

Wholehearted Christians

By John Thiel, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it [unto] the end. 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with [my] whole heart. 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

What does it mean to be wholehearted Christians? We want to contemplate the position we hold as Christians, as Seventh-day Adventists, and what it involves for such people to be wholehearted. While we were away, during one weekend we were at a relative's place, and we spent time with her. She attends a church in New South Wales which is known as a conservative Seventh-day Adventist church. We went there, and yes, we did find it conservative; not so mind-blowing to the system; and there was a preacher there who presented the subject of wholeheartedness. And as I was listening to it, my heart was touched; but at the same time it left me with a sense of generalisation of wholeheartedness. So I desired to search into it more deeply and really appreciate what wholehearted Seventh-day Adventism is all about. And of course, it leaves me with no alternative but to share with you how the Lord touched my heart in the research of this.

I thank God for the Spirit of Prophecy, the Testimony of Jesus, because if I want to know what something *really* means in the entire spectrum of truth, it is all spelt out for us in the Testimony of Jesus. We will ask Jesus the question that was asked Him, and contemplate His answer. How did Jesus answer the question of salvation?

A Prerequisite to Eternal Life

Luke 10:25 And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

An important question. This is the question that was posed to Jesus; and what was the answer that Jesus gave?

Luke 10:26 He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou?

Jesus threw the question back at him and turned his attention to what is written in the law in regards to inheriting eternal life.

Luke 10:27 And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. 28 And he [Jesus] said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live.

The question was, What must I do to inherit eternal life? and Jesus prompted the lawyer to give the answer, because he was a lawyer within the realm of Israel and the Jews; he understood the Scriptures; and he even quoted the Scripture from the Old Testament. Then after he had given the answer, Jesus said, Precisely; *this do, and thou shalt live*. What must we do to have eternal life? Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* of your heart, and with *all* of your soul, and with *all* of your strength, and with *all* of your mind; and your neighbour as yourself. Now that is a tall order. And we want to ask ourselves the question, Is this true of me? There is a call to apply this prerequisite to eternal life. Jesus drew the lawyer out to think, and we are being drawn out to think, to really appreciate what is involved here. This lawyer had a knowledge of everything; he could give the right answers; but we know he was there to tempt Jesus. He really did not love God with all his heart. It's a real strange thing. You can be so knowledgeable in Seventh-day Adventism; you can be able to preach the word of God, and yet you can be missing the point. And this is what we don't want to do.

All of God's Will

What was the attitude of the psalmist? What will a person who loves God with the whole heart express? Here is the expression of a soul who loves God with all his heart, wholeheartedly:

Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;

Teach me not only your statutes, but the *way* of your statutes. There is a difference between "Teach me your law, your statutes, that I might know them, like a parrot" and "Teach them to me as the *way* of life."

Psalm 119:33 ...and I shall keep it [unto] the end.

This is a person who loves God wholeheartedly. He says, I want you to teach me so that I can keep all your will.

Psalm 119:34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with [my] whole heart. 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

You see, to be a wholehearted believer you will not say, Oh, I love God with my whole heart! and then not go and ask Him to tell you what He wants of you. This is what I have found as I was listening to this sermon; it meant so much to me, but as I was seeing what was around me, these people did not ask God *all* His ways; because they weren't practising it and yet were claiming to be Seventh-day Adventists.

There is an example for us in these last days, in the Hebrews who were traveling through the wilderness and then came to the Promised Land. They came to the Promised Land and they doubted that they could take it. They were not fully, wholeheartedly for God. But out of the twelve tribes, ten of the spies that were sent in to spy out the land came back and made a lamentable cry; and only two would be faithful and loyal to the Lord with the whole heart – Joshua and Caleb. Let us contemplate in Caleb

An Example of Wholeheartedness

Joshua 14:6 Then the children of Judah came unto Joshua in Gilgal: and Caleb the son of Jephunneh the Kenezite said unto him, Thou knowest the thing that the LORD said unto Moses the man of God concerning me and thee in Kadeshbarnea. **7** Forty years old [was] I when Moses the servant of the LORD sent me from Kadeshbarnea to espy out the land; and I brought him word again as [it was] in mine heart. **8** Nevertheless my brethren that went up with me made the heart of the people melt: but I wholly followed the LORD my God.

In the new versions of the Bible it says: *I wholeheartedly followed the Lord my God.* Caleb is the example of wholeheartedness.

Joshua 14:9 And Moses sware on that day, saying, Surely the land whereon thy feet have trodden shall be thine inheritance, and thy children's for ever, because thou hast wholly followed the LORD my God.

“Thou hast *wholeheartedly* followed the Lord my God.”

Joshua 14:10 And now, behold, the LORD hath kept me alive, as he said, these forty and five years, even since the LORD spake this word unto Moses, while [the children of] Israel wandered in the wilderness: and now, lo, I [am] this day fourscore and five years old. **11** As yet I [am as] strong this day as [I was] in the day that Moses sent me: as my strength [was] then, even so [is] my strength now, for war, both to go out, and to come in.

And he led these tribes to conquer those strong fortified cities in Canaan. What is Caleb an example of? He wholeheartedly served the Lord. And as a conse-

quence of doing so, this man felt the same energy at the age of 85 that he felt at 40, because he *wholeheartedly* served the Lord, doing *wholeheartedly* what God required of him.

Calebs have been greatly needed in different periods of the history of our work. {1BC 1113.6}

Where are we in the history of the work today? Are Calebs needed today? We are right on the border.

Today we need men of thorough fidelity, men who follow the Lord fully, men who are not disposed to be silent when they ought to speak, who are as true as steel to principle, who do not seek to make a pretentious show, but who walk humbly with God, patient, kind, obliging, courteous men, who understand that the science of prayer is to exercise faith and show works that will tell to the glory of God and the good of His people. . . . To follow Jesus requires wholehearted conversion at the start, and a repetition of this conversion every day (Letter 39, 1899). {*Ibid.*}

There is to be a wholehearted conversion at the beginning, and it must be repeated every day. Caleb was the example of that; and we need to be like Caleb today, to serve God wholeheartedly.

Channelling Wholeheartedness

The question then is, What will you and I be like as wholehearted Seventh-day Adventist Calebs? As we ask this question, we want to not just generalise what wholeheartedness is, but explore deeply the example that Caleb showed, and let the Scriptures and the Testimony of Jesus display before us wholeheartedness. Go to the Scripture and hear a wholehearted person. See what happened to a man who was converted and expressed a wholehearted attitude. Here is a man who was wholehearted for his Hebrew faith, *a Hebrew of the Hebrews*, who was, *touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*; but what was he doing? He was persecuting the Christian church. And as he was making his way to Damascus,

Acts 9:3 ...suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven: 4 And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? 5 And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: [it is] hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

Notice how his whole mind was now affected, because he was previously a wholehearted person to his Hebrew heritage.

Acts 9:6 And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord [said] unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

To be wholehearted toward God, as Caleb was, the attitude is, Lord, I am completely bereft; I am blinded by Your greatness; what is it that You want me to do?

Isaiah 34:16 Seek ye out of the book of the LORD, and read: no one of these shall fail, none shall want her mate: for my mouth it hath commanded, and his spirit it hath gathered them.

We ask God the question, "What wilt Thou have me to do? I want to be wholehearted for You;" and the Lord tells us plainly, as He said to Paul, Go, and it will be told you what you must do. And simultaneously the Lord is saying, "You want to know what you should do? Seek; search for the answer; it is Me who is speaking, My mouth hath commanded these words. And as you seek in the book of the Lord, you will hear Me saying what you need to do." If you are really conscientiously wholehearted, you will go to God for every activity of life.

Saul, in his condition, was told by Jesus, I will tell you what to do; you will be told by My agent.

In the record of the conversion of Saul important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. Saul was brought directly into the presence of Christ. He was one whom Christ intended for a most important work, one who was to be a "chosen vessel" unto Him; {AA 120.3}

because God knew how wholehearted he really was.

...yet the Lord did not at once tell him of the work that had been assigned him. He arrested him in his course and convicted him of sin; but when Saul asked, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" the Saviour placed the inquiring Jew in connection with His church, there to obtain a knowledge of God's will concerning him. {Ibid.}

The marvelous light that illumined the darkness of Saul was the work of the Lord; but there was also a work that was to be done for him by the disciples. Christ had performed the work of revelation and conviction; and now the penitent was in a condition to learn from those whom God had ordained to teach His truth. {AA 121.1}

Isn't it interesting? He was now brought into a condition of wholeheartedness when he could say, Whatever the Lord is wanting to tell me now, I will do; and

the Lord said to him, You go, and it will be told you what you must do. And as a wholehearted Christian, he did not say, But God, *You* can tell me; I don't have to go to any other human being. God says, No, no; you need to go to those whom I have ordained to teach My truth. This is why it says that in the record of Saul's conversion, *important principles* are revealed.

Directions of the Testimony of Jesus

Today we have the church, the Testimony of Jesus, the Spirit of Prophecy; and our safety lies in that which the Spirit of Prophecy illuminates for us to pay attention to, in the teachings of the church that was taught His way over the fifty years of formation of the platform of truth. And if I am a wholehearted follower of Jesus, like Caleb and Saul, the counsel is plain: Live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God, whether it be from the word, the preacher, or the church that is identified as His representatives. If we are wholehearted, we can go to the writings of the Spirit of Prophecy and know what the Lord requires of us. God was here speaking to Sr. White:

"Your success is in your simplicity. As soon as you depart from this and fashion your testimony to meet the minds of any, your power is gone. {5T 667.3}

Sister White herself had to be wholehearted for what God would show her. The moment that she would feel uncomfortable because of what God was telling her to say to the people, and she would try to meet their minds, her power was gone.

Almost everything in this age [1871] is glossed and unreal. The world abounds in testimonies given to please and charm for the moment and to exalt self. Your testimony is of a different character. It is to come down to the minutiae of life, keeping the feeble faith from dying and pressing home upon believers the necessity of shining as lights in the world. {Ibid.}

The minute details of life are going to be addressed by the ministry of the Spirit of Prophecy

"God has given you your testimony, to set before the backslider and the sinner his true condition and the immense loss he is sustaining by continuing a life of sin. God has impressed this upon you by opening it before your vision as He has to no other one now living, {5T 667.4}

So here is a human being who is set aside by God to give us the answers to the question of what we must do in the minutiae of life.

...and according to the light He has given you will He hold you responsible. "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." "Lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sin.""" {*Ibid.*}

So go to the writings of Sister White and it will be told you what I want of you, says God. Go to the Bible, and you will know, if you will be wholehearted for God. This is what we are to do on any question, because God has given minute details. And if it cuts across what you think it is, when it doesn't meet your mind and it doesn't meet my mind, then, if you are wholehearted, what will you do? You are going to do what He says. And what will it mean?

Here in the words of Micah is the generalisation of what is clearly identified in the Spirit of Prophecy in the minute details:

Micah 6:6 Wherewith shall I come before the LORD, [and] bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt offerings, with calves of a year old?

What must I do?

Micah 6:7 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? 8 He hath showed 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?

Here are three principles. This is a generalisation. *To do justly* mean to do what God's commandments say, everything that has to do with God's justice. *To love mercy* is to embrace the pure gospel of God's mercy in application to the sinful nature we have, to practise that – it is called being obedient to the gospel. And *to walk humbly with thy God* is to be self-sacrificing, not to cling to my own opinion, because I am wholehearted for God.

The attitude of the one who is wholehearted is shown in Caleb and Joshua; and they were the only two adults above twenty years old who went into the Promised Land. Only two. That is something to think about. A very small remnant. Because they were wholehearted for God. They came and said, Lord, it is what You say; I am going to follow no matter the cost.

Psalm 119:33 Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes;

Show me the details; show me the way. The statutes are there, but show me *the way*; and *I shall keep it unto the end*, because I am wholly yours.

Psalm 119:34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with [my] whole heart. 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

I delight in You; I love You with my whole heart, and therefore, please, give me understanding; show me the minutiae, the details; I want to keep it. This is what we need to absorb, to be converted again. That conversion in which there is wholehearted surrender is to be repeated every day.

If we stand before God at this time and we see that we have, here and there, still followed our own opinion, our own way, then let us resolve to inquire of the Lord and let Him show us. Consider your position. Are you holding back? Examine closely your own motives. Are you afraid that God might tell you something that is going to cut you to the quick? That He will show you something you have to put away? That He will tell you something that is going to show you how far off the mark you are, and you'd rather not know? Not today, please, I've already suffered enough. Have you ever said that? Jesus is coming very soon, and He wants to get us ready quickly now. Are you holding anything back from what is plainly stated in God's word? Or would you rather just not know? These are important questions.

Self-Denial and Sacrifice

How wholehearted are you today? Are you resolved to do just what God says? not the way I interpret what He says, but to let His statements ring into my conscience and make the changes, walking humbly with my God.

I saw that many measure themselves among themselves, and compare their lives with the lives of others. This should not be. No one but Christ is given us as an example. He is our true Pattern, and each should strive to excel in imitating Him. We are co-workers with Christ, or co-workers with the enemy. We either gather with Christ or scatter abroad. We are decided, wholehearted Christians, or none at all. {CCh 42.2}

I am either wholehearted (and all that implies), or I am not at all. This really drives me to the Lord. I want Your way and only Your way, otherwise I'm not Yours.

Says Christ: "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew thee out of My mouth." {Ibid.}

It's that half-and-half thing.

I saw that some hardly know as yet what self-denial or sacrifice is, {CCh 42.3}

We have already sacrificed so much, but we don't exactly know what it is,

...or what it is to suffer for the truth's sake. But none will enter heaven without making a sacrifice. A spirit of self-denial and sacrifice should be cherished. Some have not sacrificed themselves, their own bodies, on the altar of God. {Ibid.}

To be wholehearted means sacrificing everything on the altar.

Those who are willing to make any sacrifice for eternal life, will have it; and it will be worth suffering for, worth crucifying self for, and sacrificing every idol for. {Ibid.}

Every idol – my opinion is an idol too. Whatever I am attached to which God's word says, "This is not what I want you to do", is an idol if I don't want to let it go. It's an idol.

The far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory swallows up everything and eclipses every earthly pleasure. {Ibid.}

We are attached to certain earthly pleasures which we feel loathe to let go, when God's word says, This is not My pleasure; My will for you is different to your will. This is the message of God to us:

Isaiah 55:8 For my thoughts [are] not your thoughts, neither [are] your ways my ways, saith the LORD. 9 For [as] the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Our ways that are very attractive to us, that we are attached to, are not necessarily God's ways. And as He reveals them to us in the minutiae, it will require a self-sacrifice, a painful experience, to give them up, which many are loathe to take hold of; and it will show me whether I am wholehearted for God or not.

What Is It, Lord?

If today you are wholehearted, you will say, Lord, yes, I am asking You, and I am willing to do anything You say, and I'm not going to put my own interpretation or try to meet my own mind with what I am reading. This is wholehearted Christianity.

Our mentality is that we look at the appearance of things, and we think, Oh, this is not what God means! He doesn't need me to go through this strange experience.

Do not worry. By looking at appearances, and complaining when difficulty and pressure come, you reveal a sickly, enfeebled faith. By your words and your works show that your faith is invincible. The Lord is rich in resources. He owns the world. Look to Him who has light, and power, and efficiency. He will bless everyone who is seeking to communicate light and love. {7T 212.3}

The Lord desires all to understand that their prosperity is hid with Him in Christ; that it is dependent on their humility and meekness, their wholehearted obedience and devotion. {7T 212.4}

Our prosperity is dependent on our *wholehearted obedience and devotion*. You know what that means; I am so devoted to what God's will is in my life that I am going to obey it with all my heart, even if it means cutting off my right hand or plucking out my right eye, as Jesus expressed. That is how wholehearted this mentality conveyed to us really is.

When they shall learn the lesson of the great Teacher, to die to self, to put no confidence in man, nor to make flesh their arm, then, as they call upon Him, the Lord will be to them a present help in every time of need. He will guide them in judgment. He will be at their right hand to give them counsel. He will say to them: "This is the way, walk ye in it." {7T 212.4}

Now don't misread this quote and say, "The Christian will not lean on the arm of flesh; he will not go to any man;" when the Lord Himself said, Go, and it will be told you by the church what you must do. It was *God* who told Saul to go to the church. And we will know when God speaks and says, Here is the way, walk ye in it. He says, *I will give you pastors according to Mine heart*. We can misread statements from the Spirit of Prophecy to meet our own minds. We say, "I don't want any man to tell me what to do; I want God to tell me what to do." Well, God was telling Saul to go to the man Ananias. He said, Ananias will tell you; the church will tell you.

I will wholeheartedly obey, and I will be wholeheartedly devoted to God and I will listen to everything He tells me.

Self-Examination

It is through the truth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that we are to be sanctified--transformed into the likeness of Christ. And in order for this change to be wrought in us... {OHC 212.3}

Do you understand what it means for a change to be *wrought* in us? Have you looked into wrought iron? What is done to wrought iron to give it its shape? It is heated up in the furnace; it is twisted and carefully shaped under heat – *wrought*. This is what is meant.

And in order for this change to be wrought in us, there must be an unconditional, wholehearted acceptance of the truth, an unreserved surrender of the soul to its transforming power. {OHC 212.3}

Is this where we are? or have we to pick ourselves up afresh?

Our characters are by nature warped and perverted. Through the lack of proper development they are wanting in symmetry. {OHC 212.4}

This is God speaking to us, and we have to accept that. That's me, yes, Lord.

With some excellent qualities are united objectionable traits, and through long indulgence wrong tendencies become second nature, and many persons cling tenaciously to their peculiarities. {Ibid.}

Let the Testimony of Jesus cause you to examine yourselves. Do I have peculiarities that have become my second nature because of the years that I have dwelt under certain influences and it has become such second nature that I am prone to cling to those tenaciously?

Even after they profess to accept the truth, to yield themselves to Christ, the same old habits are indulged, the same self-esteem is manifested, the same false notions entertained. Although such ones claim to be converted, it is evident that they have not yielded themselves to the transforming power of the truth. {Ibid.}

Wholeheartedly yielding. As I was listening to this message that Sabbath, these details were missing. And I have experienced over the years that if I touch on any of those details in practice (as I have done over the years), something happens. I have lost the membership of the church as a consequence of this kind of preaching; because they said, You can't stop talking about dress; when really, I didn't just talk about dress, I talked about everything else as well. But this was such a big point in their life that they could not change their dress to fit exactly into the counsel that God gives. Therefore to them I was always talking about dress. But no; not at all; it was just bothering them. And then it came to the subject of health reform. And we come to this subject with our own opinion instead

of a straight “Thus saith the Lord”, and we interpret certain things to meet our own minds and we go to extremes, or to slackness, instead of a clear direction from God in His own words of the Testimony of Jesus. This is our challenge – to put away our notions, our strong opinions that we conclude from our own reading. The word of God is simple, and the Spirit of Prophecy is given in *the eloquence of simplicity*. Let us not put meanings into her statements that are not there. Take it just in simple words as it all reads.

I am brought face to face in God’s word with the challenge to be wholehearted for Him, with all my mind, with all my soul, with all my strength, with all my heart; and it is when we are face to face with this challenge that God illuminates us as He did Saul. The man that was all for God, in his own estimation, discovered that he was making some miserable mistakes. And when those miserable mistakes are revealed to us, I will submit because I am saying to Him, Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do? And follow it through. Give Him your heart. Be wholehearted for the Lord, and be a Caleb in these last days.

May God grant us this so that we will be identified as Calebs and Joshuas, the little remnant who will be ready to enter the Promised Land.

Amen.