

1. Seeking to Please God

By John Thiel, *Seeking to Please God Series*, [mp3](#)

Scripture reading: Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

The time in which we are living is the day of judgment; and in this day of investigative judgment, the Lord is examining our lives. The typical Day of Atonement was a day in which God's people were to afflict their souls, to fast; and this is the fasting that we are to engage in, ever since the beginning of the hour of God's judgment which began in the first angel's message in 1844. From that time onwards, God was calling upon His people to afflict their souls, to fast; and we have learnt that this meant putting away all foods that were unhealthful and stimulating, and eating only that which is wholesome and good for us; because the fasting, in the hand of God, brings us into a more intimate knowledge of Him and a surrendering state of mind.

Deep Heart Searching

There was a purpose in the fast.

Leviticus 16:29 And [this] shall be a statute for ever unto you: [that] in the seventh month, on the tenth [day] of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, [whether it be] one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you: **30** For on that day shall [the priest] make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, [that] ye may be clean from all your sins before the LORD. **31** It [shall be] a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever.

Can you see in these words a connection with the affliction to a purpose? What is the purpose? It says on that day the priest will "make an atonement *to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.*" We are living in what the Spirit of Prophecy calls the antitypical day of atonement.

In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before

God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. {GC 489.3}

The deep searching of heart was what the affliction of soul was about.

Lamentations 3:40 Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the LORD. 41 Let us lift up our heart with [our] hands unto God in the heavens.

We are to do some deep heart searching. *Let us search and try our ways, and turn again to the Lord. Let us lift up our heart with our hands.* Let us really search out where in any way we are not doing precisely what God is saying. The reason for that is given in Isaiah 55. We are to search our hearts; we are to search out our ways. Why? We are to search out God's ways in relation to our ways. Why is that?

God's Ways

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.

There is therefore some deep research to be made to come to the ways of God, because our ways are not His ways. Search the heart; examine deeply. The purpose of researching our ways in contrast to and in connection with God's ways which are higher than our ways, is so we would put them into action.

Leviticus 20:7 Sanctify yourselves therefore, and be ye holy: for I [am] the LORD your God. 8 And ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I [am] the LORD which sanctify you.

God specifically calls upon us in the day of judgment to examine and search out our hearts to see whether we are in the way of God, to seek to please Him in His way. We are to sanctify ourselves and keep all His statutes, and do them. We are to *do* them. This is the language.

Leviticus 19:37 Therefore shall ye observe all my statutes, and all my judgments, and do them: I [am] the LORD.

God's ways are not our ways. We are to search out our ways and find out where we are out of harmony with God's ways; and we are then to study to do God's ways. This is the affliction that is connected with the day of atonement.

But often we read this and we miss some important connecting links. In Leviticus 20, we read: "Ye shall keep my statutes, and do them;" but then it says, "*I am the Lord which sanctify you.*" So while we sometimes read, Oh, alright, I've

got to do what God says; the Lord comes in and says, But I am sanctifying you. And there is here a connecting link that we need to look carefully into. We are comforted with God's part. Therefore, because God has said, I am the One that will sanctify you; you are to do My judgments and My statutes; we are comforted and we cry out, "I am trying to reach standards and ways that are pleasing to you and which are higher from me than the heavens are from the earth! I need Your help, and You have said, I am going to sanctify you!" Therefore our cry is the utterance of our scripture reading.

I am trying to reach heights that are not natural to me. My ways are not your ways, says God. Let us ever remember this. Our ways are not God's ways; therefore we are called upon to search out God's ways. I am to search my heart, but here it says, God, You please search me.

Search Me

Psalm 139:23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: 24 And see if [there be any] wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

God wants us to search our ways. He wants us to embrace His ways and do them. But He is the one who sanctifies us, so we cry to Him, Lord, You search me; know my heart; try me, know my thoughts; *and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting*, in that high way, Your way. This is the prayer that is to be operative in our affliction in this day of atonement. We are giving Him the right, because it is beyond us. When God's ways are so great and so high, can we reach them by searching to try and understand them? We are called to; but we are in need of the help of Heaven. So we are giving Him the right; we are saying to Him, together with the psalmist, *Search me, O God*; try me; lead me in the way everlasting. Lord, take over in my life. We are giving Him the right to do just that, and He will if we give Him the right.

God knows every thought, every purpose, every plan, every motive. {5BC 1085.4}

He knows everything about my heart. He knows; I don't; and I ask Him to show me.

The books of heaven record the sins that would have been committed had there been opportunity. {Ibid.}

This is something serious.

God will bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing. By His law He measures the character of every man. As the artist transfers to the canvas the features of the face, so the features of each individual character are transferred to the books of heaven. {*Ibid.*}

So my character, my human nature, is recorded. And even the things that I would have done if I had opportunity are recorded there, because that is my character. So I am to search my heart; and I am asking God, Please, search me, and try me.

God has a perfect photograph of every man's character, and this photograph He compares with His law. He reveals to man the defects that mar his life, and calls upon him to repent and turn from sin. {*Ibid.*}

This is the activity in the day of judgment – for us to afflict our souls and give God the right to show us the things we would have done if we had opportunity, so that I can confess that. Don't be like Apostle Peter. He said to Jesus, I will never leave You. But Jesus knew what was in him. He said to him, You are going to deny Me; and Peter denied that statement, because he didn't know himself. We are to research our own hearts and let the Lord show us, because I don't know. I do not know what I am going to do in the most excruciating circumstances of my life. I don't know. But God knows; and I am giving Him the right to search it out and reveal it to me. Lord, search my heart; show me Thy ways. We are giving Him the right.

So where do we start in our cooperation with God in this day of judgement?

Examine Yourself

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?

Examine yourself, He says; and what does He refer to? What are we to examine? To know whether Jesus Christ is in me. This is a good place to start. If I will have Christ in me, I will have the avenue by which I will see the rest of my detail. If I don't have Christ in me, I don't know where to start.

By the life and the death of Christ, the thoughts of men also are brought to view. {DA 57.3}

If my mind is focused on the life and death of Christ, my thoughts will be brought to view.

From the manger to the cross, the life of Jesus was a call to self-surrender, and to fellowship in suffering. It unveiled the purposes of men. {Ibid.}

Jesus' life, from the manger to the cross, unveiled the purposes of men, the things I would have done if I had opportunity.

Jesus came with the truth of heaven, and all who were listening to the voice of the Holy Spirit were drawn to Him. The worshipers of self belonged to Satan's kingdom. In their attitude toward Christ, all would show on which side they stood. And thus everyone passes judgment on himself. {Ibid.}

So in the examination of our souls in the time of the judgment, this is where we must begin. Otherwise, I don't even know where to start in the research of anything to know how everything is interconnected. But in Jesus Christ, if I have Him, if I will examine whether I am in Christ and Christ is in me, I will then go through an experience because my purposes, in beholding Christ, will be unveiled to me. And in the judgment, I will pass judgment on myself as I look to Jesus.

As we commence this careful research, we are actually examining the details of what it is that God wants me to do, where I am still failing Him, and what I am doing that needs to be corrected. I have to start with Christ. And I need to be absolutely sure, as I examine myself, whether Christ is in me; because that is the starting point. If Christ is not there, if Jesus is not there in me, I will search in vain as I try to humble myself before God. I will search in vain, because I will search out all the legalities of the law. All the Ten Commandments, I will search out whether I am keeping them or not. And I will approach it from my own perspective, from my own sense of reading the Bible, if I am not in Christ. I will have merely a legal self-examination.

Searching First for Christ

A legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. Fasting or prayer that is actuated by a self-justifying spirit is an abomination in the sight of God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposing sacrifice, proclaim that the doer of these things regards himself as righteous, and as entitled to heaven; but it is all a deception. Our own works can never purchase salvation. {CSA 17.1}

Oh yes, we agree with that. *Our own works can never purchase salvation.* But it is so important that we search out with fasting and prayer what is in our souls, in the totally humiliating experience of realising that my ways are not God's ways,

that God has a knowledge of me that is different to the knowledge I have about myself. And there is no self-satisfaction in this; there is nothing to justify me in what I am doing. Because if I do it with any thought inside of me that, I've got to justify my course here; I am already on the wrong track. It is a total selflessness that is found alone in Christ, by which I can examine myself and let the Lord reveal to me my shortcomings.

Legal religion will not answer for this age. We may perform all the outward acts of service, and yet be as destitute of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit as the hills of Gilboa were destitute of dew and rain. We all need spiritual moisture; and we need also the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness to soften and subdue our hearts. We are always to be as firm as a rock to principle. Bible principles are to be taught, and then backed up by holy practice. {ChS 263.3}

They are to be backed up by holy practice, in doing what God says, but not in a legal approach. With a legal religion you will be destitute of the quickening influence of the Holy Spirit, as were the hills of Gilboa. In other words, if I want to find out God's ways and let Him reveal to me all the things of my heart, if Jesus is in me and I in Him, then God's ways will be found in the right way. This is self-evident when you read the following words:

John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me.

If I am going to come to the Father and say, Search me, O God; I am fasting, I am depending on You, because I can't even see straight through all this; if I come with that mental prayer of afflicting myself, I will be led to focus upon Jesus, because He is the way by which I am going to correctly examine myself. Jesus is the way, the truth, and the life. If Christ is in me, how will this assist me in discovering my own erring elements that He will show to me? How will Christ in me do this?

So will it be with all who behold Christ. The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves. There will be a continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him. {AA 561.2}

Isn't this what we are meant to be doing in the day of atonement, in this judgment time? *A continual reaching out of the soul after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the heart before Him.*

At every advance step in our Christian experience our repentance will deepen. {Ibid.}

It will happen if I have Christ inside in the first place.

We shall know that our sufficiency is in Christ alone and shall make the apostle's confession our own: "I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing." "God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world." Romans 7:18; Galatians 6:14. {Ibid.}

How then will Jesus in me assist me? The nearer I come to Jesus, the more I focus upon Jesus in me, the more I will see a progressive discovery. He will reveal to me the things that mar my life. Not by verbally saying, This is what you are doing wrong; but because His life of purity being shone into my inward parts will show me my filthy rags and my character defects.

How Can I Tell?

In this deliberation, I need to examine whether Christ is in me. This is essential so that I can correctly fast and correctly pray and correctly learn about my character defects. How do I go about examining whether Christ is in me? How can I tell whether Christ is in me? This is an important question, because there are so many at the end who will say, Lord, haven't we eaten with You and been in the streets with You, and haven't we done this and that in Your name? There are a lot of Christians who think they have Christ there; but He says, I don't know you. The Spirit of Prophecy comes straight to the point with regards to this question:

It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. {SC 58.1}

We might be correct on the outside with regards to the ways of God.

The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. {Ibid.}

I want to be a Christian, and I'm going to display that I am a Christian; I will live a well-ordered life. I will search out all of God's ways and put them into practice. "Now I'm right."

Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on? {Ibid.}

There is the question; how do I know that Jesus is in me? The answer is here:

Who has the heart? With whom are our thoughts? Of whom do we love to converse? Who has our warmest affections and our best energies? If we are Christ's, our thoughts are with Him, and our sweetest thoughts are of Him. All we have and are is consecrated to Him. We long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things. {SC 58.2}

If I want to know whether Christ is in me, I can tell only when my heart is all wrapped up with Him, when my thoughts are continually upon Him, when I love to converse of Him; not put Him on a shelf somewhere and get on with our own conversation. *Who has our warmest affections and our best energies?* Can you remember when you first discovered Jesus and you gave your heart to Him? I still remember the beautiful relationship I had with Him; it was so precious, I couldn't stop talking about Him. And I talked to the other people in the Adventist church about it, and they said, Oh, that's lovely, I'm glad you're so happy; but just wait and be in the church for a little longer, and then you'll mellow, you'll calm down. That was the first love that the Ephesus church had, and then He had something against them – they had lost that first love. We must ensure that we have never lost that first love. We must have Jesus in us, not just at the beginning, but all the way along. *My sweetest thoughts are of Him.* All I have and am is consecrated to Him. *I long to bear His image, breathe His spirit, do His will, and please Him in all things.* And where I don't, I suffer with Him, because I want Him entirely. This is how we go about examining ourselves, whether Christ is in us.

Have a good look. Have I had it there, and then I lost my first love? Or am I regaining it again with deep confession and coming to the cross afresh, dying again with Jesus and being resurrected again? As it says, *I die daily.* Do I do this daily and let my heart be filled afresh every morning with Jesus? This is what I need to do to examine myself; but how do I go about securing Him to remain in me? This is now a very important question as well. I need to make sure that Jesus is in me continually.

Search the Scriptures

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

To make sure that Jesus will be part of me, and that I am so full of Him that I am always occupied with Him, I must search the Scriptures; because if I will search the Scriptures, He Himself is the Word, and I will experience Him within through the searching of the Scriptures.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Jesus is the Word; He is the way. And if I study the Scriptures, I am studying *the Word*, and I am studying it for the purpose of making sure that Jesus is in me. And what will happen if the Word is in me?

John 1:14 And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.

So if I will search the Scriptures, I will search for Jesus, who is the Word. Because everything that is written in the Bible is Jesus; and I must connect the words I am reading with the Word Jesus. And as I search the Scriptures, as I make them my own personal experience, connecting those words with the One who is the Word, the Word will become flesh in me too.

No man, woman, or youth can attain to Christian perfection and neglect the study of the Word of God. {FLB 223.2}

We want to see God's ways, we want to be made pure; but it won't happen unless I study the Word of God.

By carefully and closely searching His Word we shall obey the injunction of Christ, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me." John 5:39. {Ibid.}

What are you and I to do? I can do some of it for you, but you have to search it for yourself.

This search enables the student to observe closely the divine Model. . . . The Pattern must be inspected often and closely in order to imitate it. As one becomes acquainted with the history of the Redeemer, he discovers in himself defects of character; his unlikeness to Christ is so great that he sees he cannot be a follower without a very great change in his life. Still he studies, with a desire to be like his great Exemplar; he catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed. {Ibid.}

This is very applicable to the subject of examining ourselves in the time of judgment, examining whether Jesus is in me. And if Jesus is in me, I am going to get all my answers. But how do I get Jesus in me? Searching the Scriptures the way that we have just been reading it – observing carefully and closely the divine Model, a carefully research. *The Pattern must be inspected often.* What must I do with Jesus in the word? Inspect the Pattern *often and closely, in order to imitate it.* And as I do this, I discover the defects in my character. My unlikeness to

Christ is so great that I need a complete change. But instead of giving up, we are to continue. This is our danger, we think it's too much; and especially in these last days. There is a great wave of discovery to be made because there is little time left. So my relationship with Jesus is extremely important, because instead of giving up because I discover my shortcomings and my errorful ways and my character defects which oppress me, through this relationship I keep on looking.

Still he studies, with a desire to be like his great Exemplar; he catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed. {Ibid.}

Can you remember the story of Peter? Jesus said to him, You will deny me. And when Peter denied Him, he caught the looks of Christ, and it changed him. He went and wept bitterly. He humbled himself, and he was lifted up by Christ. The believer *catches the looks, the spirit, of his beloved Master; by beholding he becomes changed.*

All the philosophies of human nature have led to confusion and shame when God has not been recognized as all in all. {FLB 223.3}

I can start philosophising around the Bible, I can study all the dos and don'ts, and Jesus and God is still separated from me. That can happen.

But the precious faith inspired of God imparts strength and nobility of character. As His goodness, His mercy, and His love are dwelt upon, clearer and still clearer will be the perception of truth; higher, holier, the desire for purity of heart and clearness of thought. {Ibid.}

We will be lifted into God's ways, higher and higher above the earth.

The soul dwelling in the pure atmosphere of holy thought is transformed by intercourse with God through the study of His Word. Truth is so large, so far-reaching, so deep, so broad, that self is lost sight of. {Ibid.}

This is what happens. Have you ever looked out into the stars and it becomes overwhelming to you? Self is lost sight of. This is what we are to do as we study God's word, because that is what will happen.

The heart is softened and subdued into humility, kindness, and love. {Ibid.}

The Bible . . . trains the mind to grapple with the deepest problems and to pursue the broadest explorations. It exalts the intellect. It saves the soul. . . . Take it as your mirror. It will be a faithful monitor, detecting the faults and errors of your character. {FLB 223.4}

We say, God, show me. So He says, I am going to show you; I am going to compare your character with My law. And how will He do it? He gave Jesus. And if I examine to see whether Jesus is in me, I will see that I need more, that I need to look to Jesus, to study the Word. And as I do so, God will show me the details, but only if I do that. He will bring circumstances around as providence to take me through the course, and I will remember what I studied, and I will realise, Oh, this is me, and this is God; I stand in awe of Him, and I feel completely overwhelmed about my character defects, but I keep on studying. I keep on looking at Jesus. I keep on seeing that He is a wonderful person who doesn't cast me off. And this continues to cause me to submit to Him. I submerge myself in Him; and as I do so, my life is changing. I am being moulded into a different person.

The Right Approach

That Word which reveals the guilt of sin, has a power upon the human heart to make man right and keep him so. {FLB 223.5}

So when it says, *Ye shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify you*; this is the approach. The first thing to examine is whether I have that approach or not. What is the motive that is causing me to examine myself to see whether Jesus is there?

One unsanctified act on the part of our Saviour, would have marred the pattern, and He could not have been a perfect example for us; but although He was tempted in all points like as we are, He was yet without one taint of sin. He proclaims His character by the mouth of the prophet saying, "I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth: for in these things I delight." All who profess the name of Christ should delight in these things, by conversation and conduct making manifest to the world that they are copying the Pattern. {SD 148.4}

This take us back to the question, Is Christ in me? I can know it if I delight in Him, as I think of Him, as my thoughts are occupied with Him, and as I talk of Him. *All who profess the name of Christ should delight in these things, by conversation and conduct making manifest to the world that they are copying the Pattern.*

Whoever believes in Christ must do the works of Christ. The Lord has been presented before them as one who exercises loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth, and these are the fruits that are borne by the genuine Christian. {Ibid.}

These are the fruits. The fruits will be there, as we examine ourselves in the light of this study. As we proceed further into this self-examination, we have commenced by looking to see whether Christ is in us, and we will continue to explore and see that with Christ in me, I will look at every given situation as is given in His word; and with Christ in me, I will correctly understand what needs to be corrected in my life, in the right way, not in the way of legal expectations.

May God help us to proceed step by step in this important time in which we live. Thank God He has given us tangible, practical guidance in His word.

Amen.