

Laying Our Own Glory in the Dust

“We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away” (Isaiah 64:6).

“What is justification by faith? It is the work of God in laying the glory of man in the dust, and doing for man that which it is not in his power to do for himself.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 456.

Suggested Reading: *Steps to Christ*, pp. 17–22.

1. Realizing How Bad Sin Really Is

- a. How does Scripture depict the misery of fallen human nature? Galatians 5:17; Romans 7:18–21.
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“As through Christ every human being has life, so also through Him every soul receives some ray of divine light. Not only intellectual but spiritual power, a perception of right, a desire for goodness, exists in every heart. But against these principles there is struggling an antagonistic power. The result of the eating of the tree of knowledge of good and evil is manifest in every man’s experience. There is in his nature a bent to evil, a force which, unaided, he cannot resist. To withstand this force, to attain that ideal which in his inmost soul he accepts as alone worthy, he can find help in but one power. That power is Christ. Cooperation with that power is man’s greatest need.”—*Education*, p. 29.

a. **Galatians 5:17** (17) For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

Romans 7:18-21 (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. (19) For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. (20) Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (21) I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

1. Realizing How Bad Sin Really Is

- b. Of what value is the righteousness of any one of us—and what are we powerless to do for ourselves? Isaiah 64:6; Romans 3:12.
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Isaiah 64:6 (6) But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away.

Romans 3:12 (12) They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

2. Our "Best" is Vanity Apart From Christ

- a. How does God see us even when we are in our "best" state? Psalm 39:5, 11; Isaiah 40:17.
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"Were it not for Christ's atoning sacrifice, there would be nothing in us in which God could delight. All the natural goodness of man is worthless in God's sight. He does not take pleasure in any man who retains his old nature and is not so renewed in knowledge and grace that he is a new man in Christ. Our education, our talents, our means, are gifts entrusted to us by God, that he may test us. If we use them for self-glorification, God says, 'I cannot delight in them; for Christ has died for them in vain.' "—*The Review and Herald*, August 24, 1897.

a. **Psalms 39:5** (5) Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

Psalms 39:11 (11) When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

Isaiah 40:17 (17) All nations before him are as nothing; and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity.

2. Our "Best" is Vanity Apart From Christ

- b. Do we have anything of merit that we can offer to God as a price for sin? Isaiah 1:11; Micah 6:7. What may be said of even our "best" performances? 1 Chronicles 29:14.
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"The question is asked, 'Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?' (Micah 6:7). No; no man can stand before God in his own merit. Those who are saved will be saved because Jesus has paid the full debt; and man can do nothing, absolutely nothing, to merit salvation. Christ says, 'Without me, ye can do nothing' (John 15:5). Then whose is the merit?—It all belongs to our Redeemer. All the capabilities of man come alone through Christ, and we may say of our best performances, 'All things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee' (1 Chronicles 29:14)." —*The Signs of the Times*, November 10, 1890.

b. Isaiah 1:11 (11) To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats.

Micah 6:7 (7) Will the LORD be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul?

1 Chronicles 29:14 (14) But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly after this sort? for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee.

2. Our "Best" is Vanity Apart From Christ

- c. What attitude should we cultivate in view of the above statements? Micah 6:8.
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“ ‘Man at his best state is altogether vanity.’ Christ came with no outward display. Finding Himself in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, showing that fallen man must ever walk humbly before God. Riches, worldly honor, human greatness, can never save a soul from death. ‘To this man will I look,’ declares the Lord, ‘even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word’ (Isaiah 66:2).” —*The Youth Instructor*, December 20, 1900.

- c. **Micah 6:** (8) He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?

3. Learning to Distrust Ourselves

- a. What experience did Elijah need to go through before God heard his prayer for rain, and why? James 5:16–18; 1 Kings 18:43.
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“The servant watched while Elijah prayed. Six times he returned from the watch, saying, There is nothing, no cloud, no sign of rain. But the prophet did not give up in discouragement. He kept reviewing his life, to see where he had failed to honor God, he confessed his sins, and thus continued to afflict his soul before God, while watching for a token that his prayer was answered. As he searched his heart, he seemed to be less and less, both in his own estimation and in the sight of God. It seemed to him that he was nothing, and that God was everything; and when he reached the point of renouncing self, while he clung to the Saviour as his only strength and righteousness, the answer came.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 26, 1891.

“We have a God whose ear is not closed to our petitions; and if we prove His word, He will honor our faith. He wants us to have all our interests interwoven with His interests, and then He can safely bless us; for we shall not then take glory to self when the blessing is ours but shall render all the praise to God.”—*Ibid.*, March 27, 1913.

a. **James 5:16-18** (16) Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much. (17) Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months. (18) And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.

1 Kings 18:4 (4) For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.)

3. Learning to Distrust Ourselves

- b. What happens as we come closer to Jesus and depend on Him?
Daniel 10:8; Luke 5:8; Revelation 1:12–17.
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“The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in broad and distinct contrast to His perfect nature. This is evidence that Satan’s delusions have lost their power; that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you.

“No deep-seated love for Jesus can dwell in the heart that does not realize its own sinfulness.”—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 64, 65.

b. Daniel 10:8 (8) Therefore I was left alone, and saw this great vision, and there remained no strength in me: for my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength.

Luke 5:8 (8) When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

Revelation 1:12-17 (12) And I turned to see the voice that spake with me. And being turned, I saw seven golden candlesticks; (13) And in the midst of the seven candlesticks one like unto the Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle.

(14) His head and his hairs were white like wool, as white as snow; and his eyes were as a flame of fire; (15) And his feet like unto fine brass, as if they burned in a furnace; and his voice as the sound of many waters. (16) And he had in his right hand seven stars: and out of his mouth went a sharp twoedged sword: and his countenance was as the sun shineth in his strength. (17) And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. And he laid his right hand upon me, saying unto me, Fear not; I am the first and the last:

3. Learning to Distrust Ourselves

c. What happens when we overestimate ourselves? Galatians 6:3.

“One word which exalts self causes the light of God’s countenance to be withdrawn.”—*The Review and Herald*, August 24, 1897.

c. **Galatians 6:3** (3) For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.

4. A Cause for Supreme Gratitude

- a. Despite our wretched condition, what hope is nonetheless extended to us? Romans 7:24–8:2.
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“Though the world’s Redeemer sees the misery and wretchedness of the world on account of sin, yet He does not present before the fallen race a vivid delineation of their wretchedness, but teaches them of something infinitely better than that which they have ever heard before. He knows that their wretchedness is the result of sin, and His heart is moved with compassion towards fallen men. The rabbis did not condescend to preach to the common people, or to present to the Gentiles any hope of salvation. But Christ had come to present the plan of salvation before all classes of people; for all were in need of His words. In those that gathered before Him He saw a possibility that they might be allied to an infinite power, because of the parental love of God toward all His children.”—*Sabbath School Worker*, August 1, 1895.

- a. **Romans 7:24** (24) O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?
Romans 8:2 (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

4. A Cause for Supreme Gratitude

- b. What happens when we acknowledge that our sinful efforts have no merit to save us? Zechariah 3:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 12:9.
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“When men see their own nothingness, they are prepared to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. When they begin to praise and exalt God all the day long, then by beholding they are becoming changed into the same image.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 117.

“Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. God would send every angel in heaven to the aid of such a one, rather than allow him to be overcome.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 35.

“The less we see to esteem in ourselves, the more we shall see to esteem in the infinite purity and loveliness of our Saviour. A view of our sinfulness drives us to Him who can pardon; and when the soul, realizing its helplessness, reaches out after Christ, He will reveal Himself in power. The more our sense of need drives us to Him and to the word of God, the more exalted views we shall have of His character, and the more fully we shall reflect His image.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 65.

b. Zechariah 3:3-4 (3) Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel. (4) And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

2 Corinthians 12:9 (9) And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

5. Christ Came on A Rescue Mission

- a. What basic point must we all realize about salvation? Luke 19:10; John 15:5; Psalms 44:6; 31:1.
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“It is impossible for us to save ourselves. . . .

“Christ longs to see His people resist the adversary of souls; but only by looking away from self to Jesus can we do this.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 15, 1896.

“The moment you grasp God’s promises by faith, saying, I am the lost sheep Jesus came to save, a new life will take possession of you, and you will receive strength to resist the tempter. But faith to grasp the promises does not come by feeling. ‘Faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God’ (Romans 10:17).”—*Ibid.*

“Sinful man can find hope and righteousness only in God; and no human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 367.

- a. **Luke 19:10** (10) For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

John 15:5 (5) I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing.

Psalms 44:6 (6) For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

Psalms 31:1 (1) To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

5. Christ Came on A Rescue Mission

- b. What fundamental principle does God declare to all? Isaiah 43:11; 45:21.
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“Oh, what love! What amazing love! that brought the Son of God to earth to be made sin for us, that we might be reconciled to God, and elevated to a life with Him in His mansions in glory. And oh! what is man, that such a price should be paid for his redemption?”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 28, 1879.

b. Isaiah 43:11 (11) I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no saviour.

Isaiah 45:21 (21) Tell ye, and bring them near; yea, let them take counsel together: who hath declared this from ancient time? who hath told it from that time? have not I the LORD? and there is no God else beside me; a just God and a Saviour; there is none beside me.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What specifically can we not do for ourselves?
2. Why is our "best" apart from Christ not good enough?
3. Whom must we learn to distrust before we can trust Jesus completely?
4. What must we see prior to developing a deep-seated love for Christ?
5. How much are you worth to God?