

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD - NUMBER FOURTEEN - 2
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GOD CAN COMPLETELY HEAL THE DAMAGE DONE

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Number Fourteen: **"God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done."** Another look at the meaning of perfection--in the larger setting of the great controversy over God's character and government.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus uttered those memorable words that continue to trouble saints and sinners alike, "You, therefore, must be perfect." Or should it be translated, "You, therefore, will be perfect"? Is it a promise or a command?

Whether these words are encouraging or forbidding depends again on the kind of Person we believe our God to be and on our understanding of what He wants for His children throughout the universe--and especially on this planet--who have been so caught up in the damaging consequences of the great controversy. Above all, God wants peace and freedom in His family. This requires mutual love and trust, maturity and self control. Such things cannot be commanded, much less produced by force or fear. Instead God offers to set right all that has gone wrong, to completely heal the damage done.

As our Physician Father, God longs to make His children well. Our part is not to heal ourselves but to cooperate. As Jesus said to the paralytic at the pool, "Would you like to be made whole?" Perfection is a generous offer--not a burdensome command! How could we turn such an offer down! But how **do** we cooperate?

Welcome to the fourteenth of our conversations about God--another look at our Heavenly Father in the larger setting of the great controversy over His character and government. The topic for our conversation this time is entitled, **"God Can Completely Heal the Damage Done"**. This is an opportunity to consider once again the Christian doctrine of perfection, but in this larger setting of the conflict in God's family. One reason for including it in this series is that rightly understood, perfection can be good news and speak very well of our Heavenly Father. But, misunderstood, it can put God in a very bad light, indeed, as arbitrary, exacting, and severe.

It was in the Sermon on the Mount that Christ uttered those memorable words that have continued to trouble saints and sinners alike ever since. "You, therefore, must be perfect." Or should it be translated, "You, therefore, will be perfect"? Is it a promise or is it a command? The best known version of these words is the *King James Version*, almost 400 years old now. Look at Matthew 5:48. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect."

Whether those words are encouraging or forbidding, depends, as with so many of our other beliefs, on the kind of Person we believe our God to be, and our understanding of what He wants for His children throughout the universe--and especially of us who live on this planet, and therefore have been particularly caught up in the damaging consequences of the great controversy.

As we have considered all along, all God wants in His family is peace and freedom. But to have peace and freedom, there must be mutual love and trust, maturity and self control. Things like this cannot be commanded or produced by force or fear. Instead God offers to set right and keep right everything that has gone wrong. That means to completely heal the damage

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done.

That is why when Jesus was here to demonstrate the truth about His Father and the plan of salvation, He spent most of His time healing rather than preaching. It is not that he underestimated the influence and value of preaching, but there is no more eloquent way to demonstrate and illustrate the truth about God and His government and what it would mean to set right everything that has gone wrong. He certainly didn't practice the healing arts to attract people to His meetings. When He found people were coming for the wrong reason, you remember, He said something that caused most of them to go home. (see Jn. 6)

When Jesus healed the paralytic at the pool, He was preaching by the very way in which He treated that man. It was a demonstration of the truth about God. Forbid the thought, but imagine that you have terminal lung cancer as a result of a lifetime of smoking. You are sitting anxiously in the office of your physician. What would be the best possible news you could hear? Would it be for the physician to say, "I forgive you for smoking"? Would forgiveness heal the damage done? You would still die. The only difference is that you would die forgiven.

Forgiveness would only help if your physician was accustomed to killing all his patients who contracted lung cancer because of a lifetime of smoking. If that is what he was accustomed to doing, it would be very relieving to have your physician say, "I forgive you." Now he won't have to kill you after all. But physicians do not kill their dying patients. The law would not permit it.

What if the physician should say instead, "I have very good news for you. I can make you completely well."

"How well did you say?"

"I can make you perfectly well, if you will cooperate."

"You mean that though I have spent a lifetime smoking, and this is really my own fault, you can make me perfectly healthy again?"

"Yes, I can."

"Well, actually doctor, all I really want is to be forgiven." Would you say anything so absurd? Yet so often we seem to say that to God.

Wouldn't you rather say, "Doctor if that is true, how can I cooperate? What do you want me to do?"

The doctor might say, "Well this will require some changes. But if you trust me enough to follow my instructions, I can absolutely guarantee that you will be perfectly restored."

Would you say, "One moment, doctor. That word **cooperation** in there, I was counting on **you** to do it all. I am expecting you to put your hand on my chest and heal me by a miracle. If I have to work to get well, then I am going to look for another physician." Would you do that? Or would you say, "You mean if I trust you enough to cooperate with you and follow the instructions you will give me, you can guarantee to make me well? Then, please tell me what I need to do." Wouldn't you also ask most eagerly, like the jailor during the earthquake at Philippi, "What must I do to be saved?" What must I do to be well? (see Acts 16:31)

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As Christians we need more than mere physical healing. We have been damaged in many other ways. The most serious damage has been done to our ability to be the kind of people who can live in peace and freedom; our ability to trust and be trustworthy; to be loving; to be the kind of members of God's family that He could really trust with all the privileges of eternal life.

As we considered last time, in Romans 3, we have all sinned and we continue to come short of God's glorious ideal. You recall that--in verses we looked at earlier--sin is rebelliousness and disorderliness (1 Jn. 3:4). Sin is cheating. Sin is knowing what is right to do and not doing it (James 4:17). Sin is a breakdown of trust (Rom.14:23). We have done this so long, that we have greatly damaged ourselves so that, left alone, we would die (Rom. 6:23). Would it be enough for God to say, "Well, I forgive you?" Would forgiveness heal the damage done, or would we still die? Would it be like that patient in the physician's office--at least we would die forgiven?

If you believe that God threatens His children with eternal torture as a penalty for sinning, then forgiveness would rightly be your primary concern. Now God won't have to torture you after all. Just think how that cruel teaching about eternal torture has cast its hellish shadow over the picture of God and the plan of salvation. Think how widely that is held.

Now one should be careful to say, though, if you are still afraid of God, it is wonderful to hear Him say, "I forgive you." (compare Lk 23:34) He *has* said that, hasn't He? Many times. But heaven is not going to be filled with people who are pardoned criminals. It wouldn't be safe. Heaven will be peopled with healed, changed, trustworthy saints. God proposes to set right everything that has gone wrong, to completely heal the damage done.

It is most significant to know that the word salvation means, essentially, "healing". To be saved is to be healed. In one very legal understanding of the plan of salvation, to be saved is just to be forgiven ...almost to have your fire insurance paid up. Then you can be admitted. In the trust/healing model, salvation means healing the damage done.

This is made plain in many places in Scripture. Look at Luke 18:42 (NIV). "Receive thy sight; your faith has healed you." The *King James Version* says, "Your faith has saved you." The Greek is exactly the same. The word is **sozo**. Sometimes it is translated, "I save". Sometimes it is translated, "I heal". I wish there were room to list all the places where that word is translated heal, rather than save.

That brings us back to Matthew 5:48 again. "Be ye therefore perfect". The Greek reads, "You will be perfect". You can't tell if it is a promise or a command. It can be just a future statement. You will be perfect. Isn't that wonderful? Or it can be a command. You *will be* perfect, meaning you must be perfect. When the sergeant puts in the military barracks, "No Smoking", or puts, "There will be no smoking in the barracks", which has more authority? So in the Greek the future can be the equivalent of a command.

Notice how the versions have rendered this, Matthew 5:48 in three different translations. First of all, from the *Good News Bible*, "You must be perfect." From the *American Standard Version* years ago, "Ye therefore shall be perfect." Will? Shall? They made it as strong as possible. *Goodspeed*, so skillful a translator, decided to bring over into the English, both meanings of the Greek. He renders, and many others have followed his example, "You are to be perfect." You understand? You are to be perfect. Isn't it marvelous that someday you are to be

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perfect. Which is it?--a promise or a command? Some of you are familiar with the words in *Desire of Ages*, "this promise is also a command" (DA 311.4). What insight that shows into the meaning of the verse.

Now if it is a command, isn't it terrifying? We have to be perfect. Well, it would be terrifying if we didn't know the One who has asked us to be perfect. That is the subject of all 66 books and the subject of our conversations these last few weeks. How many illustrations could be cited from Scripture to reassure us about the One who said, we must be, or will be perfect.

I will pick just two--the cases of David and Solomon. In 1 Kings 9:4,5; 11:4,6 (RSV), God is speaking to Solomon, "If you walk before me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness (Do you remember David's life?)...I will establish your royal throne...When Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, (he even passed his children through the fire to Molech), and his heart was not wholly true to the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his father. (Do you remember David's life? His heart was wholly true to God?)...Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not wholly follow the Lord, as David his father had done." (parentheses supplied)

Can you imagine our having to deal with David's problems in this church, in church council and church board meeting? We would have had to censure him and disfellowship him periodically. God says to Solomon, you haven't followed Me with all your heart, as your father David did. What do you think of a God who would describe David that way?

What about Solomon? He did what David never did. David never left God to go after other gods. Solomon did. He went after the most disgusting of the gods, as some of the versions translate it. Yet, at the end of his life he came to his senses and God took him back. Did he become a second class member of the family from then on? God said to Solomon, "Write Me another book in the Bible." He wrote Ecclesiastes after living such a life.

What kind of people write books in the Bible? Holy people. Look at 2 Peter 1:21 (KJV). "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." How could God describe Solomon, who had passed his children through the fire to that abominable god, Molech, as one of the holy men of God? That doesn't speak too well of David or too well of Solomon, but what do you think about our God?

We like to cite the promise that He will treat us as if we had never sinned. These are not promises, these are facts. This is evidence. This is demonstration. God demonstrated in His treatment of David and Solomon that He really will treat us as if we had always been His loyal children. There are many other examples in the Bible to show this. That is the kind of God who wants us to be perfect. Do we have any need to be afraid of Him?

But what does it mean to be perfect? How perfect must one be in this life? Suppose you saw someone here who never ever sinned. He never swore, he never gambled, never smoked, never drank, never stole anything, never lost his temper, and he never broke the Sabbath. Would you be looking at a perfect person? You could be in an anatomy building, looking at a well-preserved corpse. Corpses never do anything bad.

Now they also never do anything good. They just never do anything--which is a rather popular view of perfection. At least it was in the early days. The number one exponent of that view was a man by the name of Simeon, a member of the church in Antioch. He so much wanted to overcome sin, that as soon as he could afford it, he got material and built himself a

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pillar. He climbed up on top. That was a little better, but not tall enough. He got more material. He built on it, and built on it, until finally, it was sixty feet high. He perched up on top of that pillar for 30 years until he died. Think of all the bad things you cannot do on the top of a sixty foot pillar. The other members of the church envied him and his perfect life. As soon as they could afford it, they gathered materials and built pillars all around the area. Pretty soon most of the members were perched on pillars. Simeon founded a whole order in the church, known as the Order of the Stylites. The order of the pole-sitters--the religious pole-sitters. They call him Saint Simeon Stylites. Is that how the saints are going to be found when the Lord comes--all perched on pillars? They are of no use to anybody, but they never do anything wrong.

Is that the idea of perfect--absence of doing wrong? There is a much more positive approach which I am sure you all know and share. That is to understand that the very word in the Bible, perfection--it is pronounced **teleiotes**--means "finished", even "ripe", if it is for a tomato--being "mature", for a human being. You are to be grown up. You are to be mature. One version has it that way. Notice Matthew 5:48, *Norlie's* translation. "You must become spiritually mature, as your heavenly Father is perfect." Not many other versions have done that. I looked and looked through the collection that I have and I was pleased to find it in this one.

When a person is converted, when he is won back to trust, and the whole marvelous procedure of healing begins, the change is so great, that it is like being born all over again. Jesus said this to Nicodemus. You remember those well known words in John 3:3 (GNB). "Jesus answered, 'I am telling you the truth: no one can see the Kingdom of God unless he is born again.'" You remember Nicodemus' comment. He thought that was almost too much. That is how great the change is.

That is why Paul interpreted baptism the way he did. He said baptism by immersion most appropriately symbolizes how great is this change. Look at the familiar verse in Romans 6:4 (Weymouth). "By our baptism we were buried with Him in death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead by the Father's glorious power, we also should live an entirely new life." You can see why baptism by immersion represents this best, can't you? Besides that is the meaning of the word, baptize. That word is even used for washing the dishes in the Bible. It doesn't do much good just to sprinkle them a little, though our children might try that short cut sometimes. The word means "to dip", "to immerse".

I thought I should include how this was recognized by members of other churches, particularly scholars in the Roman Catholic church. Look at this footnote from Romans 6:3,4. This footnote is found in the *Kleist and Lilly Version*. Lilly is a Roman Catholic priest and Kleist is a Jesuit monsignor. They are good scholars and have done a beautiful translation. This is their footnote in a Roman Catholic New Testament. "St. Paul alludes to the manner in which Baptism was ordinarily conferred in the primitive Church, by immersion. (Why? Because) The descent into the water is suggestive of the descent of the body into the grave, and the ascent is suggestive of a resurrection to a new life." (parentheses supplied) Could it be said much better than that? That is why many Christians still symbolize the newness of this experience, the beginning of the healing, with baptism by immersion.

Of course, at this stage the Christian is just a beginner. Paul calls him a babe in the truth, who needs a great deal of protection. Yet even at that beginning stage, God treats us as if we had never sinned, as if we had always been His loyal children.

Does that mean that since He is so generous, we are supposed to remain babes in the truth? Does God want us to grow up to perfection and maturity? You know from the Biblical

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record, it disturbed Paul a great deal when, even after a few months, he found that the Christian converts were staying as babes in the truth. When a person is physically retarded, we become very worried, don't we? When a person is mentally retarded, we are even more concerned. But when a person is spiritually retarded, we say, "Isn't that precious. Isn't that sweet. He still has the faith of a little child." The most serious of all conditions is to be spiritually retarded.

How the Bible comments about this! Look at Hebrews 5:11; 6:1,2 (NIV). This is the apostle speaking to new converts a few months later. "Though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truth of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. But solid food is for the mature, (or perfect) who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us leave the elementary teachings about Christ and go on to maturity." It is time to grow up. (parentheses supplied)

Put right with that Paul's advice to the believers in Ephesus. Ephesians 4:11, 13-15 (Phillips). "His gifts were made that Christians might...arrive at real maturity...We are not meant to remain as children at the mercy of every chance wind of teaching, and of the jockeying of men who are expert in the crafty presentation of lies. But we are meant to speak the truth in love, and to grow up in every way into Christ." In fact, as you know, in Ephesians it says the whole purpose of the church is to help people grow up to perfection and maturity. (4:12,13)

The Bible explains why this is so. Daniel 12, Revelation, the warnings of Christ (Matt. 24, Mk. 13, Lk. 21), and of Paul (2 Tim. 3:1-5), tell us that we face a time of confusion and deception such as the world has never seen. If we are still babes in the truth, we will never survive. God in mercy waits for us to grow up and to be as settled into the truth as Job was. In fact, that has such a motivating message for the Adventist church, that I have a whole evening under that title: **"God Waits For His Children To Grow Up."** This is the reason for His merciful delay.

You see, it is not an arbitrary requirement that we grow up. It is absolutely necessary if we are going to survive. We must not be satisfied to be babes in the truth. We need to grow up, and be able to distinguish between right and wrong.

Just briefly, there is another way of looking at perfection. It could mean perfect obedience to God's law. The perfect person is perfectly obedient. That might sound arbitrary, until one takes another look at God's law, which we already have, if you remember--**"God's Law Is No Threat to Our Freedom"**. All God asks of us is love. But what does it mean to love?

Look at the next familiar passage from 1 Corinthians 13:4,5 (RSV). "Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful; it is not arrogant or rude. Love does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful." Isn't that the description of a grown-up person? You see, to really obey God's commandments is simply to grow up--to act like a grown up. To be a safe and pleasant person to live next door to.

The remaining question is, how does one grow up like this? How does one become perfect and mature? You remember in the earlier verses, we are saved, we are healed by faith. Faith, as we have discussed so many times in these conversations, means "trust". It means "love". It means "admiration". And that means "a willingness to listen".

It is a law in this orderly universe as God has designed it, that we will inevitably become like the person we worship and admire. We know this by experience. We also see it

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corroborated and confirmed in Scripture in so many places. Look at 2 Corinthians 3:18 (Norlie). "And then with unveiled faces we can all behold as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord. And we become changed into His likeness, from glory to glory, through the Spirit of the Lord working in us."

This is how the Spirit works.

- 1. He brings us the truth.**
- 2. He brings us the picture of God.**
- 3. He brings us all the evidence of Scripture.**
- 4. We look at the picture.**
- 5. We like what we see.**
- 6. We are changed.**

It works in the other direction just as well. Look at Psalm 115:8 (NIV) about those who worship idols. "Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them." It is inevitable that we will become like the person or the object we worship and admire. If we regard God as arbitrary, exacting, vengeful, unforgiving, and severe, we, too, will become like that. History has born out the truth of that, hasn't it? Think of the cruelty of many people who have claimed to worship God, but having the devil's picture of God, have been incredibly cruel in their treatment of other people, even as Paul was before the Damascus road.

But if we see God as He really is and as His Son proved Him to be, and we consider all the testimony of Scripture, and, if we like what we see; we admire what we see; we even worship the One we see, then it is a law that we will become like Him. How absolutely essential then that we have a true picture of our God. The hazards of a false picture, if we prefer it, is that we will become like that.

Of course, the trouble with this matter of perfection is, that we tend to talk too much about perfection, and not nearly enough about God. We tend to be preoccupied with our performance rather than being preoccupied with the truth about God, which is always good news. Paul admits this was his error before the Damascus road. Look what happened when he changed his picture of God and became totally preoccupied with the truth--with Christ, why Jesus had to die, and what this said about the Father. Look what it did to Paul from Damascus on, when he shifted his attention from performance to the good news about God. Look how he treated the problems in the city of Corinth with such incredible grace and skill. When he was through, he wrote 1 Corinthians 11:1 (RSV). "Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ." He knew how it works. It is a law that we will become like the one we worship and admire.

How very sad it is that God's offer of perfect healing could be seen as a very forbidding and burdensome requirement, even the cause of much anxiety and fear. It is even the subject, sometimes, of heated criticism and debate.

As our Physician Father, God has offered to make us completely well and to completely heal all the damage done. Our part is not to heal ourselves. Our part is to cooperate. As Jesus said to the paralytic at the pool, "Would you like to be well? Would you like to be made whole?" (Jn. 5:1-15) You see, perfection is a generous offer. It is not a command. How could we possibly turn such an offer down?

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Conversations About God - Tape 14B

Venden: We'll start with a couple of questions. We have to keep at these that have come in. Here's one: "What about the promises in the Bible? How can we use them or understand them? God says, 'Have you ever seen the righteous man begging bread?'"

I think that was a statement by David, if I remember correctly, that he had never seen the righteous man begging bread. Right?

Maxwell: Yes.

Venden: This person says: Here's that statement in the Bible "yet millions starve every day." Two questions. How to use the promises? and why do so many bad things happen to good people? Where is God then?

Maxwell: Well, a lot of things comes to mind in that connection. I've thought especially of the devout Jew who went into the gas chamber, repeating the precious promises, "The angel of the Lord camps round about those who fear Him," and so on. This has led many Jews to become disillusioned, that God did not protect them. It is one reason why many of them, most of them, didn't fight back at all. You know, God's in charge, and He'll look after us. And He apparently didn't. It's very impressive to talk to a devout Jew still who has faith in God; and doesn't understand, but still trusts God. That's a bit like Job, isn't it?

It seems to me, that as you go from promise to promise in the Bible like, "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." So you train up your children in the way they should go, and sometimes they depart from it. Of course, as humans we would say, "Well, we probably didn't do a very good job." But then, maybe, if you really haven't had success in your home at all, you'd say, "It didn't seem we did that bad a job."

I think it's very essential to remember that God trained up His angels in the way they should go. And how many left Him? You see, one has to balance the picture out. They're free, you know. We remain free. Even in the hereafter, we're free to leave; or staying doesn't mean anything. You see.

So in a way, it's a general truth; we ought to do the best we can. It's certainly better than not doing it. So we do try to train our children up in the way they should go. And we don't do a perfect job either.

One thing for sure, we should never dare judge another home because maybe some of the children haven't stayed by. It's a real warning against that. Is anybody here about to take God to task for losing one-third of His angels? He did a perfect job in a perfect environment. So there's a balance to this thing. So many times it's a general statement.

Job, though, is a real test. What about, "If you'll be faithful to Me, and you'll have faith in Me, and you'll pay your tithe, I'll open the windows of Heaven and bless you?" And Job even offered sacrifice for his children in case they might have done something wrong. I mean, that's how very devout he was. And he lost everything. He lost his children. He lost his estate. He lost his health.

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And the theologians who were of legalistic bent came and said, "You know what's wrong. You know the promises. The promise is, If you're good, you're blessed; and if you're blessed, you're prosperous. And that's why you were so prosperous. You were a very good man, Job. According to the promises, you were reaping all the good results of being virtuous. Now, we've never seen a man suffering as much loss as you. You've even lost your health. So according to the promises we know, you must have been very bad. And so God is punishing you."

They had it all worked out so neatly. And God announced they were wrong. And so there's a warning in that thing. Very much. I think of this when starting out on a trip in the car. You know, you might say, "Lord please keep us safe on this journey; because we are going to Campmeeting." Have you ever heard of a carload of saints dying on the way to Campmeeting? See.

And some will say, "Well, there probably was an Achan in the family." That is so cruel, isn't it? No, they may have all been the best saints around. Those folk will awaken - if they were saints - in the right resurrection. And they'll look around; and lo, here's the Lord, and the angels, and they're on their way to Heaven. And they say, "Wait a minute, Lord. We wish to lodge a complaint. We prayed to arrive at Campmeeting."

And He'd say, "Well, do you mean Heaven isn't as good as Soquel?" You know. I don't think we'll complain. And I can think of one friend after another that I've known, who died trusting God. It's always a moving experience. I can never really get used to it. Somebody who dies in faith too soon, too young, you know.

I wasn't with Dr. Nies when he died, but I've heard things he said. He was not afraid to die. He knew God. He didn't want to leave his family. But you can think about that; only fifty-five. You think of the picture of God he had. Many of you listened to him on the tapes, haven't you? If you haven't get some of them, to read his picture of God. A Clinical Psychologist able to talk about God that way. Just marvelous!

And he was about to launch an evangelistic series, going to take a whole year off from his practice to do it. And then he dies, you know. And you say, "Where are all the promises? Here's a real saint about to do this thing?"

Well, when he arises in the resurrection and looks around, he's not going to lodge any complaints. He's only going to look for his family, and his friends, and the people he's helped through the years. That's all he'll do. You know. I don't think Job ever found out why all those things happened to him. But in the hereafter, he will surely be honored as one of God's best friends.

God promises to look after us, but He doesn't say this is a safe planet to live on. He doesn't say, "You'll not get into any trouble. In fact, the more mature and settled you become, the more perhaps I can allow the adversary to have a free hand with you, to show that I really do have trusted friends on this planet."

And so God turned to the universe and said, "Look I allowed Satan to do anything he wants to this man; and he did not let me down." And God was greatly honored by this. There are not many could have taken it. Could any of us, what Job took?

So one needs to get the whole Biblical picture here. It's like -- well, I'm sure we must have

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discussed this before -- Bedtime Stories. You know, bedtime stories are for children. And when children run out of food and pray in faith, they've hardly said Amen, and someone knocks on the door. I mean, God hurries to honor the faith of little children. How long can they wait? You know how it is.

But what about the family that runs out of food. And they pray in faith; and nobody knocks on the door. And they still have faith. That's for grownups. But you tell that to children, and they'll be troubled by it. You know, "Where's God coming with help here?"

So the book of Job is not a bedtime story. That's a book really for grownups. And there's the variety in the Bible like this. That's why I believe the policy of taking here a little and there a little can be very misleading. We need to take the whole Bible to get the whole picture. Yes, God will look after us if we trust Him. And we will arrive at the place we want to go. And we'll have no complaints. Remember the statement, even, that in the end we will have not objections as we see how God has led us through the years. But at the time, it's sometimes hard to see.

So I would rather take the ultimate promise: "If you're My friend, count on it, you'll be with Me in the Kingdom, for sure. But it may be a little rough on the way. I won't let it be too rough. That's a guarantee. I'll not let anyone be tested more than he is able to bear." See, those promises also come in as well. There are many of them in there.

And so I really feel our safety lies, not in collecting key texts, but looking on the whole Bible as a key book. That's why going through the Bible in a group is so helpful. Because someone will say, "What about the verse over here? And what about the section over there? And what about this story?" So there's real security, I think, in joining with friends and going through all sixty-six books. That's the most useful thing I've ever done; that's for sure.

Venden: Now, there's one other one that I thought maybe - this is a very practical, down-to-earth question that still may have some real correlation with the subject of this evening.

"Could you explain where standards in Christian churches - in our church, the Adventist Church, for example; and it's true in other churches to some extent too - standards such as things having to do with jewelry, with dancing, with makeup, colored nail polish, movies, music, etc. Where does all this concern about such things fit into the picture; if it does? It seems our schools" - I assume this person is talking about perhaps church-operated schools - "in the past have, and still spend a lot of time on these issues? Does Satan have us sidetracked on less important matters?"

So many young people have been driven away by these things and don't even learn the message as you speak of it. What about healing, and growth, and trust, and all these things relative to such practical matters?

Maxwell: All those things, if they're seen as very authoritarian requirements, can be a real distraction, and can even divide churches over them in disagreement. And certainly as you travel from country to country and from culture to culture, you find that even, you know, the devoutest of Christians may dress in different ways and do different things.

Like I understand that when our Adventist students who went to Collonge, they were surprised to find them skiing on the Sabbath. And they said, "Well, we're surprised how you drive your cars on the Sabbath."

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And I remember in England one rule had really come to the attention of saints over there in the church where we worshiped. And that was that a real Christian would not wear artificials. Such as artificial flowers on the hat. I remember my father and mother bought a straw hat for my sister. And it had some little daisies on. They were so pretty. The hat needed the little daisies. But they were artificial. So to avoid problems, they took it off. It was a plain hat.

So knowing this, I'd watch the lady in front. If the lady in front had a hat with little daisies on it, if they didn't wilt by the benediction, I knew she was in trouble! Because she was wearing artificials, you see. And this sort of thing can really become a burden, you know, as time goes on.

Well, the best approach I know of is to look at Paul, who used to be a great man for all the rules and regulations, to be sure. And they became a burden. And when people disagreed, he put them in prison, had them stoned. You remember? Very rigorous in this thing.

Then later on he deals with problems in the church. The Corinthian correspondence is really the best source for this. He lists the problems in that church; the disagreements over whether it's all right to eat food offered to idols; and matters like that. And then at length he deals with this. And he shows such maturity. He says for example, "One man believes you can eat anything. Another man believes you can eat only vegetables." Now, that has nothing to do with vegetarianism. The vegetables were not offered to the gods, you see. And so those who believed that the idols contaminated the food, wouldn't eat the food that was offered to the idols. And idols have very rarely been vegetarians, you notice, through the years. They get the flesh and the wine. And the pulse, as for Daniel and his friends, the vegetables, is left for the common people.

So some of the saints in Corinth and in other churches, still hanging onto a little of their superstition in idolatry, wouldn't go to the marketplace and buy things that had been offered to idols, lest it be contaminated. Remember, Jesus commented on the Jews when they came in from the marketplace; unless they wash their hands in a - nobody knows exactly how. I've read so many translations for this. Goodspeed says, "Unless they wash their hands in a peculiar way (he says, "I don't know what it was, but it was a special way") they will not eat."

And they had many other rules for the washing of pots and pans. Do you know what the word is for washing pots and pans? "Baptizing pots and pans" is another way; as I was commenting earlier. And they had many, many other rules. And Jesus had to deal with it. Paul had to deal with it. Paul says, "My first advice to you is, let everyone be fully persuaded in his own mind. Be clear on that. But then, if you as a more mature person should exercise what you believe is your right, and you upset some new convert who isn't too sure yet, you have destroyed someone for whom Christ died, for the sake of food."

He said, "I will never for the sake of food or anything else, destroy someone for whom Christ died. Better that a millstone be tied around our necks and we be cast into the depths of the sea, than that we cause a little one to perish." And the little one could sixty-five, you know. A new convert is not too clear.

So Paul says, "Whatever you eat, whatever you drink, do all to the glory of God." He says, "I'm willing to limit my freedoms, no matter how many of them, for the sake of other people. Now," he says, "that doesn't mean I'm not free. I am free, and I feel free; and I am persuaded in my own mind in these matters. But if it would upset another, I won't do it."

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So when saints are going at each other over some of these rules and regulations, that needs to be resolved first. But that doesn't mean that the standards and so on don't have their place; though standards are indeed culturally influenced, aren't they? Just coming from England so much, I notice, and visa versa. How about in other countries in the world? Like the thought that a really devout woman would never wear a man's clothing. But in some countries it's just the opposite, isn't it? The men wear skirts, and women wear pants. And, I mean, it just varies. And the question is: When does a pair of pants become man's clothing? What if it's pink, with polka dots all over it?

Well, it's still the wrong shape. And I've seen saints go at each other. And they lose something much more valuable as they work on this. I hate to cite examples here. Because I would hate to suggest that those who are very, very scrupulous in these matters, might not be candidates for the Kingdom. Because I know somebody who feels that wearing pedal-pushers is really, really a violation of this rule. Even if they're pink, and not covered with polka dots. You see, that's men's clothing. But this individual is so conscientious, she just believes that that's the way it is. That I feel, when she arrives in the Kingdom, you know -- and I'd be willing to live next door to her -- she would never take anything that isn't hers. She would be so helpful. She'd be so helpful. She'd stay up all night to help if need be -- she's done it all her life. If I'm not careful, you'll guess who it is.

Anyway, if after she's been welcomed as a really safe candidate for the Kingdom, Peter should reach over to a shelf and say, "We're so happy you're here. We have a special present for you."

"Me?" she'd say. And she'd open the package, and inside is beautiful pair of pink polka-dotted pedal-pushers.

And she'd say to Peter, "You mean it's really all right? Oh, I'll take a dozen!" You know. "Because I really wanted to wear them, because they're really more modest when you're climbing mountains and rowing boats and things like that. It's just I thought it was wrong."

I think in this matter of standards -- having to establish, you know, the right thing to do so as not to be conspicuous and rebellious and so on; of course we want to fit in and not be conspicuous -- for them to become a source of division, and criticism of each other, is really to violate the whole spirit of the thing. How are we as an international church, all going to meet in the same place someday and live together, with all our different backgrounds? Paul is the best example that I know of. We should on the one hand be absolutely conscientious; and number two, be totally convinced as to what's right for us. Absolutely. But then be very gracious toward other people. It's the only way to survive.

I love meeting someone that I know is scrupulously disciplined with respect to himself; and yet he's so generous with other people. That's just marvelous to see. And it's the only way to survive in this life; and really is the spirit of the life to come, I believe. At least that makes for a lot of peace in the meantime.

As we change standards -- have any of you gone back to your school, your college, lately? I've seen alumni come back and express their horrified amazement at what's happened to the standards. Why, there are things when my daughter went to PC; had I done several things she did with full benediction, I'd have been off the hill. It's just incredible! The dating privileges. Why, we weren't even allowed to talk together in public, in daylight, by the water fountain.

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I did it to my wife one day - the one I'd lived with for forty years - and it was dear Dr. Mary McReynolds -- do you know a better saint ever walked the earth? -- she came up to the two of us, 2:00 P.M., in the sunlight, either side of the water fountain. You know, the one outside Graff Hall?

"Oh young people," she said. And you know how she could shake her head and look so solemn. I had great respect for Dr. Mary. "Oh young people," she said, "you are destroying a fine Christian relationship by talking out here."

Now they can get permission to go to San Francisco! Isn't that right? Oh, I'd have loved it! I'm just jealous, that's all. So, I mean, what was a sin once, doesn't seem to be now. So standards change with the times. But there are certain things that last forever. Those things we should be absolutely clear on, and I'm willing to accept a standard, so as not to be conspicuous.

If all saints in Loma Linda learn on the authority of a pastoral sermon, that we should not wear neckties because the Huns wore them as good luck charms, and Elder Vandeman would say, "I'm counting on you; let's really make a show here. None of you men promise next week to wear a necktie," I'll take mine off. Sure! I mean, why let a necktie stand in the way, as far as that's concerned? Paul anyway, if you read I Corinthians 8 and 10, Romans 14; and then read Mark 7 where Jesus dealt with the special washings of pots and pans. Put those together, and it's magnificent I think.

Venden: Graham, I can't resist the thought though, that those rules in those days made such simple little things so exciting. Now you have to go clear to San Francisco, you know, to have anything special. But in those days, just the glimpse of one that you had a special feeling about, and a chance for a kind of furtive wave, you know, was enough to give you excitement for a long time.

Maxwell: Well, there's something to that. And it's amazing how we got married those days!
[Laughter]

Venden: All right. Let's go to this evening's topic and some of the questions; Marv, how about starting with you?

Comment: I love the presentation of being fully persuaded, and being generous with others. In fact, your key text of what love is, that it never insists on its own way. I still don't know how to make the jump to both Scripture and other references, to doing what is right because it is right. Teaching the truth, insisting on the truth, rebuking your brother if he's wrong; you know, all these kinds of the other extreme, I suppose, where you take stands, you know, firm stands on things because they're true, because they're ultimate or absolute truth. At least, I don't know if we can ever decide what's ultimate or not, but it's that idea of-- you know, it almost sounds as if I never really will take a hard stand with someone. I'll be generous with them. I'll let them do whatever they want. "I'll give you a good example: according to what I believe, but, hey, whatever you believe is okay."

Maxwell: Yeah, boy. What you say fits Corinthians so well, of all things in the Bible. You see, it is apparent that in the situation in Corinth, where the problems were really enormous, they were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper. They thought, "Well, a little spirit; why not a lot more?" They came in from the mystery religions where they were used to getting drunk. "Filled with the spirit,"

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they called it. But they got it out of a goatskin. It wasn't the Holy Spirit. And of course, when you're filled with the spirit from a goatskin, you don't have all the fruits of the Spirit. You may think you have love, joy and peace. But you certainly won't have self control - the last of the fruits of the Spirit.

And so when they came into the Christian church from the mystery religions, they were getting drunk at the Lord's Supper; and then they were speaking in tongues. Now, don't try to equate those with Pentecost. At Pentecost, did they need a translator? Not one. When you listen to charismatic meetings and they need interpreters, you know it isn't Pentecost. When it's Pentecost, everybody understands.

What they were doing in Corinth, Paul was very gentle. He said, "If you don't have an interpreter, don't do it at all." Well, they never were able to do it; because nobody can interpret that sort of thing. Those languages don't bear analysis at all. They were "speaking in the spirit," but it was the wrong kind of a spirit.

Well more than that, a man was living with his father's wife. They were all split up into factions. "I belong to Cephas"; "I believe to Paul"; "This baptism is better than that one," and so on. And many other problems there in the Corinthian church.

So he writes a letter, which we may or may not have. I Corinthians 5:9 says, "I wrote to you in my previous letter" - that's in I Corinthians; so there was another one - "not to be mismatched with unbelievers. And this man is behaving so terribly. Turn him over to Satan for the affliction of the flesh. But then having done that, then love him back," he says later.

All right, that letter didn't work. So he wrote a second letter, which appears to be I Corinthians. And that's the "love chapter," isn't it? That love does not insist on its own way; it was very gentle and very gracious. You see, Paul had decided after the Damascus experience, he would never be hard on people again. Be very gentle with them. He'd win them with the still, small voice. And that's the way those first two letters read. It didn't work!

So then it says in Corinthians that he paid an emergency visit to Corinth - from Ephesus to Corinth - which usually is not included in the four missionary, in his missionary journeys. It should be. There is an emergency trip across that he talks about. And when he got to Corinth, he still was gentle. "I'm not going to go back to my old ways. I'm not going to stone them or put them in prison, or shout at them. I'm going to be gentle, because that's the only way to go." And they insulted him. "My," they said, "your letters are weighty and strong, but your physical appearance is weak and your speech is contemptible."

And he got back on the boat and went to Ephesus and sat down and said, "What do I do now?" He said, "Evidently there is a time for she-bears, there is a time for the thunders of Sinai." And he wrote them thunder and lightning in four chapters, and it is tremendous. That's where he says, You know, "I don't want to boast like this; but. . ." And he just goes on. And he says, "I'm writing this with crying. I'm scared to mail it."

When he was all through, he gave it to Titus to deliver in person. And he wondered if he'd only alienate the Corinthians by resorting to the language of Sinai. And Titus went to Troas, caught the boat, and went to Corinth. And Paul couldn't wait. He walked to Troas; no Titus. Apparently the boats weren't going; so he walked all the way around, came down through Macedonia to Philippi. And lo, Titus met him the other way and gave him the good news: "Your letter worked."

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You see, what they needed was she-bears and Sinai. They weren't ready for the still, small voice. And to be truly God-like, is to know when to take people to Sinai. You have to still do it. It is not God-like to be the still, small voice when people are stubbornly hard of hearing; or when they're being irreverent and disrespectful.

How about in -- any of you grade school teachers? How about at home with the little ones? You know, they're not behaving at worship. They're being disrespectful and irreverent. You say, "Oh, boys and girls, please, please, you're hurting Daddy's heart." I tell you, after awhile you're saying, "WILL YOU PLEASE BE QUIET?" Or whatever way you have of doing this thing. Or tell them, "YOU DON'T GO OUT TONIGHT, IF YOU DO THIS ANY LONGER!"

They'll be quiet. And then you can tell them lovely things from then on. It's God-like to know when to take your children to Sinai, when to take them to the Mount of Olives, and when to take them wherever in between. Of course, none of us is that versatile.

As soon as Paul got the message from Titus, "It worked. They now take you seriously; they want you to come," he wrote a fourth letter which is all reconciliation and peace. "Oh," he said, "I was so worried about that letter. And if I caused you pain, I'm sorry. But it did work, didn't it? It was a Godly pain that led you to repentance. And it hurt me terribly to write it. But I'm so grateful that it worked."

And the letter was sent on down. And he followed the letter down to Corinth. And they had a tremendous reunion. And he learned that to be really Biblical, and to be really like God, is to be versatile, and know when to do what.

If Alice will forgive me for mentioning this: One time she got involved in something that called for a little parental discussion. And so I asked her, "Do you want to discuss this on Mount Sinai, or on the Mount of Olives." And she smilingly says, "Daddy, couldn't we discuss it on the Mount of Olives?" And if you know Alice, we didn't need to discuss that anymore after that. She'd got the point.

I just wish we were as versatile as God, and to know when to do which. So you might in the pulpit have to take your audience to Sinai. Who did it on Sinai, the Father or the Son? I Corinthians 10:4 - note, Corinthians again. Christ is the One who led them through the wilderness. Christ is the One who did all those things to get attention when people were irreverent. He sent the she-bears. He touched Uzzah, when he touched the ark. This is gentle Jesus.

So you see, it's not weakness in this thing. And Paul's a good example. Because he was a firebrand, wasn't he? But he says, "I never want to do that again. But if I have to, I will really speak to you."

So I don't know any way you could plan your life that way. It's a law we become like One we worship and admire. And if you read this in the Bible, you say, "I wish I were that versatile; I do admire it." And the change can come to one. The model has to be the full model, though. Does that touch at all on what you had in mind?

Comment: [unintelligible]

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Maxwell: You're right, in many examples. That means that Elder Venden, when we need it, can take this church to Sinai. You could do it, I believe. You have three daughters.

Venden: I'll have to think about that. I'm still back about that tie, And what was it the Huns did with it?

Maxwell: Yes. The Huns wore them as good luck charms. They're really heathen.

Venden: Well, I'll think about that. On these hot days it would be nice to dispense with them. We have a question right over here.

Comment: On the arguments of non-perfection versus perfection, and the various definitions in the Gospel, it seems like the non-perfection group likes to ask, you know, "Whoever has the character of Jesus, please stand up." Nobody stands up. So then they define the Gospel around what they see in their own lives. But my question is, If this growing up, this maturing -- or as Dr. Nies used to like to phrase it -- "highly visiblized group of people," is it eschatological? Is this end-point God working in a way that He perhaps hasn't worked in the power, and so that we, so the non-perfection group is overlooking this aspect of the gospel?

Maxwell: Yes, I think they have a somewhat different eschatology. All the things you've mentioned fit in. It's a different version of the gospel, different version of the plan of salvation. Yes, it's a whole pattern; it's a whole scheme of things.

But if God does not manipulate things to bring them to a successful conclusion, He will in the end, when we are ready, when we are like Job, He will cease to restrain. Can you think of texts that come to mind; Thessalonians and elsewhere? God is restraining; there are four angels holding the four winds. We couldn't take those awesome events, when Satan comes as Christ to confuse the world. And as Revelation 13 says, the whole world worships him as he performs miracles. So long as we're susceptible to that as supreme evidence we're not ready for this thing. And so God in mercy waits for His people to be so settled into the truth they could survive without being shaken.

Now, this is not required to be saved in the Kingdom. One need only be a babe in the truth. The thief on the cross is just as safe to save as Job. Just as safe to save. But the thief on the cross could never survive those closing events. Job could. Moses could. Abraham could. And other people we might think of. So God is waiting, not for a generation of people who are safer to save for the Kingdom, but people who could survive what's coming in the end. And so it's in mercy that He waits. It's good news that He waits. And you could count on Him to wait. He wouldn't let all Hell break loose until we're ready to survive. So in a way, our unreadiness delays the coming. But it puts Him in a very good light.

Comment: This unreadiness could do away with His sovereignty over time so it has to be balanced against His own sovereignty over time - the fullness of time -

Maxwell: Yes, yes.

Comment: And so He releases the events at a certain point. Or else if He waits for us to quit sinning and rebelling, He might wait forever. So at some point He does have to bring events on.

Maxwell: Well, I would understand -- I do not understand His foreknowledge -- but I would

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understand that having foreknowledge in some way unknown to us - I don't know how He's done several things - that He knows when it will end. That's why He could say there will be delay. Now, how did He know there would be delay? Or was He betting on their being delayed. That would be a pretty safe bet, wouldn't it? But He knew there would be delay.

He also says, "I know there will be a group." How does He know there will be a group? Maybe there won't be any at all. Jesus said, "When the Son of man comes, will He find any faith on the earth?"

And the Bible says, "Yes, there will be a group." Revelation 13 and 14. How can God foreknow that? So I would say, in His foreknowledge He knows the time; but He doesn't share this with anybody else. We couldn't take it. So He waits. But because He foreknew, He could speak of delay; and then the angel saying, "There will be no more delay." You know. A lot of it then fits in - very well, I believe.

But He will not manipulate this thing. If He can only bring things to a successful conclusion by artificially manipulating things, why didn't He do it early on in the beginning? He's not going to violate the consistency of His methods in the end in order to bring things to a successful conclusion. So as soon as His people could survive -- And you don't have to be 65 to be mature. I mean, one can accomplish this much earlier in life -- When He has a group who could survive, as with Job, He'll say to the Heavenly Council: "You see those folk down there. You know what's coming in the end. When the four angels release the closing events, all Hell will break loose. And those folk will not let Me down." And they do not let Him down.

I would see it in that light. And then there's nothing arbitrary about this. It makes Him look good, that He waits for this; seems to me.

Now, to make it some artificial thing just is so irrelevant there, that this be an arbitrary thing. No. This is very realistic. We are going to live through this. If not our generation, the next one's going to live through this. Some generation is going to live through the closing events. And it's going to be terrible. And God would not ask us to do it without sufficient information upon which to get ready, so the gospel must go to all the world. And some will respond as Job did and be settled into the truth.

So I would see it in that light, consistent with the trust/healing model. Do you feel that way yourself?

Comment: I have a problem on the subject of the nature of these events, and the nature of this judgment. And why wasn't the final judgment upon sin declared at the First Coming? And . . .

Maxwell: Well, in a way, it has been all along. I think the only difference . . .

Comment: . . . and we still see sinners walking the streets.

Maxwell: Sure. I mean, God has opposed sin from the very beginning up in Heaven, you know. I mean, look what it's caused all along. The only words of judgment I hear there in Revelation is, "Let him that is filthy stay that way. Let him that is righteous stay that way."

In other words, it's almost just an announcement of a diagnosis. There's no real judgment in the ordinary sense.

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Comment: In the Old Testament we see Babylon being defeated by a pagan nation; and Medo-Persia, Greece and Rome. But Babylon wasn't defeated completely; it still exists to be defeated in Revelation. Now, why?

Maxwell: In there Babylon symbolizes the confusion in the end.

Comment: Spiritual Babylon has to be defeated by Spiritual Israel. And Spiritual Israel defaulted. So there's our eschatology. God has to have a people who defeat Babylon in this spiritual battle. And we haven't gotten into the nature of this defeat of sin; because the battle is over sin and rebellion. And how can Babylon be culpable; how can it be judged, unless here there's a group of people whose lives condemn - who have a message, and whose very lives condemn Babylon?

Maxwell: This gets a little complicated there. There's a lot of symbolism in that. So long as it doesn't suggest that God has not won the great controversy already, that the angels are not already convinced. They see it.

Comment: Well that's the difference between the First Coming and the Second Coming events. See? If sin could have been -- [if?] it was finally defeated at the First Coming and he allowed 2,000 years of suffering, and could have done away with it, then that would raise a question His own judgment. So. . .

Maxwell: Except He's never had a generation that could survive. He never has. And you say, that's a long time to wait. Well, how about in Old Testament times? He wasn't waiting for the world to be wicked enough to send His Son. He was waiting for the first time in all history, that He had a group of people on this earth absolutely dedicated to God, the Bible, the Ten Commandments, the whole blueprint; but doing it for the wrong reason. And they are the ones who rejected the Son and tortured Him to death. Because that had to be demonstrated to the universe.

It's why God says, "Don't serve Me from fear. Don't serve Me for the wrong reason. Even as you obey Me, you could become My enemies." That had to be shown to the universe.

Now He's waiting this span of time for something very similar. A group of people who could survive. Now, He's been saving people out of every generation all along. That's not the problem. And that's why I feel our message to the world isn't so much to prepare people for salvation; though we'll always do that. Loyal members of the family should do that.

We have a special message: In view of what's happening in the end, God in mercy wants you to be ready. So, it's a message of perfection and maturity as well as rebirth and conversion. Billy Graham is doing a great job on rebirth and conversion. Lots of people are doing initial invitations to faith in God and in His Word, to be sure. And I think we ought to support them; and may God bless them.

But a finishing message because of our understanding of closing events is difficult for Billy to do, even though he's written a book on Revelation. He has a different eschatology. He does not have the great controversy over the character and government of God. He has a God who has said, "You either love Me; you either accept the sacrifice of Christ; or I'll have to torture you for eternity." And that inevitably has to sully even Billy's great message. But Billy can do the initial

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thing, winning people to reverence, respect, beginning trust, trust in the Bible, willingness to begin to worship God and study. Sure, may God bless every last one of them. We're not competing with them. But we have something to say to all these who have been introduced to the Bible and to God. We have a finishing message.

So I think that's our special message. Therefore, it's a message of healing, you see. And that's why when we were a little, tiny church, we were led by a person of great insight, into the founding of medical institutions all over the world; which seemed crazy for a little, tiny people. It's because we have a message of healing; not just the initial message of conversion. But it's a message of healing the damage done and growing up. And healing represents that beautifully. I mean, we're into healing out of all proportion to our size, aren't we?

And then some folks say, "Well, we don't need them really anymore, because we ought to get on with the message." That means the message is no longer a message of healing. So long as our church sees its distinctive message as a message of healing, a finishing message; we are going to support - maybe correct as need be - we are going to support our work of healing. The practice of the healing arts is the best way to demonstrate this.

We preachers talk about it. The healers do it. Of course, if they just do it and don't talk about it, nobody's going to know why they're doing it. So the best thing would be, if those who practice the healing arts, know the picture of God. And those who preach about the picture of God have great respect for the healing arts. And that's why Ellen White did say - I know these are dangerous words - that in the beginning ministers and the practitioners of the healing arts should be trained together.

And I never would have left PUC to come to Loma Linda, if I hadn't read the Loma Linda messages. And then I switched from training ministerial students, to the practitioners of the healing arts. I mean, I love working for ministerial students. Did it for nineteen years. Now I've had twenty-three years with those who practice the healing arts.

And unfortunately, we've built two permanent monuments - to some measure of separation, you know; Michigan and California. Well fortunately, communication has improved and we can keep in touch. And fortunately, we have lots of ministers ministering to us in Loma Linda, who have nothing but respect for the contribution the practice of the healing arts can make. So.

But that's not big enough. It needs to be done world-wide. Do you know, when we hadn't built the three towers yet, and they hadn't built Andrews yet - it was EMC - we had a member of the Accrediting Committee of the Association of Theological Seminaries, the one who accredits the Seminary back in Michigan. And he stood -- Stewart Hiltner, by name. He stood with Jack Provonsha and me by the lot where they were going to build this big center.

"My," he said, "you Adventists have tremendous opportunity. You've got the best philosophy of relating the message of salvation to the practice of the healing arts. You know, we're trying to catch up with that. Forming a Department of Medicine and Religion in the AMA, and things like that. Professorships in seminaries held by physicians; and in medical schools by ministers." They were trying to bridge the gap. They said, "This is your whole philosophy."

He said, "What an opportunity you have. This side of Barton build your great medical center to train people to practice the healing arts. And that lot across the street" - it was all open then. "Why don't you build the other institution? And you'll train side-by-side. And future ministers, and

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future physicians and dentists will learn to understand each other, and work together while they're still growing up."

Oh, he idealized. And Jack and I said, "Can we quote you on that?" "Oh," he said, "you certainly can." It didn't do any good. We've been quoting him. I wonder what we're going to do to bring the two together. Because Ellen White, in the Loma Linda Messages, pictures the two working together. That when these two work together as Luke and Paul did, those two men founded the Christian Church and wrote most of the New Testament between them. It's incredible.

And when a minister and a doctor got together in 1888 - it's a pity they didn't carry through with this - they had a potent influence on this church. Jones and Waggoner. They didn't go through with it. And I think when our most eloquent preachers and teachers of the Word realize what the practitioners of the healing arts are able to do, and visa versa; and they both have the same picture of God, and they both have the same goal; we will have a very potent force in Adventism.

So anyway, that's why I came down here. It's still got to be done somehow or other. You're an old Seminary professor. And you're right here.

Venden: Well, here we are.

Maxwell: You've done both, see?

Venden: Interestingly enough, I did a year-long sermon with Stuart Hiltner some years after he was here.

Maxwell: Oh, you did!

Venden: And one day in the Seminar, he brought up and reflected with great pleasure, upon his time here in Loma Linda.

Maxwell: How about that.

Comment: Are there any other additional meanings to work forgiveness? You spoke about forgiveness [?]. I mean, different than what we usually think of forgiveness. It's all right to forget it? Let's forget about it and not talk about it anymore. It's over.

Maxwell: Yes. I think not from analyzing the word too much. I think it would be in the way that it's used. And you know, very much -you've had experience with languages - you know how that can be.

I think it would be a little different from the former Ambassador to United Nations, who when the Chairman of the CIA apologized --it's in Time, or is it Newsweek this week; you know who I'm referring to -- and he said to the CIA leader, "I accept your apology. I forgive you, but I won't forget."

Did you see that in the paper this week? Well, that forgiveness isn't worth a whole lot. Because in the hereafter, if our guardian angels will say, "Well, we've forgiven you, but we sure aren't going to forget," and you live in hazard for eternity, that one day your guardian angel will bring up what you did after Friday night meeting May 4, 1984 -- don't tell us what your plans are. But I mean, who knows? Dreadful things have happened after lovely meetings. How could you do it?

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Are we going to live in fear of embarrassment for eternity?

God says, "No, I'm not forgetful, and there will be no divine amnesia here. But let Me tell you, can count on Me. I would never ever think to bring that up again. You know that I won't." And neither will we do this with each other; or how can Uriah and David tolerate each other for eternity? Now, some say, "Well, that's because all Bibles will be destroyed; all memory of its contents. And we'll all suffer amnesia. So that even when we see Jesus in human form, nobody will know why." I would make no sense.

The marvel is, that we will remember. And we'd never think to hurt anybody else. And then when you do that long enough -- it's way, way back somewhere. My mother was like this; she knew me very well. But I could count on Mother. She'd never bring up anything like that. Although just before Mother died - and she had Parkinson's, you know. I mean, it was so sad, because she had never been ill. And now she was so incapacitated. Only if I sat right close to her and listened, could I hear; and she'd say something. And she remembered way back - not the recent past - and she remembered the way she used to spank me when I was a small boy, and put me on the bottom stair until repentance came.

And so after she died, and I had the privilege of going back to England, I sat on the bottom stair for the first time in thirty-nine years. And I thought about my mother, now dead. And I felt very warm; but the warmth had moved up at least eighteen inches, you know. I thought how she spanked me then and put me on the stair. But now it had all moved up here [heart]. And I thought, "Think of how my mother used to do it!" And I could talk to Mother there at the end. And it wasn't a source of embarrassment.

Mother was saying, "I remember how we did that." And I had to admit, "Mother, it was a very good idea. It was even good theology." I couldn't go out to play until repentance had come. It took a little time.

I think in the hereafter we'll be able to talk to each other. I hope we will forget. To see two old enemies meet and become friends again would be tremendous to see. So forgiveness, real forgiveness, implies that the one forgiving is forgiveness personified; and therefore will remain in that attitude toward this person for eternity. That's real forgiveness.

So, you know. You said that because you believe in it so much, that that's the way it's going to be.

Comment: One of my friends told me that I would be healed if I had more faith. Would you like to say anything about that?

Maxwell: "If you had more faith, you'd be healed." I'm sure you could all cite many examples of this. We know healing - those who trust God will be healed, perfectly healed. Just when, we don't dictate to God. He can do it right now; and there are occasions in the Bible where He did it right now. Sometimes He does it later. Sometimes He does it so much in tune with the ordinary cycle of events, that you're not sure whether He healed you, or the medical program did. And you say, "Lord, I don't know whether to thank You for this. Because it seems this ran the regular course of time. And maybe it was the doctors and the nurses and the medicine. And of course, if that worked, I won't thank You." I mean, that doesn't make sense. I don't care how God does it, do you? So, you're grateful. But then the healing for some will be in the Resurrection.

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And some folk die in faith in the hospital tonight. All right, they wake up in the morning, and Lo, they're not in the hospital. It's the Resurrection, you know. We've just got to be sure we die trusting God, no matter what. Some of us may be in perfect health and won't make it home because some drunk driver meets us on the way. That happens all too often. And then we awaken in the Resurrection, perfectly healed.

Now, you've all seen people approach this experience. It's very wonderful to watch. I've had two or three such cases lately. And a moving time this week-- an individual seriously ill. And before we had prayer, she listed all the things she was grateful for. And it was really wonderful to listen to. Her life, her parents, her education, her husband, her children. And it was just a marvelous rehearsal. So, you know, she'd have no complaints what happens. She knows that if she dies trusting, she'll wake up in the Resurrection and all will be well. And there are a lot of other nice things that could be said about that situation. It's very wonderful to see a trusting saint die. Very inspiring to the rest.

Now, no one's supposed to die. This is an emergency. We live in a terrible emergency, on a very dangerous planet. So don't try to make too much sense out of all this. We can just count on God, if we trust Him, to work it out in the best way possible for everybody concerned. And that's the only thing we can be really sure about. And often we can't make sense. I doubt that Job ever found out exactly why all that had happened to him. But he certainly trusted God. He said, "He could slay me; I'd still trust Him." So he arises in the Resurrection and goes to the Lord and says, "When You have a moment, Lord, I wish You'd explain what that was all about."

And the Lord will say, "Well, there's something you don't know. You know, We were very proud of you. And when you said you repented, We were proud of you there, you know, that you'd be that humble. You said, 'I've said an awful lot of things with feeling; things beyond my understanding.' That's really true, Job. However, what more could we ask of a man under those circumstances? We think you did magnificently."

"Really, Lord?" I mean, they're going to have a very good time together.

And then come all the children who say, "Hey, how come? You used us just as pawns." You know. Well, all those things can be reconciled.

Have some of you felt in the Bible stories that some people seemed to be used as pawns? Well, the best answer I ever heard for that was a medical student a few years ago, who evidently knew how to play chess. And he said, "Well, if the Lord wants to use me as a pawn to checkmate the devil, I'd be honored."

Now, that's not bad, is it? You see. So it all depends. If we trust God, it might seem He's using me as an instrument. Some people are honored to be used as instruments. Look at poor Jeremiah, and Ezekiel, and some others. You see. Or poor Hosea. What a happy marriage. The Lord asked him to marry a woman of dubious reputation. Well, he must have been a very extraordinary man to accept that and do it, and hold firm right through as he did. He won't say, "God, You used me, didn't You?" He'll say, "God, as I look back now and see, You really honored me." Because, you know, what Hosea says, is the key to God's wrath in the Bible. It's one of the most important things in the whole Bible. And Hosea was instrumental in explaining that often very offending subject. So Hosea was honored.

The question is, would we be willing to let God say through us what He wants to say? Some

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regard that as an honor. And you can think of many stories, I'm sure, that would fit that.

Venden: All right. Let's bow our heads; and Graham, would you dismiss us?

Maxwell: Our Loving Father in Heaven, Surely it is a pleasure to meet with those who trust Thee, and talk of questions that may rightly arise. And we know Thou dost welcome our questions. In fact, if we do not ask questions, how can we know more about Thee? And so we accept the invitation. Surely we should question many more things, that we may understand more of Thy purpose as recorded through all the hundreds of years, of Thy dealings with the human race, and especially the descendants of Abraham.

And many of us, having looked over that record, find Thee infinitely worthy of our trust, and our willingness even to wait indeed for understanding of some things, even when it would seem that our prayers are not answered, and faith in the promises. There is such a weight of evidence that Thou canst be trusted.

We can almost hear Thee say, "I hope you'll be willing to wait until I can explain it all." And so we even know that if things turn sad for us, and we cry out, Thou art not offended by these cries, any more than by the cries of Job. Or the cry of Thy Son, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" He did not sin, and Thou wast not offended.

Help us to see Thee as a gracious Physician-Father, wishing for us only the very best; but hoping that we'll trust Thee enough through this very complex emergency, to be willing to wait for some things. Because there is enough evidence for trusting Thee enough to be will be willing to wait.

But we know that all will be well in the future. These things are absolutely sure. And may that give us a feeling of peace and confidence, knowing that we face more difficult times than these right now by far. May we even be among those of whom Thou canst say to our future neighbors and friends, "Here are some people who will never let Me down." What an honor to hear that. Make us ready for this, we pray.

In Jesus name, Amen.

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CONVERSATIONS ABOUT GOD, NO. 14 - QUESTIONS

A. Graham Maxwell and Louis Venden

Perfection

Venden: You know, as you were talking about perfection, I heard this emphasis on a generous gift of God--His eagerness to heal us and to make us well. It makes one wonder, who would want to be imperfect or to continue to be ill when all this healing is available. But why do you think there has been so much controversy over perfection. When you referred to the matter of this subject being a debate--well, in some circles, it has been a real subject of debate.

AGM: Whole books written about it even.

Venden: Why do you think that a subject so beautiful could become such a subject of battle?

AGM: I suppose there are many reasons. I can think of some. One is that people who claim to be perfect can be quite insufferable. It has given perfection a bad name. People who claim to be holy and perfect, I think, have given this offer a very bad name. But then another reason that might lead us to be sympathetic toward those who find it a rather forbidding subject: Perfection seems to involve our behavior. And that smacks of works, our having to do something, and they are so concerned to make salvation by faith, that they can't fit this in.

Venden: Well I wanted to ask you about that, because you have referred to involvement in cooperation. How do you keep away from the heresy or the tendency to think in terms of your performance? And how well you're doing, and evaluating it and that kind of thing?

AGM: I think it goes back to things we've discussed before. What is it that went wrong, and what would it take to make things right, and what would it mean for God to set things right? If our problem is a legal one and our primary concern is to somehow set things legally right, which would mean, maybe, to please the Father and persuade Him not to punish or destroy us, then if I'm trying to be perfect to turn away His wrath and improve my legal standing, then that's salvation by works.

But in the healing model, most of us have had a moment when we've not been well and have had to go to the physician. And we've heard the physician say, "Will you do the following?" And the most logical thing in the world is to go home and do it. And I don't feel I'm being a legalist. It seems to me that if you really trust your doctor, you will be willing to do many things. I think actually the one who is enjoying salvation and righteousness by faith may work harder than the legalist. The only difference is, his work is all in harmony with the Divine Physician. He's not trying to please the doctor, nor is he trying to improve his legal standing with the doctor. He's trying to doing what is for his own best good. The gracious Physician is saying, "Do the following. It will produce good results." And I go home and work hard to follow the regimen that He imposes.

Venden: So it really is a question of motivation making all the difference.

AGM: Very much, and the model, you see, that you have. The legal model has also cast a very regrettable shadow over the whole subject of salvation as healing and perfection as complete healing of the damage done.

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Venden: The concern with perfection sometimes has led to one person evaluating another on how well they were doing along that line.

AGM: Oh, I think that's another thing that has given perfection a bad name. You know, I have my blueprint, and I'm getting closer and closer to it. But I can tell, you're down the line a way. Who above all else does not want us to understand the good news that God would like to completely heal the damage done? So who do you suppose has confused us on this matter. One thing confuses one person, another thing confuses another. The devil has many versions of perfection that are a corruption of the truth and are not good news.

Venden: But I think a lot of sincere discussion on the subject and concern with the subject has centered around a question that comes up again and again: Does perfection mean that one never makes a mistake? And a person may long for a day when you haven't made a mistake, so you think, "Well, if I could just be perfect, I wouldn't make a mistake."

AGM: So we're back to that time we discussed the meaning of sin. Sin is not making a mistake. Sin is rebelliousness. Sin is a stubborn, unwillingness to listen. Sin is cheating. Sin is a breach of trust. I think in the hereafter, I could be planting my garden, and I plant a pomegranate tree a little too close, and it gets bigger and bigger in the fertile soil there. And the Lord comes by and says, "Say, you planted it too close, didn't you?" And I'd say, "Yes, I did. Why didn't You stop me?" "Oh no," He'd say, "now you understand. Pomegranate trees grow rather large up here. Plant it a little farther away. " So I would proceed to move it.

Venden: You are making a distinction between sin and mistake.

AGM: Yes. There's no sin in making a mistake like that. Not unless there is a spirit of rebelliousness, a stubborn unwillingness to accept advice, which would mean I'm not safe to have around.

Venden: But can a perfect person sin? Not just make mistakes, but actually sin?

AGM: Can a perfect person ever rebel? Look at Lucifer, the most perfect of all God's creation, and he was still free. And he exercised his freedom in rebellion. And think of Adam and Eve. They were perfect, and they rebelled. So though God will heal all the damage done, He does not take away our freedom, and we are still free in the hereafter.

Venden: But you referred Job. If I remember correctly, God called Job a perfect person. (Job 1:8; 2:3) And yet as you come to the end of the book, it says he repented.

AGM: In dust and ashes.

Venden: Now, what did he have to repent of? What does repentance mean when God has said, "Here is a perfect man?" He says that to Lucifer, to Satan, "Have you considered My servant Job?"

AGM: That's right. In the hearing of the onlooking universe. "Here is a perfect man." And the perfect man says, "I repent." Well, I notice that we are more inclined to point out his repentance rather than God's word that he is perfect. We need to re-read the whole book here this evening. But my understanding is that under the pressure of the bad advice of his friends, Job finally

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came to the place where he said, "God, I'm sorry I have talked about things beyond my understanding." And God immediately intervened and said, "Don't give up, Job. You have done splendidly! You have said of Me what is right. Don't let these three theologians discourage you. In fact, pray for them. They need a lot of help to understand Me the way you do." (Job 42:7,8) So we really need to take that book as a whole. God said he was perfect. Job in his humility said, "God, I have said a lot, and I've said it with a great deal of feeling. If I seem the least irreverent, I repent." God said, "A man who is covered with boils and has lost his whole family, Oh, I can understand why you cry the way you have. You did not insult Me by this. You honored Me with your confidence." Which, by the way, comes up next week when we have "Talking To God As A Friend." Job is a marvelous example of how freely we can talk to God, yet still be reverent.

Venden: Let's come back to this matter of perfection as "healing the damage done." Does that include restoration physically and mentally? And I remember one of the questions that we've had for some time here: Elder Maxwell, will you please tell me why the people of the Old Testament lived longer than the people of our day? What gave them a longer life span? Has food anything to do with our life span today? And I think that ties in here when we talked about healing all the damage that has been done.

AGM: It does. Yes, and I love to go back and read about Methusaleh and how long he lived and so on. Up until the flood they all lived a long time. Unless they were murdered, or translated as Enoch was. And then I remember the first time I went through the Sixty-six. I forget which version I was using then. I think it was the American Standard of 1901. And I wrote in my margin the declining ages of the patriarchs after the flood. It's precipitous! Their ages just drop, don't they, from almost a thousand down to a little over a hundred. We have lost a great deal physically. We're pygmies compared with Adam and Eve. Fortunately, we've all sort of withered up together so we look relatively respectable to each other, but if Adam and Eve were to walk in the back of the room, we'd be embarrassed, wouldn't we? And then we have, you know, one twentieth the vital force. We need physical healing. And we need mental healing. But in this life, though we should do the best with the little that we have, we are all getting older. I'm feeling it. We're getting older. Not until the earth made new will all that be restored. So some people say, "Well, if I can't be physically and mentally perfect in this life, I guess I can't be perfect in any way." No, perfection spiritually, perfection of character is held out to us. That's what's so incredible. So God could say us, as He did of Job, "I could trust you even through the Time of Trouble and you wouldn't let Me down." That's being mature. And that's the real meaning of perfection. Not a brittle thing. It actually means just plain growing up. It is unnatural not to grow up.

Venden: So the question comes up in this subject: Does a person have to be perfect in any sense in order to be saved?

AGM: Certainly in one's willingness to listen, which begins when one is, as we say, converted, and to be converted is simply to reverse one's course. I was stubbornly unwilling to listen. Now I'm reverently and humbly willing to listen. Now one couldn't do that if one didn't have a new heart and a right spirit. And I would say that marvelous work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to the conviction of truth and leads me freely to say I want to reverse my direction, is a work of God. It would be perfectly done, but I'm a perfect baby. That's all.

Venden: But you've steered us away very carefully from that concentration on our performance which stops and checks and says, "Well, I'm doing fairly well today." That kind of emphasis upon

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the subject.

AGM: It's just that if I'm cheating in my willingness to listen, there's something seriously wrong still.

Venden: Now I missed some words in your presentation this evening that I've heard often associated with the subject as one way to solve the questions created by Jesus' statement in the Sermon on the Mount, "Be ye perfect as your Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48) Words like "imputed," "Christ's righteousness imputed," or "the covering of Christ's righteousness," as though that was something that was placed over us and then God says, "You're perfect." As though maybe God didn't understand what's underneath. Why didn't you use phrases like that?

AGM: We need to be familiar with them and to use them at the right time, but actually those words belong to the legal model--the emergency model--that the righteousness of Christ is reckoned to us so that our account may look all right in the judgment, and so on. And that's often attributed to the verse, "Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned or imputed unto him for righteousness." The Greek word there actually can mean "considered, recognized." In the trust-healing model, I would translate that verse, "Abraham trusted God, and God said, "That's good! That's what I want. If you trust Me, all is well." All God ever asked of us is trust. And he trusted Him enough to become His firmest friend there, and Abraham really grew up and was not afraid of God, though reverent. Look at the relationship they had. That's the ideal. And one does not need to explain that in legal terms at all.

Same way with "covered." Think what we've done with the word "covered" to suggest that I as a sinner--and we're all sinners--I stand in the presence of the Father, and He would be very angry with me and destructive toward me if I were not covered. So I am covered with something, and, fortunately, God does not have twenty-twenty vision. He doesn't know the truth. I know what's inside. The Lord knows what's inside. My guardian angel knows what's inside. And the devil is reminding them as the Accuser of the Brethren as to what's inside. But the Father looks and I'm perfect. He knows better. God knows exactly what I'm like. What does that mean in the legal model? You can see how it could have an emergency comforting message for people who are afraid God. Don't worry, God can't really see you the way you are. That's emergency talk. In the trust-healing model, God looks at me and knows exactly what I'm like, but nevertheless, He treats me as if I had been as loyal as His own Son. He treats me as if I had lived as righteously as Christ. I know I haven't and so does He. But that's how generous He is. Now that's for real. And that's more marvelous than the other. So we could use those phrases, but when we do, if the audience is ready, we should explain in the healing model. But we limit these phrases unfortunately to the legal model which is only a step on the way. It has its place, but as I think you said once before, it's a way station on the way.

Venden: ...A way station along the way.

AGM: Yes.

Venden: In the beginning of your presentation, you talked about it not being enough just to be forgiven. If I'm forgiven, though, really, if I know that of every sin God has said, "You are forgiven," what more do I need to be saved? Really. You used a very helpful analogy or illustration at the beginning.

AGM: But just to say a person is forgiven doesn't heal the damage done. Just to forgive Idi Amin

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would not, unless he has changed, make him a very desirable neighbor in the hereafter. If Manasseh can be changed, so can Idi Amin, so let's leave room for him there. But if I meet him in the Kingdom, I wouldn't want to know whether he has been forgiven. I would want to know if he is safe to live next door to. As we mentioned with Isaiah, when he meets Manasseh in the Kingdom, he doesn't want to know if Manasseh has been forgiven. He wants to know if Manasseh can be trusted with a sharp saw, because he sawed him in half in a hollow log. So forgiveness is not enough. But there's more to it than that. Just for God to say, "I forgive you" does not mean I've been changed in any way, for remember Jesus on the cross said to the people who rejected Him and tortured Him, "I forgive you, I forgive you." They didn't even want to be forgiven. And you can think of other cases where God offers forgiveness but we're not receiving it. I would say unless we respond to the forgiveness, and the kindness of God leads us to repentance and to trust, (Romans 2:4) that forgiveness has done us no good.

Venden: So Jesus' prayer for those who were crucifying Him represented the heart of God...

AGM: That's right.

Venden: ...How He actually felt towards them at that moment.

AGM: With forgiveness.

Venden: But it would mean nothing to them if they were not open to receive.

AGM: Right. Unless we respond.

Venden: I want to ask the same question but in another way: Isn't it enough to be justified? Do I also have to be sanctified? Are you saying here that the healing-trust model really challenges that kind of separation and that kind of thinking?

AGM: Very much so. Of course those two words do not occur in the Bible. They are English words of Latin derivation. Not to make light of them. But the Greek word could be more literally translated "set right, put right" for "justification." Now if a person has been really set right with God and he now loves and trusts Him and is willing to listen, don't you think he would say, "What else do You want me to do, Lord?" "I want to heal you if you will cooperate." "Absolutely! Just tell me, and I'll follow." There's no way to be justified without sanctification following. If you're not willing to be kept right, you obviously haven't been set right. So being set right and kept right are all part of the same package. They belong together.

Venden: But I worry a little about someone here as for example one of the questions that came in early in our series: You've made it so complicated. There is so much to think about. Justification, sanctification and all of this. If what really is at stake is simply trusting God, why isn't it enough to say, "I'm going to have the faith of a little child? I'll just trust God, and don't bother me with all the rest of this."

AGM: But don't underestimate the faith of a little child. The faith of a little child implies he's really willing to listen. So if we really have the faith of a little child, we are willing to listen and to be trusting, which by the way is why a little child needs protection, because he's too willing to trust anybody. So he needs protection. But on the good side, the faith of a little child is wonderful. Why, I have all my grandchildren home visiting right now.

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Venden: Right now?

AGM: Right now. All of them at home. I love it.

Venden: That's quite a houseful.

AGM: And they will sit there and listen and believe anything Grandpa says. I could get away with murder, you know, but I won't do it. But to have them sit and look and hang on every word is beautiful. I love it. Well, if we had the faith of a little child we're sitting there listening to God and saying, "Tell me. Tell me more. Tell me more." Look, there's no way to have the faith of a little child without following along and sanctification will come with it and we'll be healed. There's no way to avoid it.

Venden: As I remember the little children in our house, they were trusting, but they also loved to ask why.

AGM: Oh, that's part of the faith of a little child.

Venden: They are eager to grow.

AGM: Yes. I love that.

Venden: In our Bible reference sheet there is this very interesting reference to baptism. And this footnote that you mentioned. I wanted you to comment a bit on why, what happen to change the mode of baptism to sprinkling, you referred to, to pouring, to a variety of forms.

AGM: Well, since I've cited a Roman Catholic translation, that's as fine a footnote as you could put there, may I cite another Roman Catholic translation for an explanation. It says, "Admittedly, the early Christian method was immersion. However, on the authority of the Church and for convenience, it was changed." That's in another Catholic version. I mean, our friends will understand I am just quoting both footnotes. The sad thing is, though, that changing to sprinkling and changing to pouring has also seen a change in the meaning. And that's why there may be sprinkling and pouring of or on little infants who have no understanding that it represents the burial of the old man and rising to a newness of life. And so with the change of the method has come a change of the meaning which is a loss to us. That ought to be a memorable occasion when I say, "I bury the old man, the man I used to be; I want to start all over again."

Venden: So that whole rich symbolism ties in with the subject of this evening, doesn't it?

AGM: That's the whole idea. Yes. Very much so.

Venden: You've talked of Jesus as our Example in these Conversations About God. We've had several questions come in raising the question about His perhaps having an advantage over us. How could He be regarded as our Example if He did have such an advantage? Let me just refer to a couple of these. "When Christ came to the world and took on human flesh, did He take on sinful flesh in essence or vicariously?" The question of Jesus and His humanity, what was His humanity I think ties in here in an important way. Would you comment briefly on that one?

AGM: Well, I'll cite Paul for that. He said, "Christ came in the **likeness** of sinful flesh to deal with

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sin." I think really what's behind this is, Can we really look to Jesus as an Example of the perfection that we should have?

Venden: Yes, I think that's right.

AGM: But was He exactly like us? There are some interesting differences. He was born of the Holy Spirit. And I might be sixty-five before I'm born of the Holy Spirit. So when I'm reborn, I've got sixty-five years of bad habits to fight with for the rest of my life. Jesus never acquired a bad habit. The only way you can get a bad habit is to do something bad which He never did. And you say, "Well, then He's not an Example for me." How low do we want Him to go? Do we want Him to wallow in the gutter as a wino, so that He can be an example as to how you can get out of the gutter? I don't want Jesus to be more and more like me. I want to be more and more like Him. So He came in human form in the likeness of sinful flesh using no power that is not available to us. And he showed that even little boys can be good, you know. And you can grow up good like that. And you say, "Well I had bad habits." "Look," He says, "I'm your Physician; I understand. I'll be very patient. And I guarantee I'll help you get over all of those things. Just trust Me." So how many things do we want Him to do more than He did? He's enough of an Example to show how we could have lived. Well, we didn't. What will He do with us now? Well, He's the Physician, and He knows exactly what it's like to go through what we are going through. And so you can count on Him to be patient. You say, "Well, I guess that means the Father isn't just as patient." No, Jesus came to show how patient the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are. I think sometimes we run into problems when we raise the wrong questions about what He came to tell us, what He came to show us.

Venden: You know, I want to take a moment here before we have to close Number 14 to talk about a little book that you wrote some years ago. I noticed the Copyright, Graham, is 1977.

AGM: Right.

Venden: But as we've gone through this series of "Conversations About God," I've thought of this little volume many times. And we'd like to offer this to those who are following the series on television, on radio, and we'll have a word to say more to our congregation about it as well. As I looked through this book, it seems to me that much of the book follows along in the general area that we have discussed.

AGM: Many of the highlights are really dealt with in there.

Venden: Yes. Can God be trusted? Can the Bible be trusted? Why did Jesus have to die? Good news about the Judgment. God waits for us to trust Him. This is becoming a rare book because I understand it's out of print right now.

AGM: Fortunately, we have a number.

Venden: But we have a supply, so we would like to offer those of you who are following by television and by radio. If you would write to the University Church, all the address you need is: The University Church, Loma Linda, California 92354, and we'll be happy to send you a copy of Can God Be Trusted?

AGM: And if it should provoke some questions, so much the better. That would be good.

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Venden: Yes. I should say so. That address once again: Loma Linda University Church, Loma Linda, CA 92354. Can God Be Trusted? Ask for the book by name, and we'll see that you get a copy just as soon as we can get it out. It's a little gem that I keep several copies around. I find myself giving it out to people, and I'm glad that we've found a supply so that we can carry on with this.

AGM: It would serve to remind us of some of the points we've been discussing.

Venden: Yes. It's not a script from this series by any means.

AGM: No, no.

Venden: But it certainly would be a valuable tool along with the series. Let's go to one further quick question that has come in: Is healing, the healing of our bodies, the healing that we've talked about this evening, dependent upon perfect obedience to Christ's teaching, or doesn't God's mercy at times supersede even the doubts of those who question His divine authority? That's what one of our members here wanted to know.

AGM: Oh, that's true. I suppose that could refer to when Jesus went everywhere healing everybody. He went through villages and left nobody sick. He healed all ten lepers, and only one came back to thank Him. I think on that occasion Jesus was saying something else that was crucial about the Father, that He is a Healer, not a destroyer. So everywhere Jesus went He healed people whether they trusted Him or not.