

## Victory in the Thought-life - 5

A sermon by Larry Kirkpatrick  
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The sensational so often crowds out the practical. As our time of service here is almost run out, I have been impressed that the most important topic to be addressed this sabbath morning is not what the papacy is doing, nor the latest allegedly heaven-sent dreams someone purports to be having, nor to outline the defects in a suggested readjustment to the Seventh-day Adventist understanding of time prophecies, but rather, one and only one bottom-line topic: How to overcome sin.

I have been working on a manuscript for a book GreatControversy.org plans to publish when it has the resources, titled *Victory in the Thought-life*. Today's message is a further elaboration on this theme (several messages on the same line were previously presented).

We proceed thus. First, the basics of how we make decisions that advance us toward either death or righteousness; then, serving God with our whole heart; lastly, a tool for overcoming.

### **Basics of Human Decision-making**

#### Demonically or Divinely Led

James says something very strange at the beginning of his epistle. We are to be joyful when we see that we have entered into situations of testing (James 1:2). The testing of our faith creates endurance (v. 3), and long experience with endurance brings our Christianity to completion so that we lack nothing (vv. 3, 4).

Elsewhere, we are instructed to pray that we are not led into temptation but rather delivered from evil (Matthew 6:13).

Remember that in James the comment is about when one *falls into* temptations, but in Matthew, being *led into* them. That is, there is a difference between testing in circumstances that God has prepared for us, and with temptations that one has been led into by demons who have not our best interests at heart. God will use difficult circumstances to test us and aid us in growing truer in righteousness. He promises that He will refine and purify and purge His people, “that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness” (Malachi 3:3). In contrast, if one is led into temptation, he is following demonic bait, and probably already in over his head.

Jesus was led into the wilderness but by the Holy Spirit. And there He was tested. When God sends you into a situation, and you stay next to Him, you will not be tempted above that ye are able (1 Corinthians 10:13). God never places us in a situation of inevitable failure but always places us in a situation of inevitable success—if we will entrust ourselves to Him and follow His counsels. Through the right exercise of the will He plans to renew our minds.

### The Law of Desire

A crucial key in understanding how we make choices is the law of desire. James 1:14, 15 offers the Scriptural insight:

Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.

Every man is tempted, that is, tested, when he is drawn away by his own desires. Our desires may be legitimate or not. There is something in us that is at the top of our hierarchy, something that has first place in our values-scale. Matthew Levi would say it is something that we have set our heart upon and that we are “seeking first.”

Notice how James calls this our being “enticed, or more literally, “baited.” Where KJV has “lust,” we better understand if we use the word “desire.” When we are led away by our own desire, James says we are enticed, literally, that we have taken the “bait.” Thus, James says that every person is tested when he is drawn away by his own desires and baited.

Satan uses our own desires as bait. He knows us well enough to use desires which he has already encouraged in us. We have made them our own, and he uses them to entrap us. When we “seek first” that which is part of our old, pre-conversion value system, we are easily entrapped. His best bait is often the old bait, the familiar sin, the desperate and well-worn path of self-destruction already known by each of us so well.

When this bait is taken, when our desire is fulfilled, then the moment of birth has arrived: sin is born. Unless repented, death is inevitable.

Paul understood the same central role of decision:

What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace? God forbid. Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? 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. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as ye have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness (Romans 6:15-19).

Our choice is servitude to sin, which leads to death, or obedience, which leads to righteousness.

Our actions are always trade-offs. We regard one satisfaction as superior to another. We choose what we desire the most. Therefore, there needs to be a change in what we most desire.

Ellen White understood the same principle. In *Steps to Christ*, she stated that we need to understand the true force of the will, that it is the governing power in human nature. Everything depends on its right action. “The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise” (*Steps to Christ*, p. 47).

She also said that desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go, but that if we stop there (merely desiring change but not choosing to change, that is, we continue to desire the forbidden more), those desires will not take us to our hoped-for destination. When one speaks of his desire to overcome but refuses to make that desire *primary*, he refuses to come to the point of *yielding* his will to God. He refuses to choose to be a Christian.

At the end of the day, it all boils down to the disposition that we choose for ourselves, to what we intentional and persistently seek for and endure for. Our heart is ever being reshaped, and if we are honest, we admit that we choose that shape.

### Seeking First

Here is a principle that holds true for all, converted or unconverted: Every conscious action that men make is intended by them to improve their satisfaction. If I am seeking immediate pleasure, and that is my highest value at the moment, I will decide accordingly. If I am seeking “first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33), then that is of highest value and all other decisions will be subordinated to that valuation.

At any given moment, there is something that I am “seeking first.” I have what might be called a scale or hierarchy of values, a certain presently dominant attitudinal perspective. If I am unconverted, my primary values will be in accordance with this. If I am a converted person,

likewise, my primary values will be in accordance with this. It is quite crucial who or what has my heart.

What's more, the choices I will make are directly related to whether I think that the source of dissatisfaction can be changed. If I do not think that I can change my situation, I will expend but little energy trying. If I do not think that it is really possible to overcome sin, I will not attempt it. People do not pursue that which they hold as impossible of accomplishment.

If it is true that we operate according to our current scale of values, then it is also true that we will act to remove our most pressing cause of dissatisfaction first. If overcoming a certain sin issue is my primary object, then my expenditure of emotional and spiritual resources will be commensurate with my heart's desire. Hear a warning:

The ambitious man seeks for position, honor, and power. He gains his object, and sinks into the grave. The world applauds him, and calls him a successful man; but, weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, he is pronounced wanting, and it is too late to redeem his failure. He has gratified vanity and chased illusions, and in the books of Heaven eternal loss is put down opposite his name.

Thus all have some engrossing object to absorb the mind, and often this cherished object is allowed to separate the soul from God. Jesus is acquainted with the desires of the human heart, and the Bible is given us to direct them into the proper channel. This holy word does not forbid activity; it does not leave men to lead aimless lives; it presents before them objects worthy of their best efforts. The Bible shows the pleasure-seeker the path of peace and joy; it directs the aspirations of the ambitious. If wealth is the object of desire, it unfolds treasures that will never disappoint,—unsearchable riches, imperishable as the throne of the Eternal (*The Signs of the Times*, July 3, 1884).

He who gratifies desires rooted in the flesh chases illusions. He may obtain his desire only to find it empty attainment. We are to seek first better things, and reap accordingly (Romans 8:5-17).

## Two Tracks of Deception

What method then does Satan employ to lead us to choose other than for our best good?

The beginning of yielding to temptation is in the sin of permitting the mind to waver, to be inconsistent in your trust in God. The wicked one is ever watching for a chance to misrepresent God, and to attract the mind to that which is forbidden. If he can, he will fasten the mind upon the things of the world. He will endeavor to excite the emotions, to arouse the passions, to fasten the affections on that which is not for your good; but it is for you to hold every emotion and passion under control, in calm subjection to reason and conscience. Then Satan loses his power to control the mind. The work to which Christ calls us is to the work of progressive conquest over spiritual evil in our characters. Natural tendencies are to be overcome; for the natural disposition is to be transformed by the grace of Christ. Appetite and passion must be conquered, and the will must be placed wholly on the side of Christ. This will not be a painful process, if the heart is opened to receive the impression of the Spirit of God. ‘Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ’ (*Review and Herald*, June 14, 1892).

Here we find two specific problems: (1) inconsistent trust in God, and (2) Satanic endeavors to attract and fasten the mind and affections to the forbidden. The prescription given in prevention of these, is for “you to hold every emotion and passion under control.” The opposite of this is Satan’s exercise of “his power to control the mind.” You control it or he does. If the emotions and passions are ascendent, he has an open door, if reason and conscience are ascendant, you have control. The key to consistent control is for us to cooperate with God, permitting Him to transform the natural disposition of the fallen man. It is a work of progressive conquest. Spiritual evil has already been inwoven by us into our characters, and this is to be overcome as we place our will wholly on the side of Christ.

But wasn’t Jesus different? We can echo Him in some very limited fashion, but certainly we may not ourselves have the higher attributes of His being?

The higher attributes of His [Jesus'] being it is our privilege to have, if we will, through the provisions He has made, appropriate these blessings and diligently cultivate the good in the place of the evil. We have reason, conscience, memory, will, affections—all the attributes a human being can possess. Through the provision made when God and the Son of God made a covenant to rescue man from the bondage of Satan, every facility was provided that human nature should come into union with His divine nature. In such a nature was our Lord tempted. He could have yielded to Satan's lying suggestions as did Adam, but we should adore and glorify the Lamb of God that He did not in a single point yield one jot or one tittle (*Selected Messages*, vol. 3, p. 130).

This remarkable statement tells us that we are to have “the higher attributes of [Jesus'] being.” To acquire these attributes, we must appropriate God's blessings, diligently cultivating the good in the place of the evil. Five attributes are noted: (1) reason, (2) conscience, (3) memory, (4) will, (5) affections. These are the very same attributes of Jesus' humanity, and God will use these attributes to bring renewal of the person who cooperates with the Holy Spirit.

### **Seeking With the Whole Heart**

#### Can We Really?

Which brings us to the central question: How then are we to seek God with our whole heart? Is this even possible? David answers:

With my whole heart I have sought Thee. Thy word have I hid in mine heart that I might not sin against Thee (Psalm 119:10, 11).

There is a change of heart involved. This is no mere forensics.

The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth. . . . When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ's Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven (*Steps to Christ*, pp. 67, 73).

Here is the change sought: A transformation of the whole nature, an actual change of thoughts, revision of desires. A genuine walk with Jesus grants us all these, and more! Jesus, the Desire of Ages, or, as Haggai calls Him, “the Desire of All Nations” shall come (Haggai 2:7). But we must permit Him to come. This involves our heart.

But how high is the calling of the basic Christian? Be astonished and rejoice!

The true Christian obtains an experience which brings holiness. He is without a spot of guilt upon the conscience or a taint of corruption upon the soul. The spirituality of the law of God, with its limiting principles, is brought into his life. The light of truth irradiates his understanding. A glow of perfect love for the Redeemer clears away the miasma which has interposed between his soul and God. The will of God has become his will, pure, elevated, refined, and sanctified. His countenance reveals the light of heaven. His body is a fit temple for the Holy Spirit. Holiness adorns his character. God can commune with him, for soul and body are in harmony with God (*In Heavenly Places*, p. 200).

This statement marks out the extremely high position to be obtained, not just by the rare upper crust but by every true Christian: “He is without a spot of guilt upon the conscience or a taint of corruption upon the soul. The spirituality of the law of God, with its limiting principles, is brought into his life.” He will have no spot even upon the conscience, no taint of corruption upon his soul. In the power of the Holy Spirit the limiting principles of the law of God are brought into his life.

### Setting Up Idols in the Heart

Men do not start out as idolators. We begin life with a disordered humanity, commonly called a fallen nature. It is a nature bent away from the original, a nature changed from the original. After Adam’s disobedience, it is ready to give desire highest place. There is a change. Our nature was originally centrifugal, its interests flowing outward from itself. After the Fall this

is reversed, so that it is centripetal, so that our interests are directed inwardly to ourselves. The soil of humanity is ready to take either good seed or weeds. We choose what we allow to grow there. Our nature opposes us; in the Christian walk we learn to countermand its self-destructive inclination. More than this, in the power of God we cooperate in its transformation.

As noted, we do not start out as idolators; we become such:

And the word of the Lord came unto me, saying, son of man, these men have set up their idols in their heart, and put the stumblingblock of their iniquity before their face: should I be enquired of at all by them? Therefore speak unto them, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord God; every man of the house of Israel that setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to the prophet; I the Lord will answer him that cometh according to the multitude of his idols; that I may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from Me through their idols. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God; Repent, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the stranger that sojourneth in Israel, which separateth himself from Me, and setteth up his idols in his heart, and putteth the stumblingblock of his iniquity before his face, and cometh to a prophet to enquire of him concerning Me; I the Lord will answer him by Myself: And I will set My face against that man, and will make him a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of My people; and ye shall know that I am the Lord (Ezekiel 14:2-8).

Who sets up the idol in the heart? They are personal. “Every man of the house of Israel that setteth up *his* idols in his heart.” Each chooses his own. He sets them up in the one domain that he has exclusive control over: his own heart.

People do not have just one idol in their heart. In time, a whole collection is acquired, “the multitude of his idols.” Here we see again in operation what we have called the “scale of values.” Each person has a hierarchy of his own by which he values those things he has chosen to be central to his life. There are many idols. Just as we may set up idols in our heart, so too we

may choose to bow down to the Supreme over all, the only Being worthy of our worship—God, our Creator.

### Idolatry Unawares?

To focus one's affections on an idol is to focus them away from the divine. This is the inevitable outcome.

They that make them [idols] are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them (Psalm 115:8).

One who crafts idols, literal little statues, knows he is making them. He knows that they have hands but do not touch, mouths but do not speak. But the pace of life has quickened a great deal since those days. Some move through life very fast. So much information comes at us, demanding our almost instant attention and decision, that we cannot help but be superficial in places. We have little time to think for ourselves or to process an idea, an issue, a concern, a passing impression of strangeness. It may be quite easy for us to make idols, to worship them, and to become like them, hardly realizing what we are doing.

The statement is clear: Those who make idols (wittingly or unwittingly) are like them. Notice the measure. We have a means of nailing down whether we are idol makers or worshippers. See what the Scripture says? “So is every one that trusteth in them.” What are you trusting in? Your retirement? Your credential? Your lawyer? Your conference president? Your government president? Your degree? Your career? Your spouse? Your brawn? Your intellect? These are just samples. Any of these, and more, could easily be idols to you. What are you placing your trust in?

No one starts out as an idol worshipper; we become such. We progressively deanimate ourselves. To animate is to bring to life. God made Adam; He animated Him. When you were conceived and born, God animated you. Every little life is precious. It is through our own choices that we become more alive or that we die. As God says, “Choose life” (Deuteronomy 30:19).

If we would choose life, we must choose, and carefully, our desires. Eve’s problem, in Genesis 3.6, was that after listening to the serpent, she accepted his proposition that the tree of knowledge of good and evil was “a tree to be desired.” An idol was presented before her and she chose to value it more highly than trust in God. She set that idol up in her heart. Satan placed it in front of her, dangled the bait; she chose to covet.

### Beholding Jesus Instead

By beholding we are changed (2 Corinthians 3:18). This is the central issue with idols. By focusing our attentions, energies, on the wrong things, we place them at the top of our values-scale. They become our chief interest. As we chase for them, we invest more of our heart in them. They begin to rule us. They may be unliving, unalive, unreal, but if they have our heart, they are idols, and we have set them up in our heart. They become overmastering baubles. The opossum crossing the road at night sees the headlights of the car. Fascinating! he thinks, gawking. He is flattened by the wheel.

How necessary that we respond to the plea of God in Ezekiel 18:30, 31:

Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?

Here is a clear placement of responsibility and necessity. Although Ezekiel's statement is addressed to all Israel, it holds true also for the individual. He must repent. He must turn himself. That is, the power for turning is not in him, but comes from God. Nevertheless, the choice to turn and the exercise of persistence, God-given though these are, is imperative. He must personally turn the wheel. "The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 47). As you act in persistent exercise of this choice, "You will have strength from above to hold you steadfast" (*Ibid.*, p. 48).

Indeed, the Bible promise is, "Delight thyself also in the Lord; and He shall give thee the desires of thine heart" (Psalm 37:4). God must be *absolutely* first. Jesus must become for each of us the Desire of Ages, the Center, the First, the Primary. If God is first, then our desires will be rightly ordered, our scale of values rightly set. But we must persist, be converted afresh moment by moment. Then we can seek Him with our whole heart. We should not forget the promise: "I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me" (John 12:32).

### **Motivations List**

When it comes to changing our heart, practical tools are needed. One such is a motivations list. Before we learn about the motivations list, hear inspired insights concerning the function of motive and motivation.

It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 615).

Every action derives its quality from the motive which prompts it, and if the motives are not high and pure and unselfish, the mind and character will never become well balanced (*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 171).

In every act of life we reveal one or the other of the two antagonistic motives (*Education*, p. 190).

Our acts, whether outwardly visible or not, are all stamped. They are marked as acts of ignominy, literally, “disgrace” or “bad name,” or, as acts of “high moral worth.” Our acts must be high and pure and unselfish, in order to well-balance the mind and character. The motives are in opposition to each other. Our acts are of ignominy or of high moral worth. It is not just refusal to sin but engagement in positive deeds, acts of high moral worth, that brings peace to the soul.

For everyone God has provided pleasure that may be enjoyed by rich and poor alike—the pleasure found in cultivating pureness of thought and unselfishness of action, the pleasure that comes from speaking sympathizing words and doing kindly deeds. From those who perform such service the light of Christ shines to brighten lives darkened by many shadows (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 198).

Pleasure of the sensual is only one kind, indeed, the lesser kind. Cultivating purity of thought and unselfishness of action is the higher pleasure that God has provided for all. Are we used to experiencing this kind?

Remember that although we have a bent nature, even so, it retains a positive element. There is a handle that God can reach, righteousness still has its appeal to the sinner. Jesus lights every man that comes into the world (John 1:9). Even the evil desire good gifts for their children (Luke 11:13). God has put eternity into the heart of every man (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

Every soul, however degraded by sin, is in God’s sight accounted precious. As the coin bears the image and superscription of the reigning power, so man at his creation bore the image and superscription of God; and though now marred and dim through the influence of sin, the traces of this inscription remain upon every soul. God desires to recover that soul and to retrace upon it His own image in righteousness and holiness (*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 194).

Remember: “The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise” (Steps to Christ, p. 47). What leads man to repentance? “The goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance” (Romans 2:4).

But back to the motivations list. What is it? Simply a list of things that motivate you. It is very personal, a list you make for yourself. It marks your own highest values, most closely held aspirations. It will contain warnings you wish to highlight to yourself, motivating questions and statements.

For example, if you find yourself at the edge of succumbing to temptation, you can ask yourself,

Is this what I am?

Is this who I am?

Is this what I am right now?

These kinds of questions can help us pull back from the edge of selling our long-term values for a bowl of rapidly-cooling red lentils. We can choose what we are, in fact, we can only choose what we are, right now. This moment is the edge of the laser, the moving target, the point of contact between character and eternity. What I choose to be in this moment is what I am; all the rest is either history or future.

When you experience temptation, and battle rages in your mind over whether or not you will sin this sin, immediately conduct a mental review of your motivations list. Keep fresh in your mind principles upon which you will stand, principles that are specific to your own past weaknesses and positive moral commitments. These will come in a variety of types. There may be “rules of engagement,” decisions you have made about how you will fight. Then there are

things that you simply refuse to do, raw decisions that you have made. Again, you may include in your list consequential warnings, that if I do this, then this will result.

Here is an example list:

1. I have made a personal decision that I will not employ images of real people in a fantasy.
2. If I embark on a sexually immoral fantasy I will be calling evil angels into my company.
3. Evil angels accompanying me will negatively impact those I love.
4. God made me in His image, His likeness, to be a moral being, to love righteousness; if I choose this sin then I am selling my birthright and becoming like a beast to be destroyed.
5. To knowingly do wrong will morally degrade my character and make Satan's next temptation more difficult to resist.
6. Satan would love it if I did this; I will not give him the satisfaction!
7. By doing righteousness rather than wickedness, I facilitate the change of character that God is seeking to accomplish in me.
8. God and His angels are watching me even now. Every aspect of my life occurs within sight of heaven.
9. Heaven is cheap enough. I will do, in this moment, whatever it takes to follow Jesus, pay whatever cost, to see Him as He is when He comes (1 John 3:2).

Reviewing your motivations list should have several effects. For one, it is an aid in moving mental disposition from emotional to rational control. Even a brief review takes time, aiding one in seeking divine empowerment. Help for steadfast resistance will come from outside oneself, changing inflamed brain chemistry. Reviewing your motivations list reminds you of your scale of values, and appeals to your inward desire for righteousness.

By the law is the knowledge of sin. But the sinner is constantly being drawn to Jesus by the wonderful manifestation of His love in that He humiliated Himself to die a shameful death upon the cross (*Lift Him Up*, p. 150).

Looking unto Jesus, dwelling upon His virtues, mercies, and purity will create in the soul an utter abhorrence for that which is sinful, and an intense longing and thirsting for righteousness (*Our High Calling*, p. 58).

We may be damaged dust but we are not ruined dust. We are redeemable. We may become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through misplaced desire (2 Peter 1:4). We are involved in a retraining. We have trained ourselves in evil and now we are to be trained in righteousness. Christ is our Trainer. Character is formed better by long discipline than miraculous zappings, and so God's methods may seem mundane but actually are optimum. We want shortcuts for spiritual growth, but there are none.

### How to Develop Your Personal Motivations List

1. Keep the sentences short; make them memorable. Each item can have a full paragraph if you wish, but make the first sentence the memory item.
2. Consider using a memory device, like making the first letter of the first line of each item a letter in a word.
3. Try to include items with both immediate and delayed benefit. There is always the immediate benefit of a clear conscience, and the long term benefit of the hope of heaven.

### Conclusion

We want to conclude with a tragic and then very hopeful thought from Hosea.

Ephraim is joined to idols: let him alone (Hosea 4:17).

Ephraim's condition sounds hopeless. But hear the last chapter of Hosea, chapter 14:

O Israel, return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord: say unto Him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously: so will we render the calves of our lips. Asshur shall not save us; we will not ride upon horses: neither will we say any more to the work of our hands, Ye are our gods: for in Thee the fatherless findeth mercy. I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely: for Mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine: the scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon. Ephraim shall say, What have I to do any more with idols? I have heard him, and observed him: I am like a green fir tree. From me is thy fruit found. Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein.

There will be a people who have learned how to choose God! They understand how decision works, and they have determined they would give their whole hearts to Him. They will no longer say to the works of their hands that they are gods. In the Father, the fatherless find mercy. In the end, Ephraim shall say, “What have I to do any more with idols?”

There is hope, friends! There is help. There is seeking and finding with your whole heart. There is recognition of our idols, and repudiation of them. Jesus becomes all in all. We do overcome. We can give our whole heart. We can receive a whole salvation. We can be changed today and day by day. Our Father has opened before us a clear path. He calls us to choose Jesus. Your answer will be your answer.

All this is very good news. Jesus is coming again, and we can be ready when He comes. We will see Him as He is (1 John 3:2). We will be able to stand in His presence, look into His face, and see, in the end, His glorious divine smile, stretching from ear to ear, and we will enter

into the joy of our Lord. This should be the highest desire, the primary trust, the top of our values-scale. Remaking that values-scale all begins again today. Maranatha!

**Biographical Note:** Pastor Larry Kirkpatrick is a convert to the Adventist faith. Since 1994 he has served in the ministry of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. He holds degrees from Southern Adventist University and the Seventh-day Adventist Theological Seminary. His work has included research assistant for the Ellen G. White Estate, pioneering Adventist internet ministry, involvement in GYC, and presenter at the 50th Anniversary *Questions on Doctrine* Conference. He is author of the books *Real Grace for Real People* and *Cleanse and Close*. For many years his sermons and papers have been published on the internet. Larry and wife Pamela have served churches in Nevada, Utah, and California. The Kirkpatricks presently serve at the [Mentone church](#) near Loma Linda, California.