

In case you've just started attending in the last couple of weeks, let me provide a little catch-up. On the last Saturday of each month, we bring a topic that has been on the hearts of the pastors; thus the title, "From the Heart." As you can see from the graphic behind me, we've already gone through 9 topics, and this one is the tenth.

The topic today is called "Minding the Gap" – more precisely, minding that gap that many times exists between our Orthodoxy and our Orthopraxy. In case you don't know what those terms mean, they are religious terms for right or correct doctrine or teachings, "Orthodoxy": and correspondingly, right or correct conduct or practice, which would be Orthopraxy.

Simply put then, our topic might be said to be about that tension that so often exists when we try to practice what we preach.

So why is this so hard? There's a multitude of reasons; however, mostly it comes down to two questions: 1) What do we mean by "Correct Doctrine," and 2) What do we mean by "Correct Conduct". Unfortunately, in its ultimate expression, this gap has gone much further than mere spiritual disputes; it has brought about some of the most heinous acts in human history, all in the name of religion.

### Prayer

Between April and July of 1994, more than 800,000 Rwandans were murdered in the most rapid genocide ever recorded. And on top of it, most of the killings were carried out by their fellow countrymen, and many were neighbor-to-neighbor, with the only difference being that one side was "Hutu" and the other "Tutsi" or "Tutsi sympathizers." Though there were many factors that led up to this hundred-day killing spree and the backlash that followed, the victims could not have imagined anything worse. After seeing the atrocity, one journalist said, "It is gut-wrenching and horrific to even imagine that human beings are capable of this kind of systematic butchery on one another."

I bring this up because, up until then, almost every genocide or mass organized murder had been triggered by either a socio-religious struggle or a blatant attempt to eradicate a targeted religious group. As one author states, "It was the first time in recorded history that the discrimination and extermination was not directly related to religion per/say." But then he goes on to say, "But was it really?"

You see, the startling thing about this massacre is that it was done in Rwanda, which is a country that professed to be 95% Christian. Seventh-day Adventists made up 10% of that figure, as you can see in the graph behind me.

In a stirring sermon, Elder Robert Folkenberg, who was the General Conference President for the Seventh-day Adventist church during this time, spoke these words:

“I have spent many hours on my knees before God trying to understand what happened. I have come to one conclusion. The gospel did not fail. The cross of Christ did not fail. The Holy Spirit did not fail. We failed!”

He went on to talk about leadership, pastors, and then he said something quite interesting:

“We have been satisfied to talk about religion and denominations. We have been satisfied to talk about rituals, lives, and practices – externals. But the fruit of our relationship with Christ shows that we failed.”

It was a sad moment, but it was also a wake-up call for all who profess Christ to see what is really inside. Where does the motivation for our practice of Christianity come from? What are we putting our faith, hope and belief in, and does it make a difference to the world I live in? Does it matter to my neighbor?

When Christ was here on earth, he was seemingly always at odds with the Scribes and Pharisees.

In his famous sermon on the mount in Matt 5, he recites the Law:

<sup>21</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder,<sup>[a]</sup> and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.’ <sup>22</sup> But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause<sup>[b]</sup> shall be in danger of the judgment.

Then again:

<sup>27</sup> “You have heard that it was said to those of old,<sup>[c]</sup> ‘You shall not commit adultery.’<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>28</sup> But I say to you .....

One after another, “You have heard it said, but I say.....”

This discourse was not Christ doing away with the law. As a matter of fact, he says, “I didn’t come to abolish the law but that the law through me would be fulfilled.” (Matt. 5:17)

And then Christ says a really interesting thing, in verse 20 of Matthew, Chapter 5. He says:

<sup>20</sup> For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees*, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

Now, at first glance, it sounds like he wants us to be hyper vigilant about keeping the law and doing it even better than the Scribes and Pharisees did—an accomplishment that was widely known among the people of the day. But that's not what Christ is talking about.

He's saying that their righteousness is only a show. They talk about it, they study the fine details of it, they even teach it expecting others to do as they do in perfect obedience. But it is still only external.

<sup>25</sup> “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.”<sup>26</sup> Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean.

<sup>27</sup> “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You are like whitewashed tombs, which look beautiful on the outside but on the inside are full of dead men's bones and everything unclean.

You can understand why they started to collaborate to have him done away with. Christ was not making too many friends that day.

He actually says, in the beginning of this chapter to the people standing around, “Hey don't do what these guys tell you to do, cause their not practicing what they preach.”

But what's going on, what is causing this gap between saying one thing and doing another?

Let's look at the very first “Woe” Statement, it's actually different from the rest:

<sup>13</sup> “Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You shut the door of the kingdom of heaven in people's faces. You yourselves do not enter, nor will you let those enter who are trying to.

Yes, this sounds like an attack on a practice, but what Christ is referring to is that the Pharisees have shut the door on anyone being able to see the Kingdom for what it really is. Not only have they closed off this wonderful revelation, but they

themselves don't even want to look. They have systematically and categorically shut down access to the real Orthodoxy, the Law that Jesus was NOW fulfilling.

The law that Jesus summed up as **“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and your neighbor as yourself”**.  
(Matt. 22:37-39)

This kind of Orthodoxy was missed when the Pharisees were teaching their students. This Orthodoxy was missed when young German Nazis were being taught to look at Jews differently than other human beings. This Orthodoxy was missed when Belgium missionaries were teaching young Rwandan children to obey the government officials in any situation.

It is when we fail to see Christ's life as the fulfillment of the law that we fail to understand how to act out the practice of the law.

But this is never easy on our own, Christ knew this. Listen to what he says to His disciples that night he spent with them in the upper room.

**“If you love me, show it by doing what I've told you. I will talk to the Father, and he'll provide you another Friend so that you will always have someone with you. This Friend is the Spirit of Truth. (John 4:15-17)**

It is here, that Jesus is helping the disciple to understand that, even though he is going away, there will be a Friend, a Comforter, the Holy Spirit who will guide and direct their hearts. So on one side we have Orthodoxy; on the other side we have Orthopraxy. I would like to think that Jesus is providing another look at this whole thing, something that will help us mind this gap that so often occurs: “Orthopathy,” a correct heart.

There are many terrible accounts that took place during those 100 days in Rwanda, but there are also some incredible stories of hope and love that came out as well. One such story was about Alphonsine Musabwamana, a young Tutsi girl who was hiding along with her family and many other Tutsis in a Muslim mosque.

Tutsis tried to find any place they could to hide from their attackers, and because many Hutus believed that devils lived in Muslim homes and mosques, they were reluctant to enter.

However, because there were no Muslims in the building where they were hiding, the Hutu militia broke in and tried to take out all of them as quickly as possible before the Muslims returned. They succeeded except for one, Alphonsine. “I was cut pretty badly on my head and my neck,” she recounts, “but a young man by the name of Rasheed came in and found me and took me to his home where he

and his family called for food and supplies to help me and many others that they had found.”

The interesting part is that Rasheed was a Muslim. He was considered by all Rwandans to be less human than the ones he was risking his life to save. He said he knew that, if he was caught, he would die, but he was determined to be with them and, if need be, die with them because he felt in his heart he would want someone to do that for him.

You know, I was approached by one of our members a few weeks ago. He mentioned that we’ve had a lot of sermons about love and grace – that maybe its time we had a sermon on obedience.

Well, here we are. Let’s not miss this. Orthopathy, having a correct heart, is the best place for obedience to start.



October 28, 2017

1. In your mind, what does it mean to be “Right with God,” and how does that affect your daily routine?
2. As we look at back at the actions and behaviors in our lives, what seems to have been the predominant motivation for them?
3. What part does having a correct understanding of the Law of God play in our everyday lives? How does that play out in our understanding of having a correct heart?
4. If you were placed in a situation where helping or saving one person put your life in danger, how prepared would you be, and what would go through your mind in order to make that decision?



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