

THE TEACHINGS OF MORRIS VENDEN

HARVEST INSPIRATION DISCOVERIES LECTURE SERIES

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CHAPTER FOUR- SOME THINGS HE SAYS TO AVOID IN VICTORY OVER SIN

Table of Contents

LISTING OF VENDEN'S BOOKS-MAGAZINES-CAMPMEETING TRANSCRIPTS.....	3
<i>BOOKS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>MAGAZINE ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY.....</i>	<i>3</i>
<i>CAMPMEETING SERIES TRANSCRIPTS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY</i>	<i>4</i>
WORKING.....	4
<i>SIMPLY ACCEPTING THEM.....</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>GIVING ATTENTION TO FRUIT</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>FAITH PLUS WORK BRINGS IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>DON'T TRY WORKING</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>HE DOESN'T NEED OUR HELP</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TRYING-TRYING HARD TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>TAKING OVER OUR BATTLES.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IT ALL.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>SIN NEVER STAMPED OUT BY US</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>STOP TRYING HARDER</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>NEVER FORCE YOURSELF TO OBEY.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>FIGHTING AND TRYING.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>WHEN THE OBEDIENCE BECOMES IMPERFECT.</i>	<i>5</i>
[MY RESPONSE TO WORKING].....	6
OVERCOMING.....	7
<i>OVERCOME-BY NOT TRYING TO DO RIGHT</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>YOU HAVE NO PART TO DO IN OVERCOMING,.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>THE ONLY WAY TO RESIST THE DEVIL.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>NEVER DOING RIGHT TO BE A CHRISTIAN</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE-WRONG TO ATTEMPT IT</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>RIGHT THINGS-WHEN EVERYTHING RIGHT IS WRONG</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>GOOD WORKS-MORALITY IS WORTH NOTHING</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>MORALITY-THE COUNTERFEIT TO REAL MORALITY.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>MORE DANGERS FROM MORALITY.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>MORALITY IS NOT CHRISTIANITY.....</i>	<i>9</i>

NO SALVATION IN OBEDIENCE.....	9
THE BURDEN OF HOLINESS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE FROM THE BURDEN OF SIN	9
WATCHING-"WATCH"-BUT NOT TO RESIST SIN	9
RESISTING THE DEVIL-RESISTING SATAN MAKES US LIKE HIM.....	9
GOD DOES NOT EXPECT US TO FIGHT SIN	9
[MY RESPONSE TO JAMES 4:7,8 'RESIST THE DEVIL'].....	9
Ellen White's writings explicitly contradicts his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.	10
He sees the "fight of faith" and the fight against sin and Satan as two different things. Yet Ellen White says they are one and the same:.....	10
Other Ellen White statements make it as clear as possible that while God's imparted strength is essential to the conquest of evil, the work of conquering evil remains our work.	10
HEADING DOWNWARD WHEN WE FIGHT SIN	11
RESISTING SIN-RESISTING SIN CHEAPENS GRACE	11
GIVE THAT UP THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN	11
THE BAD FIGHT OF SIN.....	11
NO BETTER OFF DOING GOOD THAN THOSE DOING BAD.....	11
THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE	11
STOP FIGHTING THE WAVES OF SIN.....	11
TRYING TO BE WHAT WE SHOULD BE.....	12
REFUSING TO DO WRONG WHEN WHAT WE LOVE IS WRONG.....	12
GIVING UP SINFUL PRACTICES-THE GIVING UP THINGS GIMMICKS	12
OBEDIENCE.....	13
ONLY TEACH OBEDIENCE IF YOU UNDERSTAND IT.....	13
GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF PRODUCING OBEDIENCE	13
DOESN'T ACCEPT US BECAUSE OF OUR OBEDIENCE	13
ALWAYS AND ONLY BY FAITH	13
NOT A CAUSE OF OUR SALVATION	13
WHY WE CAN SAFELY IGNORE OBEDIENCE	13
THE PURPOSE OF OBEDIENCE-OBEDIENCE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SALVATION.....	13
GOOD DEEDS-GOD DOES NOT LOOK AT OUTWARD ACTIONS.....	14
RIGHT LIVING.....	14
GOOD LIVES AND BEHAVIOR	14
IT DOESN'T PROVE A THING.....	14
CONTROLLED ACTIONS	14
CONTROLLING ACTIONS DOES NOT OVERCOME SIN.....	14
VICTORY OVER SIN	14
VICTORY FROM ABOVE; NO VICTORY FROM WITHIN.....	14
BEHAVIOR.....	14
BEHAVIOR CONCENTRATION TURNS US FROM JESUS.....	14

<i>YOUR BEHAVIOR IS NOW ONLY HIS CONCERN.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>WORKING ON BEHAVIOR KEEPS YOU FROM CHRIST.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>GOOD BEHAVIOR IS STILL SIN.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>CHRISTIANITY IS NOT BASED ON BEHAVIOR.....</i>	<i>15</i>
<i>BEHAVIOR IS NO MEASUREMENT OF BEING IN CHRIST.</i>	<i>15</i>

LISTING OF VENDEN'S BOOKS-MAGAZINES-CAMPMEETING TRANSCRIPTS

BOOKS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY

[SBF] - "Salvation by Faith and Your Will," Morris L. Venden, Southern Publishing Association, 1978, 128 pages, paperback.

[FTW] - "Faith that Works," Morris L. Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1980, 375 pages, hardback.

[ROE] - "The Return of Elijah," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 110 pages, paperback.

[DO] - "Defeated Demons," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 16 pages, paperback booklet.

[GN] - "Good News and Bad News About the Judgment," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 96 pages, paperback.

[TP] - "The Pillars," Morris L. Venden, Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1982, 109 pages, paperback.

[MCR] - "How to Make Christianity Real," Morris Venden, Concerned Communications, 1982, 168 pages, paperback.

[OOF] - "Obedience of Faith," Morris Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983, 95 pages, paperback.

[TKG] - "To Know God," Morris Venden, Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1983, 125 pages, paperback.

[NWI]- "Never Without an Intercessor." (Boise, ID: Pacific Press Publishing Assn, 1996).

I've added the review of this book at the end of this document.

MAGAZINE ARTICLES INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY

[TTI-1] - "Morris Venden Talks to Insight, Part 1," Morris Venden and Editor, "Insight" Magazine, May 8, 1979, pages 7-11.

[TTI-2] - "Morris Venden Talks to Insight, Part 2," Morris Venden and Editor, "Insight" Magazine, May 15, 1979, pages 6-11.

[TCT] - "The Christmas Tree," Morris L. Venden, "Adventist Review," December 24, 1981, pages 4-5.

[SAS] - "What Jesus said about sanctification," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, January, 1982, pages 6-7.

[SAFR] - "What Jesus said about faith and relationship," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, March, 1982, pages 8-9.

[SAH] - "What Jesus said about Himself," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, May, 1982, pages 18-19.

[JSAP] - "What Jesus said about perfection," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, July, 1982, pages 8-9.

[SAPJ] - "What Jesus said about a pre-Advent judgment," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, September, 1982, pages 14-16.

[SITP] - "What Jesus said about the prophets," Morris L. Venden, "Ministry" Magazine, November, 1982, pages 22-23.

CAMPMEETING SERIES TRANSCRIPTS INCLUDED IN THIS TOPICAL STUDY

[1-7 AUC CM] - Sermon Series at Atlantic Union Conference Campmeeting, Summer, 1979. (This was a seven-part lecture series, and each sermon is numbered: 1 AUC CM, 2 AUC CM, etc.)

Of the above materials, "Good News and Bad News About the Judgment," and "The Pillars," are among Venden's best books, for they tend to deal with doctrinal aspects on which he is more in agreement with traditional Adventism. To these two books should be added nearly all of the August through December sections of "Faith that Works." By the end of July, Venden had covered the means of salvation and had turned to other topics. Thinking, doubtless, that his audience was smaller, he gave some unusual material in his "Insight" articles and AUC Camp meeting Series. Seven of his nine published books were issued since 1981.

WORKING

SIMPLY ACCEPTING THEM

"He gives us rest from trying to earn our way to heaven, from our own attempts to overcome sin and the devil, and from fighting the battles that Jesus has promised to fight for us. Remember that a gift is a gift. It is not something you earn, merit, or pay for. You cannot work for one of God's gifts. Are there one or more of the gifts under this Christmas tree that you have not yet received? Is it possible that it is because you still are trying to work for them instead of simply accepting them?" TCT, 5.

GIVING ATTENTION TO FRUIT

"And if you want righteousness, you don't work on righteousness; you put your effort on knowing Jesus, who is righteous. If you want faith, if you want love, you don't work on either; they are fruits of the Spirit." 3 AUC CM.

FAITH PLUS WORK BRINGS IMPERFECT OBEDIENCE

"Those who believe it, sanctification by faith plus works, can believe only in imperfect obedience until Jesus comes. But those who believe in sanctification by faith alone can believe that perfect obedience is possible any time that they are depending upon Jesus instead of their own power." AS, 7.

DON'T TRY WORKING

'Well,' says someone, 'then how do I get over my problems?'

"Accept the fact that you can do nothing apart from Christ (John 15:5). This text doesn't say that you can do 90% or 30% apart from Him, because it is talking about man's inner nature, where all are equally helpless. We can do nothing apart from Christ.

"If I want to give up my temper, I don't try working on my temper. I don't even pray overly much about it, because it is possible, even in my prayers, to fight the bad fight of sin. 'Lord help me today not to do this, and this, and this. My attention is then on myself or things!'"

"Instead, I focus the attention on my relationship-on Him!" MCR, 128.

HE DOESN'T NEED OUR HELP

"God said, 'You won't have to fight. The Lord will fight for you: And the first thing they did was to begin scrapping with their enemies. They too had to learn that God has the power to do what He's promised, and He doesn't need our help to do what He has promised to do for us. Admitting our helplessness to do it ourselves is the final step before coming to Him.'" FTW, 49.

TRYING-TRYING HARD TO DO WHAT IS RIGHT

"I must teach you how to grow a healthy apple tree. An apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree, never in order to be one. A Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one. Many think the way to be a Christian is to try hard to do what's right. That is not the way to be a Christian:'-3 AUC CM.

TAKING OVER OUR BATTLES

"God can only deliver us by taking over our battles for us." MCR,131. .

YOU'LL HAVE TO DO IT ALL

" 'I do need You. I'll always be a sinner, and if You want me to live victoriously, You'll have to do it ALL for me." MCR, 132. [Emphasis his.]

SIN NEVER STAMPED OUT BY US

"The principle and premise of the great theme of righteousness by faith is that as Christ comes into the life, sin is crowded out by Him. It is not stamped out by us." MCR, 134.

STOP TRYING HARDER

"We must leave our battles against our sins, our problems, to Him. Here is one of the hardest ideas for human beings to accept, probably because of humanity's natural pride and self-sufficiency. We cherish the thought that we can do more if we try harder." SBF, 77..

NEVER FORCE YOURSELF TO OBEY

"The results of that saving faith, doing what's right, living a good life (inwardly as well as outwardly) are not coerced. Whenever I have to force myself to obey by trying to conform to the principles of conduct in Christian life, I am simply acknowledging that I'm an immature Christian." SBF, 49.

FIGHTING AND TRYING

"But then he said that in sanctification, you've got to work really hard, fighting the devil and trying hard to overcome sin and to obey God's requirements. But if sanctification is the fruit, then it will be the result of accepting justification.' OOF,85.

WHEN THE OBEDIENCE BECOMES IMPERFECT.

"To whatever extent we are involved in trying to obey, to that degree will the obedience be imperfect. The person who believes that perfect obedience is possible through the grace of God, also recognizes that we must give up on ourselves and let Christ dwell within. He concludes that obedience comes by faith alone, plus or minus nothing. And if it is ever going to be a perfect reality, it will have a result exclusively through God's doing." OOF, 61.

[MY RESPONSE TO WORKING]

"Many feel that their faults of character make it impossible for them to meet the standard that Christ has erected; but all that such ones have to do is to humble themselves at every step. . . . He adds to their work His perfection and sufficiency, and it is accepted of the Father. We are accepted in the Beloved. The sinner's defects are covered by the perfection and fullness of the Lord Our Righteousness. Those who with sincere will, with a contrite heart, are putting forth humble efforts to live up to the requirements of God are looked upon by the Father . . . as obedient children, and the righteousness of Christ is imputed unto them" (1888 materials, p. 402; italics supplied).

"Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition . . . , but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man, and works in mind and heart and character. It is through the impartation of the grace of Christ that sin is discerned in its hateful nature, and finally driven from the soul temple.

"It is through grace that we are brought into fellowship with Christ, to be associated with Him in the work of salvation. Faith is the condition upon which God has seen fit to promise pardon to sinners. . . . *Faith can present Christ's perfect obedience instead of the sinner's transgression and defection.* . . . The repentant soul realizes that his *justification* comes because *Christ, as his substitute and surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness*" (Review and Herald, Nov. 4, 1890; italics supplied).

ILLUSTRATION: A family often had no money for gas. When necessary, the father would offer his prized car jack, worth far more than a few gallons of gas, as a substitute for cash, a surety that he would return to pay. Because of the jack's inherent value, the owner of the gas station never turned down this substitute. Indeed, nothing more was needed for payment. But something was required to retain possession of the valuable jack. Had the father not returned with cash, he would have lost its ownership and could no longer have used the jack as credit.

We have no merit by which to use justification's credit line. But we assure continued substitution ("jack") by gratefully choosing to obey. Upon the basis of this choice, our Surety guarantees that He, the Substitute, will pass us through the judgment and preserve us until His return (Phil. 1:6). **Unless we choose to obey, however, we surrender all claim to justification.**

The choice to obey—not obedience itself!—permits an honest credit claim. Obedience follows as we trust the Surety. The father could not honestly return for the jack without the exchange. Nor can we receive justification without surrendering our sinfulness for His righteousness. The substitution does not act directly upon the future. But the future is assured so long as we retain the credit line by a faith in our Surety, a faith that honors His ownership and lordship.

A lack of commitment to obey may mean we claimed justification dishonestly—like getting gas without paying but refusing to leave the jack. If so, we were never justified in the first place. Our claim was not an act of loyal faith but of disloyal presumption. Or we may have exercised true faith but forfeited justification by adopting a false assurance that we need no exchange, no continued commitment to obey.

In the latter we again become responsible for sins of the past (cf. Eze. 18:20-26). Not because Christ retracts past credit, but because of the nature of the credit line. The past is always covered by present justification—never by past justification. Christ Himself—not some mark in heavenly records—is our justification! We are justified when we are in Him and unjustified out of Him!

But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ's righteousness while practicing known sins, or

neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul. {1SM 366.1}

James writes of Abraham and says, "Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only" (James 2:21-24). In order for man to be justified by faith, faith must reach a point where it will control the affections and impulses of the heart; and it is by obedience that faith itself is made perfect. {1SM 366.2}

I was attending a meeting, and a large congregation were present. In my dream you were presenting the subject of faith and the imputed righteousness of Christ by faith. You repeated several times that works amounted to nothing, that there were no conditions. The matter was presented in that light that I knew minds would be confused and would not receive the correct impression in reference to faith and works, and I decided to write to you. You state this matter too strongly. There are conditions to our receiving justification and sanctification, and the righteousness of Christ. I know your meaning, but you leave a wrong impression upon many minds. **While good works will not save even one soul, yet it is impossible for even one soul to be saved without good works.** God saves us under a law, that we must ask if we would receive, seek if we would find, and knock if we would have the door opened unto us. {FW 111.1}

END OF MY RESPONSE TO WORKING.]

OVERCOMING

OVERCOME-BY NOT TRYING TO DO RIGHT

"The reason we've become so discouraged in trying to live the Christian life is that we've never known how to overcome. We often talk about what we should do, but people say, 'Yes, I've tried that, and it doesn't work.'

"Eventually the follower of Christ must give up trying to 'do what is right' in his own power. He gives up on the idea that he can do, anything about his life, except to go to God, because surrender has primarily to do with self, not sins." MCR,124.

YOU HAVE NO PART TO DO IN OVERCOMING,

"It didn't help my morale when I received a pamphlet describing, One Hundred Sins That laodicea Must Repent Of. ' It was discouraging! Is fighting the bad fight of sin the plan that God has for each of us?

"Someone else told me, 'look, you don't realize how the victorious life is obtained. Victory comes when you do your part and God does His. You have enough will power to do part of it. You choose to be good with your will, then you act with your will power in carrying out your choice. Do the best you can, and God will make up the difference by removing the evil from your heart.'

"This plan might be termed 'subsidy religion,' in which God would subsidize my weak power, if I would do my 30%. But I didn't even have the will power to do that much. If I was trying to overcome my temper, I was supposed to make sure that I didn't slap my enemy. Then God would take the hate out of my heart. But my backbone was like wet spaghetti. I couldn't even do my part so that God could take the hate out of my heart. This 'subsidy' program kept me frustrated, wondering just how far short I was falling each time.

"When I tried harder to conquer my problems, I discovered it to be a fierce and hopeless battle. If I had any time left over after fighting my sins, then I'd read a verse or say a prayer to keep God happy, but usually after hassling all of my problems, I didn't have enough time or energy to bother.

"I found that it was possible to fight the devil so hard that I became more like him." MCR. 121. 122. '

THE ONLY WAY TO RESIST THE DEVIL

" 'Wait!' objects someone, 'You're describing "cheap grace," but the Bible says that we have to fight.'

"True. But how do I fight the devil? He's stronger than I am. The only way to resist the devil is to turn the battle over to superior forces. The good fight of faith is the effort to know God and Jesus Christ whom He has sent." MCR, 123, 124.

NEVER DOING RIGHT TO BE A CHRISTIAN

"An apple tree bears apples because it is an apple tree; never in order to be one. And a Christian does what is right because he is a Christian, never in order to be one." FTW, 97.

LIVING THE CHRISTIAN LIFE-WRONG TO ATTEMPT IT

"These Christians have been miss-instructed. It is wrong for a person to attempt to live the Christian life. We are not asked to do so." SBF, 40.

RIGHT THINGS-WHEN EVERYTHING RIGHT IS WRONG

"But the point is that anyone who is living a life apart from Jesus is going to do whatever right things he does for wrong, self-centered reason." TKG, 22.

GOOD WORKS-MORALITY IS WORTH NOTHING

" 'Wait a minute!' someone objects. 'Isn't morality worth something? Maybe it will lead me to God eventually.' Our good works will not bring us to God. The law only shows us our sins so that we will seek God.

[Good works do not bring us to God, but sin does]

The only legitimate obedience in the Christian life comes as a spontaneous result of our relationship with Christ. If being good by not being bad were our method, then we would be operating our wills in the wrong way. God never intended us to employ them toward being good. He wanted us to use them only toward knowing Him." SBF,52.

MORALITY-THE COUNTERFEIT TO REAL MORALITY

"Of course it does not mean that a religious life will lead to immorality. Actually, true spirituality is the only thing that will produce a genuinely moral life. But the world has a substitute for real morality, a counterfeit known as conformity to right conduct and principles." SBF, 25-26.

MORE DANGERS FROM MORALITY

"Morality can come from all sorts of bad motives. We can put on a good performance because we want others to think well of us, because we want to stay out of jail, or even because we're just too afraid to do anything else." FTW, 184.

MORALITY IS NOT CHRISTIANITY

"We are not against morality. Morality is worthwhile. It will keep you out of jail. It will keep you from getting traffic tickets. It will keep you from lying in the gutter. But morality is not Christianity, and it will not get you to heaven." FTW, 47.

NO SALVATION IN OBEDIENCE

"How are we supposed to know whose side we're on? Certainly not by our behaviour alone. If the strongest person in the world, the one with the greatest self-discipline, cannot really change his heart one iota, then what benefits result from being moral? Certainly there are some, but salvation is not one of them, and neither is being a Christian. Being moral or outwardly good will never save a person, for it is possible for some to achieve it without a relationship with God." SBF, 28-29.

THE BURDEN OF HOLINESS NOT MUCH DIFFERENCE FROM THE BURDEN OF SIN

"All of us in every generation have struggled with the burden of holiness. And at times there's not much difference between the burden of holiness and the burden of sin." TKG, 99.

WATCHING-"WATCH"-BUT NOT TO RESIST SIN

"It is true that Jesus told us to watch and pray. But He wasn't talking primarily about watching for temptations on specific things. We need to watch that nothing will separate or keep us from God." MCR, 163.

RESISTING THE DEVIL-RESISTING SATAN MAKES US LIKE HIM

"Remember that God never intended that our sin, our mistakes, or our problems should obsess us. Have you ever tried so hard to go to sleep at night that you have kept yourself awake? It's possible to fight Satan so strongly that you become more like him." SBF, 109.

GOD DOES NOT EXPECT US TO FIGHT SIN

"I wish that we could clearly understand where the battle takes place. The Bible tells us to 'fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed, a good profession before many witnesses' (1 Timothy 6:12). Are we supposed to combat the enemy? Or do we engage in the fight of faith? Is there a difference between the fight of faith and the fight of sin?

" 'Oh,' says someone, 'wait a minute. Doesn't the Bible say, 'Resist the devil, and he will flee from you'? Yes, it does in James 4:7. But how are we supposed to do it? By battling against sin and the devil? No. By submitting to God, by waging the fight of faith.

"The fight of faith takes every ounce of energy, self discipline, and willpower, every bit of human effort that we can muster. God does expect us to engage in this battle, but He does not expect us to fight sin." SBF, 70,71.

[MY RESPONSE TO JAMES 4:7,8 'RESIST THE DEVIL']

[⁷ Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. ⁸ Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse *your* hands, ye sinners; and purify *your* hearts, ye double minded.

7. Submit. James here begins a series of ten imperatives, which every church member subject to the danger of becoming a "friend" to the world (see v.4) does well to heed. Before God can bestow His "grace" (v. 6) the "humble" man must be willing to submit his will to God's plan. Submission implies complete trust that all God's arrangements are for his own good (see Heb. 12:9).

Therefore. That is, because of the danger of pride and self-interest Christians must place themselves under God's command. He promises not to allow any temptation beyond our power of resistance (see 1 Cor. 10:13). **Resist.** Gr. *anthistēmi*, "take a stand against." Compare Eph. 4:27.

Submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist

But the verse doesn't say that submitting and drawing nigh to God mean we no longer resist Satan, supposedly relinquishing this responsibility to God while we keep out of His way. Rather, the verse is clear as is Ephesians 6:12-17 that submission and drawing nigh give us power to resist, much as the armor of faith gives this power. In no way do these Scriptures imply, especially as we place them alongside other passages, that faith means the total abandonment by the Christian of the struggle with sin, letting Christ do it all in our place.

Ellen White's writings explicitly contradicts his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

Venden professes great respect for the writings of Ellen White. He speaks of how both the investigative judgment and the Spirit of Prophecy are under attack in the church today. Yet he seems not to have considered the extent to which Ellen White's writings explicitly contradict his view regarding God's part and man's part in salvation.

He sees the "fight of faith" and the fight against sin and Satan as two different things. Yet Ellen White says they are one and the same:

"The Christian life is a warfare. The apostle Paul speaks of wrestling against principalities and powers as he fought the good fight of faith." {5T 222.2}

"We must come, we must resist the Devil, we must strive to enter in at the strait gate, we must run the race with patience, we must fight the fight of faith, we must wrestle with principalities and powers, we must agonize before God in prayer, if we would stand blameless before the throne of God. We must have the faith that works, or it will be powerless." {RH, September 6, 1892 par. 7}

No hint of any kind can be found, in these or any inspired statements, that God will fight sin and wrestle against principalities in our place so long as we pray and have faith.

Other Ellen White statements make it as clear as possible that while God's imparted strength is essential to the conquest of evil, the work of conquering evil remains our work.

"The fact that Christ has conquered should inspire His followers with courage to fight manfully the battle against sin and Satan." {GC88 510.3}

"Our part is to put away sin, to seek with determination for perfection of character. As we thus work, God cooperates with us." {RH, June 11, 1901 par. 4}

"It is left with us to remedy the defects in our characters, to cleanse the soul temple of every defilement." {CET 189.2} (Christian Experience and Teachings)

"Each day he [the Christian] must renew his consecration, each day do battle with evil. Old habits, hereditary tendencies to wrong, will strive for the mastery, and against these he is to be ever on guard, striving in Christ's strength for victory." {AA 476.3}

"We have a work to do to resist temptation. Those who would not fall a prey to Satan's devices must guard well the avenues to the soul; they must avoid reading, seeing, or hearing that which will suggest impure thoughts." {MYP 285.1}

"There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. The soul must be kept from every stain, through faith in Him who is able to keep you from falling." {2MCP 405.4} (Mind Character & Personality)

One must defy the simplest rules of grammar and syntax to read into these statements the idea that man's only struggle in the saving process is to keep "in relationship" while any direct confrontation with sin or Satan is to be left completely to God. The above passages repeatedly declare the opposite that in fact we are to struggle with sin and Satan, using the strength God gives us.

We do well to remember Ellen White's warning:

"In reading the Testimonies be sure not to mix in your filling of words; for this makes it impossible for the hearers to distinguish between the word of the Lord to them and your words." {GW 374.3}

END MY RESPONSE JAMES 4:7]

HEADING DOWNWARD WHEN WE FIGHT SIN

"If we continue to seek to fight sin and the devil on our own, then our direction will be downward. Anyone who does not have a continuing relationship with the Lord Jesus, whether, he has once become a Christian or not, is giving Satan control of his direction." FTW, 199.

[Obviously, the words "on our own" makes the above quotation correct. But Venden does not believe or teach that we should fight sin IN GOD'S STRENGTH either. We are told not to fight it at all]

RESISTING SIN-RESISTING SIN CHEAPENS GRACE

"Let's not cheapen God's grace and His plan by saying that He helps us grit our teeth and struggle more diligently to be good through our own deliberate efforts." SBF, 65.

GIVE THAT UP THE FIGHT AGAINST SIN

"If you have problems, seek Christ instead of concentrating on your problems. I don't fight the bad fight of sin. I give that up and seek Christ instead. God has promised to fight for us. He's already gained the victory, and it's ours as a gift if we accept Him. Our fight is to seek Him!" MCR, 134, 135.

THE BAD FIGHT OF SIN

"Unfortunately, most of us immediately confuse the good fight of faith, or trust, with the bad fight of sin. We think that fighting the good fight of faith consists of trying hard to live a good life. The problem is that the strong person who fights sin might outwardly succeed to some degree, but becomes proud of his success, and also fails to see his need of God. On the other hand, the weak person who tries to change his life by fighting sin doesn't even outwardly succeed and he becomes discouraged. Neither understands what the fight of faith is all about." MCR, 30.

NO BETTER OFF DOING GOOD THAN THOSE DOING BAD

"While some are better able to keep from doing bad things, they are actually no better off than the weak people who are obviously suffering defeat in their Christian experience." MCR,31.

THE SUM AND SUBSTANCE OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

"Although the sum and substance of the Christian life is being acquainted with Jesus each day, we often don't believe that it's that easy. The devil tries to get us to work on righteousness and our faith, and usually after we've spent our time battling the enemy, we don't have any time left over for getting acquainted with Jesus," MCR, 79, 80.

STOP FIGHTING THE WAVES OF SIN

"[Illustration of waiting to rescue people from drowning till they are almost ready to go under.] Did you know that the salvation of man is based upon the same principle? We must come to the place where we are

ready to stop fighting the waves of sin. Jesus sees us floundering in the sea of life. We're struggling, desperately trying to fight our sin, trying to overcome our problems. But the devil is stronger and smarter than we are. It doesn't seem we'll ever get victory. Finally, when we have given up and are about ready to sink forever, we admit that we can't make it."

"You may wonder why God hasn't given you the power to overcome your sins. Perhaps' you haven't yet reached the place where you realize your weakness and helplessness. Perhaps you haven't learned what it means to surrender to Him."

"Most of us realize the importance of 'surrender,' but we fail to understand exactly what and how to give up. How easily our attention focuses on the sins and the behavior. We usually think that righteousness is only 'right doing' and that the way to do right is to stop sinning (doing wrong)." MCR, 119,120.

TRYING TO BE WHAT WE SHOULD BE

"Isn't this what we've usually done in our Christian experience? We know what we should be like, and we often work on trying to be like that. Instead, we should work on the cause of the goodness, the relationship. If my sins are the result of separation from God, then I should seek to maintain the close communion with God and He will take care of my sins." MCR,126. .

REFUSING TO DO WRONG WHEN WHAT WE LOVE IS WRONG

"The program that most of us have operated on at some time, at least, in our Christian lives is this: we think we will always love sin, but we will grit our teeth and stay away from it because we love God. The usual concept in Christian circles is that in living the Christian life we refrain from evil and do what is right because we love God, even though we would like to do wrong. 'I love to dance. I always did. I probably always will. But I won't do it, because I love Jesus. I love pork. Pork, was always one of my favorites. I'd love to have some right now. But I've given it up, that's my cross for Jesus, and I'll bear it for Him.' I do not believe that this is genuine obedience. Yet how many of us have wasted countless time and energy working on obedience, instead of seeking to know God." FTW,179.

GIVING UP SINFUL PRACTICES-THE GIVING UP THINGS GIMMICKS

'Well," says someone, 'we have to surrender all our sins and problems before we can be righteous.'

"So we determine to give up these things. Have you ever tried it? One time I became excited about living the victorious Christian life. I promised God that I would surrender my evil habits. To accomplish this, I made a list of seven major sins and resolved to work on them. The first sin on my list was my ugly temper. The next day, I began trying to control my temper. When I'd get angry, I counted to 10. Sometimes I succeeded in not slapping my enemy, but as I counted to 10, my neck was red and the veins stood out, my eyes were bulging, my stomach churned, and my fists were clenched. Somehow this didn't sound like victorious living to me!"

"Someone told me that the real problem was with my thinking. I hadn't learned to control my thinking. And because 'as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he,' I needed to work on my thoughts. Have you ever tried this one? 'Today I won't think about oops! I just thought about it!' . .

"Finally I reached the point where I felt I had overcome my temper; so I moved to the next sin on my list. This time I was successful. I found I could get rid of this sin easily, and I became proud of my own abilities. Unfortunately, by the time I started working on no. 3, I discovered, much to my chagrin, that my bad temper had returned." MCR, 120.

OBEDIENCE

ONLY TEACH OBEDIENCE IF YOU UNDERSTAND IT

"It is only people who understand that they have already been accepted by God who can safely talk about obedience. If I am not sure of my acceptance, it is extremely hazardous for me to study the subject of obedience, because it will be nothing but discouraging." FTW, 158.

GIVE UP ON THE IDEA OF PRODUCING OBEDIENCE

"If we are sinners, and cannot produce genuine obedience apart from God, then all we can do regarding ourselves is to surrender ourselves, give up on the idea that we can ever produce genuine obedience. " FTW, 168.

DOESN'T ACCEPT US BECAUSE OF OUR OBEDIENCE

"In the first place, God doesn't accept us because of our obedience. He accepts us when we come to Him, presenting the merits of Jesus in dying in our place. Our acceptance before Him, and the certainty of our salvation, is already settled, as we continue to accept what Jesus did for us at the cross." FTW, 174.

ALWAYS AND ONLY BY FAITH

"Obedience is always and only by faith, because it is the fruit of faith, never of our own efforts." OOF, 88.

NOT A CAUSE OF OUR SALVATION

"Obedience is not the cause of our salvation, even though it is a condition. It is the result." FTW, 187.

WHY WE CAN SAFELY IGNORE OBEDIENCE

"Some may still object that others will stop struggling to do what's 'right' now for the purpose of learning to know Jesus later, and thus open the door for an interim of anarchy. I'd like to propose that it is an unfounded fear because of an obvious conclusion: The strong person who has succeeded in behaving morally through his willpower and backbone without Christ will continue what's 'right' for selfish reasons, whether or not he hears about salvation through faith in Christ. A person who has succeeded in staying out of trouble and out of jail will not suddenly scrap everything. I haven't seen a 'strong' person yet who became immoral because he decided that righteousness by faith meant that he could go ahead and do whatever he had always wanted to do anyway so that 'grace may abound'. Also I'd like to suggest that the weak person who hasn't succeeded in doing right is going to continue that way until he experiences genuine faith, and he won't be any worse off than he was before." SBF, 58-59.

THE PURPOSE OF OBEDIENCE-OBEDIENCE HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH SALVATION

"It isn't safe to talk about obedience and overcoming and victory and any of that, unless we have it clearly in mind that we already have been accepted because of what Jesus has done for us. We will get the impression that our obedience has something to do with our acceptance. We will get the impression that our obedience has something to do with saving us eternally, as the cause of our eternal life. And those misunderstandings have been around too long. Do you know what the purpose of obedience is? It is to bring glory to God. It isn't to save us in heaven. If our obedience has nothing to do with causing our acceptance with God, then who here tonight is totally accepted?" 5 AUC CM. "

GOOD DEEDS-GOD DOES NOT LOOK AT OUTWARD ACTIONS

"It is the motives and desires on the inside that God looks at, not our outward appearance. We may mow the widow's lawn, in itself a good deed, but apart from Christ it is sin, because our motive will inevitably be a selfish one." FTW, 164. "

RIGHT LIVING

GOOD LIVES AND BEHAVIOR

"Many people have exhibited good lives apart from Jesus, at least lives that were outwardly good. Some in our world will give you the shirt off their back, and yet curse God in the same breath. External good behavior can result from all kinds of bad reasons." OOF, 87.

IT DOESN'T PROVE A THING

"Would you like to know for sure whether or not you are a Christian? Would you like to know for sure whether you are a genuine follower of Christ? 'Oh,' someone says, 'the proof of it is if you are living a good life.' No, that doesn't prove a thing." FTW, 184.

CONTROLLED ACTIONS

CONTROLLING ACTIONS DOES NOT OVERCOME SIN

"The strong person may control his outward actions, but he hasn't overcome the sin. Sin is always from within, and is only overcome by God's power." FTW, 209.

VICTORY OVER SIN

VICTORY FROM ABOVE; NO VICTORY FROM WITHIN

"He [Jesus] gave us an example of victory from above, rather than victory from within. And that's the real issue in the end anyway." SAH, 19.

[A victory from above (the Venden view): God does it all, the willing and the doing, we only passively yield. Apparently, there is only growth and maturing in yielding, and none in nobility of character and determination to do the right because it is right. A victory from within (Bible-Spirit of Prophecy view). As we come and yield ourselves to Christ, He works out His will in our lives by strengthening our resolve and our acts to do the right and resist the wrong. Continuing this faith-that-works relationship with God, we grow into His moral likeness. We do not have to wait for heaven to begin this ennobling process.]

BEHAVIOR

BEHAVIOR CONCENTRATION TURNS US FROM JESUS

"When we begin to concentrate on our behavior and performance, our attention is away from Jesus, and our dependence upon His power is broken. This can happen even though the relationship with Him may be continuing day by day. Whenever our attention is on our sins and weaknesses and problems, we are overcome." FTW, 199.

YOUR BEHAVIOR IS NOW ONLY HIS CONCERN.

" 'Wait!' objects someone. 'If my behavior is supposed to improve when I get acquainted with God through His Word and through prayer, then why is my behavior worse than ever when I try this method? That doesn't make sense!'

"Again, you're measuring your Christian experience and closeness to God by your performance and actions. But Christianity is based upon whom you know, not what you do as you're learning to know Him better. Your part in the great plan of God is to become acquainted with Him, and your behavior is His concern." MPR, 142.

WORKING ON BEHAVIOR KEEPS YOU FROM CHRIST

"When I shift gears from behaviorism to fellowship and relationship with God, then and only then does it become possible for me to continue seeking Him constantly." MCR, 148.

GOOD BEHAVIOR IS STILL SIN

"The strong-willed person who quits his smoking, drinking, and dancing, apart from Christ, may become a 'good' church member. But who really did it? He did." FTW, 168.

CHRISTIANITY IS NOT BASED ON BEHAVIOR

"The term surrender is grossly misunderstood by thousands of Christians. If a person's idea of Christianity is based upon behavior, then his primary focus will be on the Ten Commandments and trying hard to obey them. If he is strong, he will 'succeed', if he is weak, he will fail. The behaviorist philosophy never gets the person to the point of helplessness to take him on to surrender. The behaviorist who is strong and apparently succeeds doesn't realize he is helpless. The behaviorist who is weak says, 'I can't do it; I give up,' quits trying, and goes away from God at the very point, if he only knew it, at which he is the closest to God that he may ever be."

"The behaviorist thinks that surrender is giving up certain things in his life, giving up his sins, giving up his problems and his weaknesses. So the behaviorist says, 'I stand before God and this audience, and I promise that from now on I won't smoke, drink, or dance anymore.' If he is strong, he never does them again, and he becomes a so called 'good' church member. If surrender has primarily to do with giving up things, the strong succeed and the weak fall." FTW, 51.

BEHAVIOR IS NO MEASUREMENT OF BEING IN CHRIST.

"One of the proofs that we are hopelessly hooked on the do-it-yourself approach is that often when a person begins to seek a relationship with God, he still measures whether or not he has a relationship by his behavior." FTW, 82.

[MY RESPONSE TO BEHAVIOR WHICH I WILL CALL PERFORMANCE]

[Over and over we are warned against examining our performance and comparing it with God's law. (See MCR pages 30, 46; 128, 137, 140, 142, 143, 144, 146-10). We are told that this is focusing attention on ourselves instead of on Christ. In the chapter "Doing Worse When We Try", confusion is again introduced by intermingling descriptions of temptations that come through trials and difficult circumstances, and descriptions of actually giving in to temptation and sin. The two are not the same! The newly converted Christian may face many trials and temptations, but that does not mean that his behavior or his performance are worse! Indeed, if his response to the temptation is worse, then he had better reexamine his commitment. To experience more trials and harder temptations when surrendering to Christ should not surprise us. But to experience worse behavior and performance is to deny the power of Christ. It is evidence that true conversion has not taken place.]

On page 140, Job is used as an example of things going worse because of his commitment to God. But there is a failure to recognize that this was in circumstances and not in Performance. Job's performance didn't deteriorate in proportion to the circumstances. If it had, Satan's point would have been gained.

On MCR page 142 we are warned several times against measuring our Christian experience by our obedience to God's law. How can this be harmonized with James 1:21-27? And why did God give us His law? It is true that there is danger in focusing exclusively on our sins and defects, but when we are comparing our lives with God's great standard of righteousness in order that we might strive to be more like Christ, this is proper and essential.

4 T 361 "The wisdom which God gives will lead men to self-examination. The truth will convict them of their errors and existing wrongs. The heart must be open to see, realize, and acknowledge these wrongs, and then, through the help of Jesus, each must earnestly engage in the work of overcoming them."

ST June 20, 1895 "John says, 'Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law; for sin is the transgression of the law.' Here we have the true definition of sin; it is 'the transgression of the law.' How often the sinner is urged to leave his sins, and come to Jesus; but has the messenger who would lead him to Christ clearly pointed out the way? Has he clearly pointed out the fact that 'sin is the transgression of the law,' and that he must repent, and forsake the breaking of God's commandments?"

How does Venden measure up to these questions? In reality he endeavors to show that sin is not really an issue of transgressing God's law, but rather an issue of taking some time each day to seek God in Bible study and prayer; it even endeavors to show that one of the main things that the sinner must repent of is his efforts to keep God's law! He tries to show that the sinner must forever forsake his efforts to keep God's law!

ST (cont.) "Man's conscience has become hardened by sin, and his understanding darkened by his transgression, and his judgement has become confused as to what is sin. He has become benumbed by the influence of iniquity, and it is essential that his conscience be aroused to understand that sin is the transgression of God's holy law. He who does not obey the commandments of God is a sinner in the sight of God..... Righteousness can be defined only by God's great moral standard, the Ten Commandments. There is no other rule by which to measure character."

ST Mar.11 1897 "He who earnestly desires to fulfill the will of God must daily look into the law of God, the great moral looking glass, that he may see himself as God sees him. But too often Christians neglect to do this. (The book would have us believe that this would be focusing our attention on self rather than on Christ) The mirror is not looked into as constantly as it should be, and our defects of character pass unnoticed."

Why be concerned about our defects of character if they are not our responsibility, and we can do nothing about them (pages 124, 132); if our transgressions of God's law are immaterial as long as we seek fellowship with God through Bible study and prayer (page 146); if to look at them is to take our eyes off Christ (page 128)?

ST (cont.) "Many apologize for their spiritual weakness, for their outbursts of passion, for the lack of love they show their brethren. They feel a sense of estrangement from God, a realization of their bondage to self and sin; but their desire to do God's will is based on their own inclination, not upon the deep, inward conviction of the Holy Spirit. They believe that the law of God is binding; but they do not, with the eager interest of judgement-bound souls, compare their actions with that law. They admit that God should be worshiped and loved supremely, but God is not in all their thoughts. They believe that the precepts which enjoin love to man, should be observed; but they treat their fellowmen with cold indifference, and sometimes with injustice. Thus they walk away from the path of willing obedience. They do not carry the work of repentance far enough. The sense of their wrong should lead them to seek God most earnestly for power to reveal Christ by kindness and forbearance.

"Many spasmodic efforts to reform are made, but those who make these efforts do not crucify self. They do not give themselves entirely into the hands of Christ, seeking for divine power to do His will. They are not willing to be molded after the divine similitude. In a general way they acknowledge their imperfections, but the particular sins are not given up." (This clearly shows that surrender has to do also with individual sins). "The enemy is willing that these spasmodic efforts should be made; for those who make them engage in no decided warfare against evil."

We see here that God calls for decided warfare against evil, which suggests consistent, earnest and resolute efforts to overcome sin. There is a warning given here for a class of people described as only making spasmodic efforts to overcome sin, based upon their inclination, who are not carrying repentance far enough (does this mean that they failed to repent of their disobedience in particular things?). What then can be said for the class of people who are studiously repressing every effort to war against evil in their character?

ST (cont.) "But a general conviction of sin is not reformative. We may have a vague, disagreeable sense of imperfection, but this will avail us nothing unless we make a decided effort to obtain the victory over sin. If we wish to cooperate with Christ, to overcome as He overcome, we must, in His strength, make the most determined resistance against self and selfishness."

Here again we see the principle of cooperation between human effort and divine power. Unless we put forth the efforts His power can avail nothing in overcoming our sins.

ST cont.) "If men and women will critically examine their conduct, measuring it by the law of Jehovah, they will see that sin is not limited to those things which the world condemns, but that selfishness and oppression, even in the smallest degree, are sins against God. They will see that by yielding to their inclinations, and refraining from obedience, they are depriving themselves of the richest blessings God can give."

ST April 1, 1897 "If you would work as Christ worked, if you would overcome as He overcame, go straight to Him for help needed to subdue the inclinations of the natural heart. Resist every sinful indulgence, every inclination to gratify wrong desires, remembering that Christ is all and in all, and that He is able to do 'exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or think.'"

NOTE: ANY REFERENCES NOTED CAN BE FOUND IN MAIN DOCUMENT.