

Believing

By M. M. Campbell

“Here are those who keep the commandments of God
and [who keep] the faith of Jesus.”¹

Breaths there an Adventist with soul so dead he/she does not recognize the Revelation 14:12 description of the final-crisis remnant of prophecy? As Adventists, we have claimed these words as a description of *us*. Does this claim hold true under scrutiny?

Answering this question involves exploring the science of the gospel, which Jesus called “believing.” “Then they said to Him, ‘What shall we do, that we may work the works of God?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘This is the work of God, that you *believe* in Him whom He sent.’”²

In the Philippian jail Paul and Silas dealt with the same question from the jailor: “What must I do to be saved?” he asked, and they replied. “*Believe* on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved.”³

In Romans 4 the apostle Paul seeks to explain the essence of the gospel to gentile converts: “. . . to him who does not work but *believes* on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.”⁴

Obviously, “believing,” as Jesus and Paul understood it, plays a central role in the gospel. But what does “believing” mean, in the sense that *they* meant it? How does it fit in with the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? To modern minds “believing” simply means comprehension and mental ascent. Today multitudes believe in this way, fostering *antinomianism*—the idea that receiving a concept as truth is all there is to believing. Yes, Jesus was the Son of God who came to earth and died for our sins. Does this manner of thinking, believe to the saving; does it meet the definition of believing as Jesus and Paul understood and taught it?

Nowhere do we find a better illustration of the Biblical meaning of “believing” than in the life of the patriarch, Abraham, for he is the father of all who believe, the spiritual ancestor of

¹ Revelation 14:12. New King James version of Scripture used throughout unless otherwise stated.

² John 6:28-29.

³ Acts 16:30, 31.

⁴ Romans 4:5.

the children of faith.⁵ "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."⁶ Scripture describes the manner in which Abraham believed, which models the manner in which the remnant keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.

Therefore it is of *faith* that it might be according to grace, so that *the promise* might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the *faith* of Abraham, who is the father of us all (as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he *believed*—God, who gives life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; who, contrary to hope, in hope *believed*, so that he became the father of many nations, *according to what was spoken*, "So shall your descendants be." And not being weak in *faith*, he did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb. He did not waver at the *promise of God* through unbelief, but was strengthened *in faith, giving glory to God*, and being fully convinced that what He had *promised* He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness."⁷

Was Abraham's great need a longing to be made righteous? No. He wanted a son and heir. This was his perceived need, even though God knew he really needed a pure heart. But Deity saw He could use the patriarch's perceived need as a stepping stone to the purity of heart that was his true need. And Abraham went after his perceived need with passion, giving glory to God for the blessings *realized* (whether or not he had yet received them).

The patriarch believed in an impossibility just because God had promised it to him. He believed he and Sarah could parent a son in their old age. He believed that son would have other sons and that his progeny would eventually become a great nation. Notice that righteous Abraham *gave glory to God*. He believed *actively* through giving God glory and thanking Him that "It is so."

In what Biblical sense did Abraham give glory to God? "Let them give glory to the Lord, and *declare His praise* in the coastlands."⁸ Jesus stressed *this definition* of "give Him glory"⁹ in Luke 17:15-19: "And one of them [the ten lepers], when he saw that he was healed, returned, and with a loud voice *glorified God*, and fell down on his face at His feet, *giving Him thanks*. And he was a Samaritan. So Jesus answered and said, 'Were there not ten cleansed? But where are the nine? Were there not any found who returned to *give glory to God* except this foreigner?' And He said to him, 'Arise, go your way. Your *faith* has made you well.'" Both the psalmist and the thankful leper tell us that to give glory to God means to praise Him, to express heart appreciation of His goodness and blessings.

⁵ Romans 4:11.

⁶ Romans 4:3.

⁷ Romans 4:16-22.

⁸ Isaiah 42:12.

⁹ Revelation 14:7.

It is sad to think our entrance into the heavenly Canaan may have been so long delayed due to our simple failure to express thanksgiving to God for gifts already received and the gifts packaged in the promises of Scripture. What a wonderful prospect God holds out to His children—freedom from sin, living in a perfect world, a life without end, open association with Deity and holy angels. To some it may seem an impossibility as did Abraham’s desire, in the natural. Can we achieve this great prize by the same means Abraham achieved his great desire?

The companionship with Christ to which the household of faith is called can only grow out of a spirit of praise and thanksgiving to God. These are the New Covenant sacrifices¹⁰, perhaps so-called because it takes conscious energy—a sacrifice?—to develop the habit of being thankful in all things. Abraham, it seems, developed this habit, for he gave glory to God, expressing his confidence in God’s willingness and power to fulfill His promise. To Abraham, believing was an active living thing.

Abraham kept God’s commandments. “Abraham obeyed My voice and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.”¹¹ Since the fourth commandment directs observance of the seventh-day Sabbath, we know that Abraham observed this day of rest. Through giving glory to God, he expressed his confidence in Him or “believed God”—and thus became the father of the children of faith.¹² Therefore, Abraham is the role model for those who “keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.”¹³ As in the case of Abraham, believing begets action. Thanksgiving or giving glory to God connects the human to God, who inhabits the praises of His people¹⁴, bringing the righteousness of Jesus into the human life. It was through this dynamic that Abraham kept God’s commandments, for walking with God enabled Deity to live in Him, direct His ways, and fulfill His promise to the patriarch.

Do Adventists keep the commandments of God? Obedience has been our emphasis through the years, especially as it pertains to the fourth commandment. No one can refute Adventism’s Scriptural position that God intends the sanctification of His children, as attested by obedience to His commandments. We have magnified this theme to heaven and earth in spite of the great number of discouraged church members who confess their struggle to keep the law in its deep, spiritual intent, as Jesus said to keep it.¹⁵

Many other Adventists rest satisfied with observing the letter of the law by attending church on Saturday, paying tithe, and working in their local church with no apparent awareness of the spiritual intent of the law. Is this keeping the commandments as Jehovah intends?

¹⁰ Jeremiah 33:11; Hebrews 13:15.

¹¹ Genesis 26:5.

¹² Romans 4:11, 12.

¹³ Revelation 14:12.

¹⁴ Psalm 22:3.

¹⁵ Matthew 5:21-48.

Do Adventists exercise the faith of Jesus? Here has manifested Adventism greatest challenge. While believing and teaching obedience to the Ten Commandments, we have been ignorant of the mechanics which make heavenly obedience possible in our fallen human nature.

Abraham is our role model of keeping the commandments of God through the faith of Jesus.

A. T. Jones and E. J. Waggoner brought the dynamics of true commandment keeping to Adventism in the late nineteenth century. They described how the faith of Jesus enables humans to observe God's commandments in their spiritual intent.

Appreciation to God and the expression of it—*believing*. . . . Could this be the “missing link” all along? How dare we take so much from God and return so little thanks. Might God's children create a great united chorus of praise and thanksgiving before His throne on which Deity can enter the core of our being—both individually and corporately—to return to this earth, to put sin into history, and to take us home?

Praising God is its own reward, but it seems that God has a great deal more than that in mind. This believing—the faith of Jesus—can bring our Savior into our hearts to share His righteousness with us. The victory of Abraham attests to it. He realized the fulfillment of his *perceived* need, when a spirit of thanksgiving to God opened a door in His soul for the Savior to come in and walk with him.

When we keep the commandments through the faith of Jesus, we will be the individuals described in Revelation 14:12.