numerous were they. The trouble was none of them was our Father. They were none of them with us. They were all gods afar off in the distance and in the dim, and none of them loved the human soul. There were gods of war, and gods of storm, and gods of lust, theft, and drunken revelry, until every base and angry passion of the lost soul was deified and worshiped, to drag the soul farther down into sin and resultant misery. There was a god in the clouds to shoot forth the arrows of the angry lightning; a god in the ocean to toss the waves on high, and wreck the ships freighted with human life." He writes well, doesn't he? "A god in the earth to make it tremble with terror, and pour forth lava from mountaintops, desolating the cities at its base; a god everywhere for wrath and destruction; a god everywhere whose wrath must be appeased by some bloody sacrifice; a god everywhere but always too far away to be reached by the prayers of trembling faith, surging up from suffering souls. But when Jesus came, he was God with us--with us in sorrow, for he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; with us in joy, for he too, rejoiced at the wedding feast; with us in childhood, for he was a child, and even the child's timid prayer can reach his heart; with us in youth, for he knows all its slippery paths, all its haunting fears, that so silently take the place of the fleeting phantoms of its high ideals, and high hopes unrealized; with us in poverty, for he had not where to lay his head; with us in work and weariness, for he was a carpenter; with us in persecution, for he was led as a lamb to the slaughter; with us in the sad hour of final parting from loved ones, for did he not say on the cross, "Behold thy mother," to John?; with us when our faith almost fails, for did not he, too, say in anguish, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"; with us in the dark valley of death, for he likewise took part in the same, that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil. Ah, yes. He was Emanuel, which being interpreted is God with us." So why is he saying all this? "How the devil's falsehoods flee as we behold God revealed in Jesus Christ. How the estranged soul comes back to its native home, and becomes at one with God." You see what he's saying? The life of Jesus is working atonement through manifestation of the love of God.

A manifestation of the character of God is working atonement. This is the relational understanding of atonement, whereas the whole of Christianity is focused on the act of death to satisfy an angry deity that must be satisfied with blood to satisfy the demands of the law. That's a legal transaction. "I'm satisfied. It's done." It's a completely different mindset to what is being described here in this book of a relational, a reaching out of the Father through his Son. "I want you to know what I'm like. I want you to understand." This is what works the atonement. Love begets love. We can't deny it. In Desire of Ages, page 22, "The exercise of force is contrary to the principles of God's government." He cannot use force. He will not use force. It doesn't do anything. Atonement is spiritual. It is a winning back of the heart through a manifestation of the character of God.

So in that context, what is going to produce final atonement for the world? God revealed in his people; the manifestation of the spirit of Christ, Christ in you the hope of glory, enduring suffering and death for Christ to manifest the atonement. That's final atonement, and that is a revolution in thought. It's a completely different concept of final atonement and our part to play in that atonement. This is impacted by thinking in terms of how I am to deal with the people around me. Are we his disciples? Take up your cross. Deny yourself when people irritate you, when they do things the way that you wouldn't do them, and they leave messes behind them that you need to clean up. We are challenged with the thoughts that this person is disrespecting me, this person is causing annoyance, this person is causing me to work harder than I need to work, and this person doesn't understand how to do things properly. A lot of our daily trials and tribulations are related to these types of thoughts of people who don't get it. These are the very baby steps of the cross, of manifesting God's love without anything in return, again and again. What allows the soul to endure this kind of abuse? Christ himself. It is Christ doing it. He is beloved of the Father. He knows he's beloved of the Father. He's had that belief tested to the utmost, tested beyond what we will ever be tested. He knows that the Father loves him. When that spirit abides in you, you are a fortress impregnable, as it says in Desire of Ages. You can begin to endure the contradiction of sinners against yourself. So the final atonement is a manifestation of Christ in his people, the

144,000, the first fruits to God. It's a manifestation of that character, in the face of such wickedness, that will bring about final atonement.

This ties together so many things. We can talk about on the atonement in heaven and the cleansing of the earthly sanctuary. You can look at it all that way as well, but the bottom line is that it's Christ fully manifesting. As it says in Revelation chapter 12, "And they overcame by the blood of the lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they loved not their lives unto the death." They knew that they were secure in Christ. They could lay down their lives happily. If it would reveal the love of Christ, if it would reveal the agape of God, if they had the opportunity to manifest the character of Christ, happily would they do it. Blot my name from the book; I don't care for anything in this life anymore. All I see is my Father's character, and if laying down my life gives glory to Him, then let it be. This is atonement. This light that lights the earth with its glory, it's this manifestation of self-denial and selfless love in the face of persecution and hatred. That's the light that's going to lighten the earth. That's what's going to turn men's hearts. That's what's going to produce the 144,000 and the great multitude. That's what final atonement is all about. It's really simple, isn't it? It all spins on the relational framework, the relational understanding of the law and of atonement.

Should I read a bit more? "It is the goodness of God that leads us back to the Father's house in repentance. This goodness is revealed through Christ, so him hath God exalted to be a Prince and a Savior, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. The theological world resolves itself into two great schools." It's an interesting thought process he has here. "The first of these is represented by so-called orthodoxy, the last by Unitarianism." So what's orthodoxy? Trinitarianism. He talks about Trinitarianism and Unitarianism. "The first one of these schools is always talking about the death of Christ." Isn't that true? "...The last one, about his life. Now it is impossible to dwell too much upon the death of Christ, and it is also impossible to linger too lovingly over the memory of his life, but that two should not be separated in the thought." He makes this beautiful analogy between the life of Christ and of the death of Christ, saying they must be put together. Haven't we been talking about that in terms of the old and the new covenant being put together? God kills and God makes alive and you mustn't separate the two. He's talking about the same thing. You cannot separate the life of Christ from the death of Christ in the atonement. That's what he's saying. He goes on to say this. "Nothing earthly is more capable of inspiring the soul and lifting it to noble endeavor than the self-sacrificing, heroic death of the merely human hero. But that death is inspiring becomes heroic, in fact, only when taken in connection with the life, with the circumstances which led to the death. So with the death of the divine Son of God; it is not the death only, but the life also. For Paul says, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life." And what do we see in his life? A manifestation of the character of God, which turns our hearts towards the Father. "The death of Christ becomes significant only when taken in connection with his life of self-sacrifice, which led to and was the cause of his death. Only thus does the death have power to reveal God's love so as to reconcile us to him." When I was reading this, I thought this is profound what this man is saying here. Is it an accident that this should suddenly appear exactly 120 years after it was written? This was written in 1897, and here we are in 2017, in the third and fourth generation, and I'm reading this. This is profound what this man is saying. Has the iniquity been visited and is eye salve now being given to actually understand the meaning of these words, that our hearts would be turned to our forefathers that we should understand this? I love talking about these things on a new moon. I feel inspired. This is amazing.

Christ's death is just a magnification of his life. It's the ultimate expression of what his life was about. But in Christendom it's all waiting to get to the deed to be done, the death. But it's out of context if his whole life was one of self-sacrifice, and giving of himself, and turning the other cheek, and his death simply magnified massively what his life was all about. The thief on the cross next to him, he died on the cross as well. If it's only about death, it might as well be his death as well as anybody else's. It's the life that gives significance to the death. He goes on and he says, "The first of these theological schools, neglecting almost entirely and failing to understand the humanity of Christ..." and he says some good things about the humanity of Christ, "Is ever

exclaiming Ecce Deus, behold the God. While the last, denying the divinity of Christ, takes up the cry Ecce homo, behold the man." Do you see the oppositional framework? He's addressing this oppositional thinking and he's putting it together. I like this language; it's very, very good. "It seems to the author that both of these make a grave, if not fatal mistake. With reference to the first I would say God is love. Love, and therefore God, is most revealed in Jesus Christ when we remember that in him, for our good, divinity actually took upon itself humanity..." He used the word upon. Thank you. "...With all its weaknesses and weariness, with all its passions and loves, and longings, and with all its temptations. In fact, it is only thus that Christ reveals God, and is himself divine, for God is love. On the other hand, if Jesus was only human, and not the divine Son, how did it come that his life so transcends all other lives ever lived in the world," good question, "towering so above men of his time and of all other times, as to stand alone, the one center of type and memorial, of prophecy and history, of hope and faith?" I like the way he writes. It's beautiful, isn't it? "For past and coming ages, if only human, how does this reveal other than the human? How does it so reveal God as to bring the world back to him?" This is the issue. He cannot only be man, he must reveal God; this is the key. This is the divine pattern, "If you've seen me, you've seen the Father." It's the ultimate divine pattern of God manifest in the flesh; the invisible manifested through the visible. Always together, never separated, but man is always separating. Jesus was just like us. God help us. Jesus was God with us, but on the other side the two natures were not mysteriously blended, they were interestingly joined and it was just his humanity that died. Divinity did not die. Jesus didn't actually die on the cross. All this emphasis comes through. But the water and the blood is what came through. We saw water and blood, symbolizing divinity and humanity.

Reading on, "If only human, what can it do for the human race, only to lift it, maybe, the tide of their aspirations and longings a little higher without increasing the power for a possible realization? This were but to increase their misery by taunting them with impossibilities." There is no substitution, only emulation; I've done it, you do it, the great Arian heresy. We're going to see a lot of this reenacted, I assure you, with the focus on Arianism, and Christ being exactly like us. It's going to destroy the gospel. Yes, all Trinitarians will be pointing and going, "Yes, see, see, we told you." And they will tell you, because on that point they're right, but not seeing the log in their own eye, they have a problem. "It were but to hold above them the apple of life, only keeping it ever beyond their grasp. Ah, no! This is not like God. Either of these extremes is fatal. We need simply to believe the Bible record of the incarnation. We cannot understand it. What have we yet understood of the mystery of even vegetable and animal life? Here reason fails." I agree with him. "And the most blatant science stands dumb, and yet here we believe and know. Why should we wonder that the divine life in Christ, and through him in us, should be a mystery? And why refuse to believe it is, because it is a mystery? What does the incarnation mean? Simply this, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, that Jesus was divine, and yet human, perfect God and perfect man, Son of God and Son of man, that with the divine arm he might grasp the throne of the Infinite, while with the human arm he encircles humanity." He's quoting Ellen White, obviously. "...With all its woes and needs, with all its hungering and heartache, and encircling it to lift it up, to unite it to God, thus making the atonement." Is that beautiful? This is something we need to read and contemplate. This is where I want to go. It's beautiful. The nature of Christ is part of the atonement. This is why it's been such a battlefield in understanding this particular issue. Of course Satan polarizes in his Hegelian demonism to push apart. Christ took to nature before the fall, Christ was only like us; just polarizing the issue in order to destroy the atonement. I don't want to get too deep into that, but I think you get the idea. The whole great idea behind that is there's a divine pattern in that we can be reconciled to the Father through that, and so can others be reconciled to us and to the Father. Through the same channel there is reconciliation, not just for us, but for wayward ones. We become the ambassadors for Christ. As we go through our reconciliation, we come into Christ, and we are reconciled to God. So Paul says, "Be ye reconciled to God," through the spirit that is coming to my life, reaching out to you. "Out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water," through the atonement. The atonement is living.

Now through a little bit of the next chapter, The Atonement Vicarious. Now, listen to this, because it's really, really interesting. When we did the presentation, The Penalty of Sin, and that God was not the one demanding

the death of the transgressor, but man himself, the cry goes up, "You're denying the atonement; death must be the penalty for sin in order for the atonement to make sense." Do you understand what I'm saying? The natural thinking of man is that in order for the atonement to take place, God needs to kill someone who transgresses his law; he must be appeased in order for atonement to take place. But what we are suggesting is something completely different, that God is not the one that is wroth with us. We're the ones who are wroth with him. So the atonement, then, is something completely different from the natural understanding of man. I'm just flagging that point because there have been some accusations that I am denying the vicarious understanding of the atonement.

Now, back to George Fifiield, "After reading the last chapter, some conscientious but timid soul may ask, "Is not this denying the vicarious atonement?" He was on it. "I answer NO, a thousand times, no. It is only lifting and broadening and enlarging our conception of the vicarious atonement, and bringing it into harmony with what we know of God's character, as revealed in his work and his word." That takes a little bit to digest. The atonement is being magnified through the life of Christ. It's broadening its understanding in the relational context. People will cry it's a denial of the vicarious atonement in the legal framework of Christianity that has existed for the last two thousand years. That's a denial of the atonement, but not in the relational kingdom, you see? We'll need to go over this a few times, but I'm just planting some seeds for you. "Jesus is still the world's only Savior. Both in life and in death he suffered vicariously, bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows, suffering the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God. That is, that he might make an atonement." In his life and his death, this concept of atonement is not just death only. "Christ's death was not the result of an outpouring of the Father's wrath. It was the result of the world's violation of the Father's law of love. His death was simply the climax of his life. In every day's labor of love, he had been giving his life, his very heart and soul, to uplift and redeem humanity. But the hearts of men were so cold and hard through sin that they knew it not. On Calvary he completed the gift, while the world mocked at the foot of the cross. He lived a perfectly unselfish life in a world of sin and selfishness and the world hated him because his life showed the selfishness and hypocrisy of its own. Paul said that if he preached circumcision, he would escape persecution, for then would the offense of the cross cease. So with Jesus; if he had turned to the right or to the left from the straight line of truth, he might have escaped the crucifixion. The devil and wicked men hated truth, not error. Nevertheless, it is the truth only that can save men. Jesus kept this ever in mind in constantly saying, "Not my will, but thine be done." He was ever loyal to the truth and his life led to his death. The cross was at the end of the avenue of self-sacrifice. In all this, he was only bearing our griefs and carrying our sorrows." Do you comprehend his connection there? He was carrying our griefs. All of this is part of this process, and this is important for us in understanding final atonement. "His life and his death were like those of the prophets before him and the apostles after him. Only that in him the idea was reached and realized. Steven said to the Jews, "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, you do always resist the Holy Ghost. As did your fathers, so do ye. Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted?" It goes on, but I won't read all of this, because I'll let you go over this in your own time.

I'll come down to this particular point. It says, "But says one, if this is the nature of Christ's sacrifice, a living sacrifice," because that's what Paul talks about, present your body as a living sacrifice. This is the atonement. "...As well as a dying one." Here's the thing, and this is where the divine pattern really kicks in. It's not just a dying, but a living sacrifice that leads to a dying sacrifice. "Why is the blood always the symbol of that sacrifice?" This is what I find profound, because we come to that quote. "And why is it said that without the shedding of blood there is no remission?" Now we come to the point. If the blood is the symbol of atonement, how can we say that Christ's life is part of this atonement? This is what he comes down on now. He says, "Ah, in this there are depths of meaning! It is because Jesus was true unto the death. With him there was no flinching, no turning aside, though he beheld the cross at the end of the journey. He said, "Father, not my will, but thine be done." His death has meaning only when taken as one with his life." That end point only came about because of the decisions that he was making while he was alive. It was simply a manifestation of his life. "His death

has meaning only when taken as one with his life, and his life takes on new glory when thus we behold it as leading to his death. He requires us to live that life.”

Now it comes home. He requires us to live this life. If we live the life of Christ, it only leads to one place, and that is to death. It's the only place it can lead. Of course, it's the death of the old man, but it may manifest itself in physical death as well. There is no other path for the disciple of Christ to walk if he wants to be part of the final atonement. He says, "If ye love father or mother, or houses or land, or any earthly treasure, even your own life more than me, you are not worthy of me." If anything, even the cross at the end of the pathway we tread, will turn us aside from the way, we are not his." If anything, even the cross, our thought of the cross is too hard, we can't bear this anymore; we can't bear the ridicule of our brothers and sisters in the church; we can't bear the fact that they think that we are scum; we can't bear the fact that we don't have their fellowship anymore; we can't bear it, this is a cross. It's a straight path, and narrow; few there be that find it. "If anything, even the cross at the end of the pathway we tread, will turn us aside from the way, we are not his; and if we are not his, there is no remission." The relationship has failed and all is lost. You've broken the connection.

"Nothing but the blood could signify a sacrifice so complete," to love not your life unto the death. When you understand the source/channel principle of the divine pattern, the death of Christ began in the invisible, in his mind. This is where it was formulated, while he was living, and it manifested itself in physical death. So the life and the death are always together in the divine pattern. One is manifesting through the other. Then he says these words, "Nothing but the blood could signify a sacrifice so complete. Then is it not in death only that the life's blood is given? It was Paul who spoke of always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." When I read those words, I rejoiced because this is what we've been talking about in terms of the sufferings of Christ, pierced; even today Christ is suffering the agonies of crucifixion. He's going through those things today. This is part of the atonement that is still going on right now, "Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus." Even if you're not connecting all of the dots here, what I would say to you tonight is that this is worth studying. For everything that you're worth, study this issue because it's the final atonement. It says, "...that the life also of Jesus might be manifest in our body." In order for that to take place, always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, and what was that? A death to the flesh, which is manifest in our flesh. We die to ourselves. When someone slaps us on the one cheek, we turn the other cheek. I can't do it, but when I think about the cross, I choose, I set my path towards Jerusalem. I set my mind like a flint. I'm going in that direction, because that's where my Savior has gone, and he will give me the grace to follow him to death and resurrection. "It can be manifest in no other way. The heart that is broadened and made tender through suffering, till, like his, it takes in humanity with all its needs and all its longings, giving unasked sympathy and helpfulness to all. This heart knows what it is to give its life blood daily." Did you capture the significance? Without the shedding of blood; he's bringing it into the living reality. The giving of your lifeblood, to deny yourself, to allow Christ in you; this is part of what he is talking about is the atonement. "...To die daily that the life of Christ might be manifest in it. There are times when it takes more courage and true heroism to live, and to live right, than to die." Is that true?

Sometimes it's easier to die than to live, and to face the scorn and the repulsion and all of those things. "The heart, after the storm and struggle are over, beats quietly toward the close. Yes Carlyle well says, "My brother, the brave man has to give his life away. Give it, I advise thee; thou dost not expect to sell thy life in any adequate manner? The wages of every noble work do yet lie in heaven or else nowhere." It is a daily giving of the life, such as only the shedding of the life's blood can signify. This is Christianity."

The depth of this book was given to us in 1897. Now, in this book, he does not fully get to the point of addressing the issue of the destruction and punishment of God in the Old Testament and the final punishment. He doesn't get there in this book, but on the atonement and the close of probation he nails it. He says we are the ones who close the probation, not God, because he says God's mercy is everlasting. He made those connections in 1897. To think that we as a people had access to this information for 120 years! The fact that

this book has disappeared from existence is evidence of the enmity of man against the gospel. The time is up. It's laid out here in this booklet. When I read these things I rejoiced. I rejoiced and I thought, "Ah, I see the atonement." It fits in with the identity message. It's all connected with what we've been saying all along. It fits perfectly in here. Of course, I had never thought about the atonement, because I had been so trained in the legal framework of the atonement, that I had completely missed it. I had never studied that far in the identity message of the relational understanding of the atonement rather than the performance-based understanding of the atonement. And now, here it is in the book. I had to go back to our forefathers to have it put in my face, and I had to be reading it during the time of the new moon to get a four-fold magnification. Oh, finally! Where have you been?

I would say that, in closing, the work of the 144,000 is this revelation of the character of Christ, of selflessness. Of course, the 144,000, they will face death, but they don't die. So what does that tell you? Their death is in the life. They are willing to die. They stare death in the face. They have the death decree. They refuse to submit to the death decree knowing that it means certain death, and they stare it in the face and say, "We will die. We're not careful to answer to you, O king. We will not bow. We will not bow to this image of Catholicism. We will not bow to this because that is a treachery to our God. We cannot do it. As much as we love you, as much as we want to honor you and serve you in whatever other way we can, we cannot do this. Thus we are willing to die." Obviously, in that struggle of facing their death, the time of Jacob's struggle, they're wrestling in the soul. "Can I face death? Can I face death with a clear conscience? Can I face it and know that all of my sins have been confessed?" It seems apparent to us that we must die. The whole world is against us. Everyone has forsaken us. We've got nothing left. The whole world has arraigned against you, and it's you against the world. That's the way that it feels. Does the anchor hold? You also see yourself as a wretched sinner, pathetic, and worthless. You look back at your life, and everything is tainted with self and sinfulness. It's all laid out there. You think, "What hope do I have? Into thy hands I commend my spirit." The spirit of Jesus will not break. The scripture cannot be broken, as it says. I believe that the Lord is giving us a message, the next level to look at in this particular question, the atonement, a relational concept of the atonement that will completely change. But it had to go this way, because these are the questions that I've been challenged on since we've been talking about the penalty of sin as not coming from God's side. That has to change the atonement, and it makes it relational, and the character of God; it all fits in there. It's all beautifully connected. I do have a copy of this on the website, God is Love, but I've reformatted it so I can send it. I'll put it up on the website as well so you can have a look at it.