

THE FINAL GENERATION

By M. L. Andreasen

The final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for humanity is still in the future. Christ showed the way. He took a human body, and in that body demonstrated the power of God. Men are to follow His example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every human being who submits to Him. The world is awaiting this demonstration. (Rom. 8:19). When it has been accomplished, the end will come. God will have fulfilled His plan. He will have shown Himself true and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated.

There is much spurious doctrine concerning holiness taught in the world today. On the one hand are those who deny the power of God to save from sin. On the other hand are those who flaunt their sanctity before men and would have us believe that they are without sin. Among the first class are not only unbelievers and skeptics but church members whose vision does not include victory over sin, but who accept a kind of compromise with sin. In the other class are such as have no just conception either of sin or of God's holiness, whose spiritual vision is so impaired that they cannot see their own shortcomings, and hence believe themselves perfect, and whose conception of religion is such that their own understanding of truth and righteousness is superior to that revealed in the Word. It is not easy to decide which is the greater error.

That the Bible inculcates holiness is indisputable. "The very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." 1 Thess. 5:23. "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord." Heb. 12:14. "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification." 1 Thess. 4:3. The Greek word *hagios* in its various forms is translated "sanctify," "holy," "holiness," "sanctified," "sanctification." It is the same word which is used for the two apartments of the sanctuary, and means that which is set apart for God. A sanctified person is one who is set apart for God, whose whole life is dedicated to Him.

The final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for humanity.

Forgiveness and Cleansing

The plan of salvation must of necessity include not only forgiveness of sin but complete restoration. Salvation from sin is more than forgiveness of sin. Forgiveness presupposes sin and is conditioned upon breaking with it; sanctification is separation from sin and indicates deliverance from its power and victory over it. The first is a means to neutralize the effect of sin; the second is a restoration of power for complete victory.

Sin, like some diseases, leaves man in a deplorable condition—weak, despondent, disheartened. He has little control of his mind, his will fails him, and with the best of intentions he is unable to do what he knows to be right. He feels that there is no hope. He knows that he has himself to blame, and remorse fills his soul. To his bodily ailments is added the torture of conscience. He knows that he has sinned and is to blame. Will no one take pity on him?

Then comes the gospel. The good news is preached to him. Though his sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. All is forgiven. He is “saved.” What a wonderful deliverance it is! His mind is at rest. No longer does his conscience torment him. He has been forgiven. His sins are cast into the depths of the sea. His heart wells with praise to God for His mercy and goodness to him.

As a disabled ship towed to port is safe but not sound, so the man is “saved” but not sound. Repairs need to be made on the ship before it is pronounced seaworthy, and the man needs reconstruction before he is fully restored. This process of restoration is called sanctification, and includes in its finished product body, soul, and spirit. When the work is finished, the man is “holy,” completely sanctified, and restored to the image of God. It is for this demonstration of what the gospel can do for a man that the world is looking.

In the Bible both the process and the finished work are spoken of as sanctification. For this reason the “brethren” are spoken of as holy and sanctified, though they have not attained to perfection. (1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 1: 1; Heb. 3: 1.) A glance through the Epistles to the Corinthians will soon convince one that the saints there mentioned had their faults. Despite this, they are said to be “sanctified” and “called to be saints.” The reason is that complete sanctification is not the work of a day or of a year but of a lifetime. It begins the moment a person is converted, and continues through life. Every victory hastens the process. There are few Christians who have not gained the mastery over some sin that formerly greatly annoyed them and overcame them. Many a man who has been a slave to the tobacco habit has gained the victory over the habit and rejoices in his victory. Tobacco has ceased to be a temptation. It attracts him no more. He has the victory. On that point he is sanctified. As he has been victorious over one besetment, so he is to become victorious over every sin. When the work is completed, when he has gained the victory over pride, ambition, love of the world—over all evil—he is ready for translation. He has been tried in all points. The evil one has come to him and found nothing. Satan has no more temptations for him. He has overcome them all. He stands without fault before the throne of God. Christ places His seal upon him. He is safe, and he is sound. God has finished His work in him. The demonstration of what God can do with humanity is complete.

Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth. Through them God’s final demonstration of what He can do with humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God. They will be subjected to every temptation, but they will not yield. They will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin—the very demonstration for which the world has been looking and for which God has been preparing. It will become evident to all that the gospel really can save to the uttermost. God is found true in His sayings.

The last year of the conflict brings the final test; but this only proves to angels and to the world that nothing that the evil one can do will shake God’s chosen ones. The plagues fall, destruction is on every hand, death stares them in the face, but like Job they hold fast their integrity. Nothing can make them sin. They “keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” Rev. 14:12.

Throughout the history of the world God has had His faithful ones. They have endured affliction and great tribulation. But even in the midst of Satan's buffetings they have, as the apostle Paul says, through faith "wrought righteousness." "They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth." Heb. 11:37, 38.

And in addition to this galaxy of faithful witnesses, many of whom were martyrs for their faith, God will have in the last days a remnant, a "little flock," in and through whom He will give to the universe a demonstration of His love, His power, His justice, which, if we exempt Christ's godly life on earth and His supreme sacrifice on Calvary, will be the most sweeping and conclusive demonstration of all the ages of what God can do in men.

It is in the last generation of men living on the earth that God's power unto sanctification will stand fully revealed. The demonstration of that power is God's vindication. It clears Him of any and all charges which Satan has placed against Him. In the last generation God is vindicated and Satan defeated. This may need some further amplification.

God's Demonstration

The demonstration which God intends to make with the last generation on earth means much, both to the people and to God. Can God's law really be kept? That is a vital question. Many deny that it can be done; others glibly say it can. When the whole question of commandment keeping is considered, the problem assumes large proportions. God's law is exceedingly broad; it takes cognizance of the thoughts and intents of the heart. It judges motives as well as acts, thoughts as well as words. Commandment keeping means entire sanctification, a holy life, unswerving allegiance to right, entire separation from sin, and victory over it. Well may mortal man cry out, Who is sufficient for these things!

Yet, to produce a people that will keep the law is the task which God has set Himself and which He expects to accomplish. When the statement and challenge are issued by Satan: "No one can keep the law. It is impossible. If there be any that can do it or that have done it, show them to me. Where are they that keep the commandments?" God will quietly answer, Here they are. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Rev. 14: 12.

Let us say it reverently: God must meet Satan's challenge. It is not God's plan, or a part of His purpose, to subject men to tests that only a chosen few can survive. In the Garden of Eden, God subjected Adam and Eve to the lightest test conceivable. No one can say that our first parents fell because the test was too hard for them. If they fell, it was not because the test was hard or because they had not been provided with strength to resist. The temptation was not held before them constantly. Satan was not permitted to molest them everywhere. He had access to them at only one place, namely, at the tree of knowledge. That place they knew. They could stay away from it if they wanted to. Satan could not follow them everywhere. If they went where Satan was, it was because they wanted to. But even if they went there to examine the tree, they need not

have remained there. They could walk away. And even if Satan offered them the fruit, they need not take it. But they took it and ate. And they ate it because they wanted to, not because they had to. They deliberately transgressed. There was no excuse. God could not have devised an easier test.

When God commands men to keep His law, it does not serve the purpose He has in mind to have only a few men keep it, just enough to show it can be done. It is not in line with God's character to pick outstanding men of strong purpose and superb training, and demonstrate through them what He can do. It is much more in harmony with His plan to make His requirements such that even the weakest need not fail, so that none can ever say that God demands that which can be done by only a few. It is for this reason that God has reserved His greatest demonstration for the last generation. This generation bears the results of accumulated sins. If any are weak, they are. If any suffer from inherited tendencies, they do. If any have an excuse because of weakness of any kind, they have. If, therefore, these can keep the commandments, there is no excuse for anyone in any other generation not doing so also.

But this is not enough. God intends in His demonstration to show, not merely that ordinary men of the last generation can successfully pass a test such as He gave to Adam and Eve, but that they can survive a test much harder than such as falls to the lot of common men. It will be a test comparable to the one Job passed through, and approaching that which the Master underwent. It will test them to the utmost.

"Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy." James 5:11. Job passed through some experiences that will be repeated in the lives of the chosen ones of the last generation. It may be well to consider them.

Job's Test

Job was a good man. God trusted him. Day by day he offered sacrifices for his sons. "It may be that my sons have sinned," he said. Job. 1:5. He was prosperous and enjoyed the blessing of God. Then came "a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before the Lord, and Satan came also among them." Verse 6, A conversation is recorded between the Lord and Satan that concerned Job. The Lord says that Job is a good man, which Satan does not deny, but urges that Job is God-fearing merely because it pays him to be so. He states that if God will take away His mercies, Job will curse God. The statement is in the form of a challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to take away Job's property and otherwise to cause him sorrow, but not to touch Job himself, Satan immediately proceeds to do what he is permitted to do. Job's property is all swept away, and his children are killed.

When this happened, "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshiped, and said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly." Job 1:20-22.

Satan is defeated, but he makes another attempt. At the next meeting with the Lord, without admitting defeat, he claims that he had not been permitted to touch Job himself. If he had, he claims, Job would have sinned. The statement is again a challenge, and God accepts it. Satan is given permission to torment Job but not to take his life. He immediately departs on his mission.

All that the evil one can do, Satan does to Job. But Job stands fast. His wife counsels him to give up, but he does not waver. Under intense physical pain and mental anguish he remains steadfast. Again it is recorded that Job stood the test. “In all this did not Job sin with his lips.” Job 2:10. Satan is defeated and does not appear any more in the book.

In the succeeding chapters in the book of Job we are given a little insight into the struggle going on in Job’s mind. He is greatly perplexed. Why has all this calamity come upon Him? He is not conscious of any sin. Why, then, should God afflict him? He, of course, does not know of the challenge of Satan. Neither does he know that God is depending upon him in the crisis through which he is passing. All he knows is that out of a clear sky disaster has come upon him till he is left without family or property, and with a loathsome disease that nearly overwhelms him. He does not understand, but he retains his integrity and faith in God. This God knew he would do. This Satan said he would not do. In the challenge God won.

Humanly speaking, Job had not deserved the punishment that came to him. God Himself says it was without cause. “Thou movedst Me against him, to destroy him without cause.” Job 2:3. The whole experiment can therefore be justified only by considering it as a specific test devised for a specific purpose. God wanted to silence Satan’s charge that Job served God only for profit. He wanted to demonstrate that there was at least one man whom Satan could not control. Job suffered as a result of it, but there seemed to be no other way. A reward was afterward given him.

Job’s case is recorded for a purpose. While we grant its historicity, we believe that it has also a wider meaning. God’s people in the last days will pass through an experience similar to Job’s. They will be tested as he was; they will have every earthly stay removed; Satan will be given permission to torment them. In addition to this the Spirit of God will be withdrawn from the earth, and the protection of earthly governments removed. God’s people will be left alone to battle with the powers of darkness. They will be perplexed, as was Job. But they, as did he, will hold fast their integrity.

In the last generation God will stand vindicated. In the remnant Satan will meet his defeat. The charge that the law cannot be kept will be met and fully refuted. God will produce not only one or two who keep His commandments, but a whole group, spoken of as the 144,000. They will reflect the image of God fully. They will have disproved Satan’s accusation against the government of heaven.

God’s Government on Trial

A serious situation arose in heaven when Satan made his charges against God. The accusations in reality constituted an impeachment. Many of the angels believed the charges. They ranged themselves on the side of the accuser. One third of the angels—and that must have been millions—faced God with their leader, the highest

among the angels, Lucifer. It was no small crisis. It threatened the very existence of God's government. How should God deal with it?

The only way the matter could be satisfactorily settled so that no question would ever arise again, was for God to submit His case to the ordinary rules of evidence. Was, or was not, God's government just? God said it was; Satan said it was not. God could have destroyed Satan. That would not prove His cause just but would, in fact, count against Him. There was no other way than for each side to present its evidence, produce its witnesses, and rest its case on the weight of testimony adduced.

The picture, then, is that of a court scene. God's government is at stake. Satan is the accuser; God Himself is the accused and is on trial. He has been charged with injustice, with requiring His creatures to do that which they cannot do, and yet punishing them for not doing it. The law is the specific point of attack, but the law being merely a transcript of God's character, it is God and His character that are the points at issue.

In order for God to sustain His contention, it is necessary for Him to show that He has not been arbitrary, that the law is not harsh and cruel in its requirement, but contrariwise, that it is holy, just, and good, and that men can keep it. It is necessary for God to produce at least one man who has kept the law. In the absence of such a man, God loses and Satan wins. The outcome therefore hinges on the production of one or more who keep the commandments of God. On this God has staked His government.

While it is true that many from time to time have dedicated their lives to God and lived without sin for periods of time, Satan claims that these are special cases, as was Job's case, and do not come under the ordinary rules. He demands a clear-cut case where there can be no doubt, and where God has not interfered. Can such an instance be produced?

The Last Generation

God is ready for the challenge. He has bided His time. The supreme exhibition has been reserved until the final contest. Out of the last generation God will select His chosen ones. Not the strong or the mighty, not the honored or the rich, not the wise or the learned, but common, ordinary people will God take, and through and by them make His demonstration. Satan has claimed that those who in the past have served God have done so from mercenary motives, that God has pampered them, and that he, Satan, has not had free access to them. If he were given full permission to press his case, they also would be won over. But he charges that God is afraid to let him do this. "Give me a fair chance," Satan says, "and I will win out."

And so, to silence forever Satan's charges; to make it evident that His people are serving Him from motives of loyalty and right without reference to reward; to clear His own name and character of the charges of injustice and arbitrariness; and to show to angels and men that His law can be kept by the weakest of men under the most discouraging and most untoward circumstances, God permits Satan in the last generation to try His people to the utmost. They will be threatened, tortured, persecuted. They will stand face to face with death in the issuance of the decree to worship the beast and his image. (Rev. 13: 15.) But they will not yield. They are willing to die rather than to sin.

God removes His Spirit from the earth. Satan will have a greater measure of control than he has ever had before. True, he may not kill God's people, but that seems to be the only limitation. And he uses every permission he has. He knows what is at stake. It is now or never.

God, to make the demonstration complete, does one more thing. He hides Himself. The sanctuary in heaven is closed. The saints cry to God day and night for deliverance, but He appears not to hear. God's chosen ones are passing through Gethsemane. They are having a little taste of Christ's experience—those three hours on the cross. Seemingly they must fight their battles alone. They must live in the sight of a holy God without an intercessor.

But though Christ has finished His intercession, the saints are still the object of God's love and care. Holy angels watch over them. God provides them shelter from their enemies; He provides them with food, shields them from destruction, and supplies grace and power for holy living. (See Psalms 91.) Yet they are still in the world, still tempted, afflicted, tormented.

Will they stand the test? To human eyes it seems impossible. If only God would come to their rescue, all would be well. They are determined to resist the evil one. If need be they will die, but they will not sin. Satan has no power—and never has had—to make any man sin. He can tempt, he can seduce, he can threaten; but he cannot compel. And now God demonstrates through the weakest of the weak that there is no excuse, and never has been any, for sinning. If men in the last generation can successfully repel Satan's attack; if they can do this with all the odds against them and the sanctuary closed, what excuse is there for men's ever sinning?

The 144,000

In the last generation God gives the final demonstration that men can keep the law of God and that they can live without sinning. God leaves nothing undone to make the demonstration complete. The only limitation put upon Satan is that he may not kill the saints of God. He may tempt them, he may harass and threaten them; and he does his best. But he fails. He cannot make them sin. They stand the test, and God puts His seal upon them.

Through the last generation of saints God stands finally vindicated. Through them He defeats Satan and wins His case. They form a vital part of the plan of God. They go through terrific struggles; they battle with unseen powers in high places. But they have put their trust in the Most High, and they will not be ashamed. They have suffered hunger and thirst, but now "they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Rev. 7:16, 17.

They "follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth." Rev. 14:4. When at last the doors of the temple shall swing open, a voice will sound forth: "Only the 144,000 enter this place."—Early Writings, p. 19. By faith they have followed the Lamb here. They have gone with Him into the holy place; they have followed Him into the most holy. And in the hereafter only those who have thus followed Him here will follow Him there. They will be kings and priests. They will follow Him into the most holy,

where only the High Priest can ever enter. They will stand in the unveiled presence of God. They shall follow Him “whithersoever He goeth.” They will not only be “before the throne of God” and “serve Him day and night in His temple,” but they will sit with Him in His throne, even as He also overcame, and is set down with His Father in His throne. (Rev. 7:15; 3:21.)

The matter of greatest importance in the universe is not the salvation of men, important as that may seem. The most important thing is the clearing of God’s name from the false accusations made by Satan. The controversy is drawing to a close. God is preparing His people for the last great conflict. Satan is also getting ready. The issue is before us and will be decided in the lives of God’s people. God is depending upon us as He did upon Job. Is His confidence well placed?

It is a wonderful privilege vouchsafed this people to help clear God’s name by our testimony. It is wonderful that we are permitted to testify for Him. It must never be forgotten, however, that this testimony is a testimony of life, not merely of words. “In Him was life; and the life was the light of men.” John 1:4. “The life was the light.” It was so with Christ, it must also be so with us. Our life should be a light, as His life was. To give people the light is more than to hand them a tract. Our life is the light. As we live, we give light to others, Without life, without our living the light, our words abide alone. But as our life becomes light, our words become effective. It is our life that must testify for God.

May the church of God appreciate the exalted privilege given her! “Ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord.” Isa. 43: 10. There must be “no strange god among you: therefore ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God.” Verse 12. May we be witnesses indeed, testifying what God has done for us!

All this is closely connected with the work of the Day of Atonement. On that day the people of Israel, having confessed their sins, were completely cleansed. They had already been forgiven; now sin was separated from them. They were holy and without blame. The camp of Israel was clean.

We are now living in the great antitypical day of the cleansing of the sanctuary. Every sin must be confessed and by faith be sent beforehand to judgment. As the high priest enters into the most holy, so God’s people now are to stand face to face with God. They must know that every sin is confessed, that no stain of evil remains. The cleansing of the sanctuary in heaven is dependent upon the cleansing of God’s people on earth. How important, then, that God’s people be holy and without blame! In them every sin must be burned out, so that they will be able to stand in the sight of a holy God and live with the devouring fire. “Hear, ye that are far off, what I have done; and, ye that are near, acknowledge My might. The sinners in Zion are afraid; fearfulness hath surprised the hypocrites. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings? He that walketh righteously, and speaking uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes, that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil; he shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.” Isa. 33:13-16.

The Sanctuary Service, Chapter twenty-one.