

1 **How to Anticipate the Close of Probation**
2 **Without Going Crazy**
3 by Marvin Moore
4

5 For some Adventists, the close of probation is one of our most frightening
6 teachings. And, unfortunately, it has created an unhealthy perfectionism in some of our
7 minds. This isn't to say that our teaching about the close of probation is wrong. The
8 misinterpretation and misuse of a biblical teaching doesn't make the teaching itself
9 wrong. The New Testament doctrine of justification by faith is correct in spite of the fact
10 that some people use it to justify cheap grace.

11
12 **What probation means**

13 I will begin by analyzing the biblical teaching about probation. Probation began
14 when God extended grace to our first parents after they sinned. The opportunity to accept
15 salvation has been available ever since. However, the Bible is clear that this opportunity
16 will end someday. When Jesus returns, some Christians will be surprised to hear His
17 words, "I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!" (Matthew 7:23). There
18 obviously will be no further opportunity for these people to be saved.

19 This verse and others like it suggest that probation will close *at* Christ's second
20 coming, for this is the time when God will give eternal rewards to both the righteous and
21 the wicked and separate them from each other. In Jesus' parable of the wheat and the
22 tares, the righteous and the wicked are separated at the harvest (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-
23 43), which Jesus said represents "the end of the age" (verse 39). The parable of the sheep
24 and the goats is even more specific. It says that the righteous and the wicked will be
25 separated "when the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him"
26 (Matthew 25:31). This is an obvious reference to Christ's second coming.

27 However, Seventh-day Adventists believe that probation will close a short time
28 *before* Christ's return. Years ago, I was under the impression that we based this teaching
29 on Ellen White rather than on the Bible. However, a careful study of Revelation
30 underscores the biblical accuracy of our Adventist conclusion. Revelation describes the
31 world divided into the same two end-time groups. The righteous are represented
32 symbolically as those who receive the seal of God while the wicked receive the mark of
33 the beast. The question is, When are the seal and the mark applied—*at* the second coming
34 or *before*?

35 Revelation 14:9, 10 says that God's wrath will be poured out unmixed with mercy
36 upon those who receive the mark of the beast. This outpouring of wrath is graphically
37 described in chapter 16 as "seven last plagues," which occur a short time before Christ's
38 return. And the first plague, a skin disease, falls on "the people who had the mark of the
39 beast and worshiped his image" (Revelation 16:2). Obviously, the decision of who will
40 receive that mark and who will not must be made before the first plague falls. This is a
41 clear indication that probation will have closed by the time the plagues begin to fall,
42 confirming the Adventist teaching that probation will close a short time *before* Christ's
43 return rather than *at* His return.

44
45 **Probation and Christ's mediatorial ministry**

1 Ever since Jesus returned to heaven 2,000 years ago, He has been officiating in
 2 the heavenly sanctuary as our Mediator. However, Seventh-day Adventists teach that this
 3 ministry will cease at the close of probation, leaving God’s people with no Mediator
 4 during the time of trouble. Ellen White said:

5
 6 When the third angel’s message closes, mercy no longer pleads for
 7 the guilty inhabitants of the earth. . . . Jesus ceases His intercession in the
 8 sanctuary above. He lifts His hands and with a loud voice says, “It is
 9 done;” and all the angelic host lay off their crowns as He makes the
 10 solemn announcement: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he
 11 which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be
 12 righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Revelation 22:11.
 13 Every case has been decided for life or death (*The Great Controversy*,
 14 413).

15
 16 Can we also defend from Scripture the idea that Christ will no longer be our
 17 Mediator following the close of probation? The answer is Yes. Revelation 15:5-8
 18 describes a scene in the heavenly sanctuary that occurs immediately prior to the
 19 outpouring of the seven last plagues. Verse 5 shows the temple of God being opened; in
 20 verse 6 the angels with the seven last plagues emerge from the temple; in verse 7 one of
 21 the four living creatures gives these angels seven golden bowls filled with God’s wrath.
 22 Finally, verse 8 shows the temple of God “filled with smoke from the glory of God and
 23 from his power, and no one could enter the temple until the seven plagues of the seven
 24 angels were completed.” What do the words “no one” mean? Is Jesus included? Is
 25 Revelation telling us that Jesus Himself cannot enter the temple while the smoke from
 26 God’s glory fills the temple?

27 The imagery in verse 8 is drawn from several Old Testament passages. I will
 28 mention two, both having to do with the dedication of Solomon’s temple. The Bible says
 29 that when the ark of the Covenant was brought to the Most Holy Place, “the temple of the
 30 Lord was filled with a cloud, and *the priests could not perform their service* because of
 31 the cloud, for the glory of the Lord filled the temple of God” (2 Chronicles 5:13, 14,
 32 italics added). Again, following Solomon’s dedicatory prayer, “the glory of the Lord
 33 filled the temple. And *the priests could not enter the temple of the Lord* because the glory
 34 of the Lord filled it” (2 Chronicles 7:1, 2, italics added). A comparison of these two Old
 35 Testament passages with the description in Revelation makes it clear that Revelation is
 36 speaking of the close of probation:

37

Solomon’s Temple	God’s Temple in Heaven
● Is filled with a cloud (5:13)	● Is filled with smoke
● Is filled with God’s glory (5:14; 7:2)	● Is filled with God’s glory
● The priests cannot enter the temple (7:2)	● No one could enter the temple
● The priests cannot perform their	● Not mentioned, but I assume it

service	applies too
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My conclusion from this is that, just as the cloud and glory of God prevented the priests in the Old Testament type from entering Solomon’s temple to perform their service, so the smoke and glory of God will prevent Christ from performing His mediatorial ministry in Heaven’s temple. This is further evidence that probation will close shortly *before* rather than *at* the second coming of Christ.

Perfection and probation’s close

I mentioned in the introduction to this paper that Adventists have developed some unhealthy perfectionism out of our teaching about the close of probation. This is particularly due to the idea that there will be no Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary after the close of probation. In order to understand what it will be like to have no Mediator, we need to first consider what it means to have one. I’m sure the list below is quite incomplete, but it will suffice to make my point:

1. As our Mediator, Jesus continually sends His Holy Spirit throughout the world to influence those who are not His people to give their lives to Him, and He commissions the Spirit to transform the minds and hearts of those who surrender to Him. This transformation is called conversion.
2. As our Mediator, Jesus causes the Spirit to dwell in the minds and hearts of God’s people throughout their Christian life.
3. When His people confess their sins, our Heavenly Mediator writes “forgiven” beside the record of those sins in heaven’s record books.
4. As part of His mediatorial ministry, Jesus continually covers His people with the robe of His righteousness so that they appear sinless before God even though they still have many character defects.
5. Jesus our Mediator gives us power to overcome sin.
6. He responds to all the prayers of His people.
7. Jesus defends His people against Satan’s accusation that they are unworthy of salvation.

Let’s go over these various aspects of Christ’s mediatorial ministry again and ask one simple question about each of them: Will this benefit still be available after the close of probation?

1. *Influencing those who are not His people to surrender their lives to Him.* Will Jesus continue this activity after the close of probation? The answer is clearly No. When Jesus makes the solemn announcement “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, . . . and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11, KJV), every case will have been decided for life or death. There will be no more changing sides. Thus, the ones who need to fear the close of probation are the wicked, not the righteous, for the wicked will have missed their last opportunity to obtain eternal life.

1 2. *Indwelling the minds and hearts of His people.* I have heard some Adventists
2 express the fear that they will have to live without the presence of the Holy Spirit after
3 the close of probation. Fortunately, this is not true. Jesus told His disciples that when He
4 returned to heaven He would “ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to
5 be with you forever—the Spirit of truth” (John 14:18, 16, 17). Asking God to send the
6 Holy Spirit into the minds and hearts of His people is one of the important aspects of
7 Jesus’ intercessory ministry. And He said that the Spirit would be with His disciples—
8 and you and me—*Forever!* Also, in His Great Commission, Jesus promised His disciples,
9 “Surely I am with you *always*, to the very end of the age” (Matthew 28:20, italics added),
10 meaning His second coming. He did not say to His disciples, “I’ll be with you till the
11 close of probation, but between then and My second coming you’ll have to make it on
12 your own.” He said “I will be with you *until* my second coming.” Jesus would break this
13 promise if He were to remove His Holy Spirit from His people after the close of
14 probation!

15 Ellen White said that when Jesus “leaves the sanctuary, . . . the wicked have
16 passed the boundary of their probation; the Spirit of God, persistently resisted, has been
17 at last withdrawn” (*The Great Controversy*, 614). It’s the wicked who lose the Holy Spirit
18 after the close of probation, not the righteous.

19 3. *Forgiving sin.* We can be sure that there will be no forgiveness available for the
20 wicked after the close of probation, and the righteous may not need it. Why do I say *may*
21 not need it? There’s a fairly widespread understanding among Seventh-day Adventists
22 that God’s people will be perfect after the close of probation, which is usually understood
23 to mean that they will not sin. If this is true, then logically forgiveness won’t even be
24 necessary. We should be careful, though, about hastening too quickly to that conclusion.
25 Logic can sometimes get us in trouble when doing theology. Let’s just say that if God’s
26 people need forgiveness in any sense after the close of probation, it will surely be
27 available.

28 4. *Covering us with the robe of Christ’s righteousness.* Will Jesus remove the
29 robe of His righteousness from His people following the close of probation? Of course
30 not! As long as we are on this earth, even if we are living perfectly sinless lives, we will
31 need Christ’s righteousness to cover us. The idea that our own righteousness will be
32 sufficient following the close of probation is totally contrary to the gospel.

33 5. *Power to overcome sin.* Based on a perfectionist theology, some people may be
34 tempted to suppose that we won’t need God’s power to overcome sin after the close of
35 probation. Why would we need God’s power to overcome sin when we are no longer
36 sinning? That’s like asking why a car needs gasoline since the engine is already running.
37 If anything, because of the severity of the trials that will confront us during the time of
38 trouble we will need *more* of the Spirit’s power, not *less*.

39 6. *Responding to our prayers.* Does any Adventist seriously believe that the
40 cessation of Christ’s ministry in the heavenly sanctuary means that He won’t be
41 responding to the prayers of His saints during the time of trouble?

42 7. *Defending us against Satan’s accusations.* Revelation 12:10 describes Satan as
43 “the accuser of our brothers, who accuses them before our God day and night.”

44 Defending His people against these accusations is one of the most important functions of

1 Christ's mediatorial ministry, especially in its final phase during the judgment. And Jesus
2 will surely continue to defend His people against Satan's accusations during the time of
3 trouble. If anything, given the fact that Satan has such a very short time left, his
4 accusations will grow in intensity during the time of trouble, which will make Christ's
5 response to those accusations even more imperative than it is now.

6 There are no doubt other aspects of Christ's mediatorial ministry in the heavenly
7 sanctuary that we could talk about, but a careful examination of this list is enough to
8 make my point: *All the benefits that God's people receive from Christ's mediatorial*
9 *ministry today will still be available to them after the close of probation.* It's true that
10 Jesus won't be providing these benefits to us in His role as our Mediator. He will be
11 providing them in His role as our King. Nobody needs to be afraid of living without a
12 Mediator!

13 14 **Perfectionism**

15 Unfortunately, the idea that there will be no Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary
16 after the close of probation has caused some Seventh-day Adventists a great deal of
17 anxiety: They're afraid they may not be "good enough" to live without a Mediator. This
18 fear has arisen from certain extreme conclusions that some Adventists have drawn from
19 two statements by Ellen White in *The Great Controversy*:

20
21 Those who are living upon the earth when the intercession of
22 Christ shall cease in the sanctuary above are to stand in the sight of a holy
23 God without a mediator. Their robes must be spotless, their characters
24 must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling. Through the grace of
25 God and their own diligent effort they must be conquerors in the battle
26 with evil. While the investigative judgment is going forward in heaven,
27 while the sins of penitent believers are being removed from the sanctuary,
28 there is to be a special work of purification, of putting away of sin, among
29 God's people upon earth (*The Great Controversy*, 425).

30
31 Now, while our great High Priest is making the atonement for us,
32 we should seek to become perfect in Christ. Not even by a thought could
33 our Saviour be brought to yield to the power of temptation. Satan finds in
34 human hearts some point where he can gain a foothold; some sinful desire
35 is cherished, by means of which his temptations assert their power. But
36 Christ declared of Himself: "The prince of this world cometh, and hath
37 nothing in Me." John 14:30. Satan could find nothing in the Son of God
38 that would enable him to gain the victory. He had kept His Father's
39 commandments, and there was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his
40 advantage. This is the condition in which those must be found who shall
41 stand in the time of trouble (*The Great Controversy*, 623).

42
43 In the first statement Ellen White said that God's people who live during the time
44 of trouble must "stand in the sight of a holy God without a mediator. Their robes must be

1 spotless, their characters must be purified from sin by the blood of sprinkling.” In the
2 second statement she said that “not even by a thought could [Jesus] be brought to yield to
3 the power of temptation. . . . There was no sin in Him that Satan could use to his
4 advantage.” And then these ominous words: “This is the condition in which those must
5 be found who shall stand in the time of trouble.” So we will have to be *absolutely perfect*
6 in order to “live in the sight of a holy God without a Mediator.”

7 Some Adventists have carried this idea of an absolute end-time perfection to an
8 unfortunate extreme. I suspect that the idea began with A. T. Jones, though I have not
9 done the historical research that would be needed to verify that. What I can say with
10 some certainty is that the idea was most fully developed and articulated by M. L.
11 Andreasen, who was one of the most respected Adventist theologians of the twentieth
12 century. During his distinguished career Andreason served as a pastor, Bible teacher,
13 conference president, college president, and seminary professor. I do, however, disagree
14 strongly with his “final generation” theology. He spelled out that theology in his book
15 *The Sanctuary Service*. I will summarize his ideas, and then I will share with you some of
16 his statements.

17 Andreasen proposed that God has been waiting 6,000 years for a community of
18 saints who can demonstrate to the universe that His law can be kept by the very weakest
19 human being, and He will finally achieve that objective in the final generation.
20 Furthermore, this demonstration must be made before Jesus can return, because should it
21 not be made, Satan would be proven correct in his claim that God’s law cannot be kept,
22 and He would emerge victorious in the great controversy. However, God is fitting up a
23 people—the 144,000—to be sinlessly perfect ambassadors for Him during the time of
24 trouble, and by their perfect lives during the most intense time of distress the world has
25 ever known, they will prove that God’s law *can* be kept. Thus, they will disprove Satan’s
26 claim and thereby defeat him. This will vindicate God, and then Jesus can come. The
27 opening paragraph of Andreasen’s chapter “The Last Generation” introduces this view:

28
29 The final demonstration of what the gospel can do in and for
30 humanity is still in the future. Christ showed the way. He took a human
31 body, and in that body demonstrated the power of God. Men are to follow
32 His example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every
33 human being who submits to Him. The world is awaiting this
34 demonstration. (Rom. 8:19.) When it has been accomplished, the end will
35 come. God will have fulfilled His plan. He will have shown Himself true
36 and Satan a liar. His government will stand vindicated (*The Sanctuary*
37 *Service*, 299).

38
39 Here are two other statements in which Andreasen made a similar point:

40
41 Thus it shall be with the last generation of men living on the earth.
42 Through them God’s final demonstration of what He can do with
43 humanity will be given. He will take the weakest of the weak, those
44 bearing the sins of their forefathers, and in them show the power of God.

1 They will be subjected to every temptation, but they will not yield. They
2 will demonstrate that it is possible to live without sin—the very
3 demonstration for which the world has been looking and for which God
4 has been preparing. It will become evident to all that the gospel really can
5 save to the uttermost. God is found true in His sayings (Ibid., 302).

6
7 God will have in the last days a remnant, a “little flock,” in and
8 through whom He will give to the universe a demonstration of His love,
9 His power, His justice, which, if we exempt Christ’s godly life on earth
10 and His supreme sacrifice on Calvary, will be the most sweeping and
11 conclusive demonstration of all the ages of what God can do in men (Ibid.,
12 303).

13
14 In the first statement Andreasen said that “men are to follow His [Christ’s]
15 example and prove that what God did in Christ, He can do in every human being who
16 submits to Him”; and in the second statement he said that this final generation “will be
17 the most sweeping and conclusive demonstration of all the ages of what God can do in
18 men.” I don’t have a problem with the statement that God wants to prove that He can do
19 through every human being who submits to Him what He did in Christ, namely, bring
20 total victory over sin. I do have a problem with the idea that God will not achieve this in
21 any human being until the final generation that lives after the close of probation. While
22 God alone knows who they are, there have almost certainly been many examples of this
23 perfection during the millenniums of Judeo-Christian history.

24 Andreasen also said that “the world is awaiting this demonstration.” I don’t think
25 so, if by “the world,” we are to understand nonbelievers. The world *hates* the perfection
26 of believers. John said that Cain killed his brother Abel “because his [Cain’s] own actions
27 were evil and his brothers were righteous” (1 John 3:12). Andreasen refers to Romans
28 8:19 to support his view that “the world is awaiting this demonstration,” but that verse
29 says only that “the creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be
30 revealed.” Paul understood “sons of God” to be all Christians, not just the final
31 generation of saints who achieve sinless perfection.

32 In the second statement above Andreasen said that through this final generation of
33 saints “it will become evident to all that the gospel really can save to the uttermost. God
34 is found true in His sayings.” Andreasen alludes here to Hebrews 7:25, which says that
35 Jesus is “able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him” (KJV).
36 However, even a casual reading of Hebrews makes it clear that *every* Christian in *every*
37 generation is a demonstration that God is able to save to the uttermost those who come to
38 Him through Christ.

39 Andreasen claims that it is up to the final generation to defeat Satan. Here is what
40 he says:

41
42 In the last generation God is vindicated and *Satan defeated* (Ibid.,
43 303, 304, italics added).
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1 [Satan] had failed in his conflict with Christ, but he might yet
2 succeed with men. So he went to “make war with the remnant of her seed,
3 which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus
4 Christ.” Rev. 12:17. *If he could overcome them he might not be defeated*
5 (Ibid., 310, italics added).
6

7 Through the last generation of saints God stands finally vindicated.
8 *Through them He defeats Satan and wins His case.* They form a vital part
9 of the plan of God (Ibid., 319, italics added).
10

11 I have a *major* problem with the idea that God will not defeat Satan until the final
12 generation demonstrates their loyalty to His law. *Jesus already defeated Satan by His life*
13 *and by His death!* John proclaimed:
14

15 “Now have come the salvation and the power and the kingdom of
16 our God and the authority of his Christ. For the accuser of our brothers,
17 who accuses them before our God day and night *has been hurled down*”
18 (Revelation 12:10, italics added).
19

20 *Satan was defeated at the cross.* It was *Jesus’* perfect life that defeated Satan once
21 and for all. He doesn’t need to be defeated again by the final generation. *Jesus*
22 demonstrated that God’s law can be kept, and once He made that demonstration the battle
23 was won. *Jesus* demonstrated Satan’s claims to be false. There’s nothing left for the final
24 generation to prove. *Jesus* vindicated God. The final generation doesn’t have to.

25 Or, perhaps it would be more correct to say that *every generation of saints*
26 *vindicates God before the universe.* Paul said that “through the church the manifold
27 wisdom of God [is] made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms”
28 (Ephesians 3:10). He said that “we”—he and his fellow apostles—“have been made a
29 spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men” (1 Corinthians 4:9). Every
30 generation of Christians is a demonstration to the universe of what the gospel can do in
31 human hearts. However, note that neither of the two verses I just quoted says that we
32 humans vindicate God. While there may be some limited ways in which our lives can do
33 that, the *only* person who vindicated God for the purpose of bringing the plan of salvation
34 to a close was Jesus.

35 The idea that Satan will not be defeated until the final generation proves their
36 loyalty to God by perfect obedience to His law puts the burden on sinful human beings to
37 complete the plan of salvation, and *I have a huge problem with that!* Jesus is the *only* One
38 on whom God placed the responsibility to defeat Satan. Jesus’ righteousness is the *only*
39 righteousness and His obedience is the *only* obedience that could defeat Satan. To say
40 that God must await the righteousness of the final generation to defeat Satan is to make
41 *our* righteousness effective in bringing the plan of salvation to a final conclusion, and
42 *that simply cannot be true.* Jesus’ righteousness is the only righteousness that could
43 accomplish that. If God must await the righteousness of the final generation to defeat

1 Satan and complete the plan of salvation, then Jesus' life and death were inadequate, and
2 again, *that simply cannot be true.*

3 Finally, Andreason suggests that after the close of probation the Holy Spirit will
4 be removed from God's people, and they will have to battle the powers of darkness on
5 their own:

6
7 God's people in the last days will pass through an experience
8 similar to Job's. They will be tested as he was; they will have every
9 earthly stay removed; Satan will be given permission to torment them. In
10 addition to this the Spirit of God will be withdrawn from the earth, and the
11 protection of earthly governments removed. God's people will be left
12 alone to battle with the powers of darkness (Ibid., 314, 315).

13
14 The idea that after the close of probation God will remove His Spirit from His
15 people, leaving them to battle Satan alone, is *simply not true.* It is the wicked who will
16 suffer the loss of His presence. I shared with you Ellen White's statement in *The Great*
17 *Controversy* in which she said that it is the *wicked* from whom the Holy Spirit is removed
18 following the close of probation, not the righteous. It is strange theology indeed that
19 suggests on the one hand that victory over sin is impossible without the aid of the Holy
20 Spirit and on the other hand that the final generation must live perfect lives *without* the
21 presence of the Spirit!

22 In preparing this paper, I took the time to read through Ellen White's chapter in
23 *The Great Controversy* on "The Time of Trouble." This chapter covers the entire period
24 during which Andreason's final generation of saints will live; and, with the exception of
25 the first page of the following chapter, it is the only chapter in the entire book that deals
26 with any part of this time. And the point is this: Not once in her chapter on the time of
27 trouble did Ellen White give the faintest suggestion that God's people who live during the
28 time of trouble must vindicate God, must defeat Satan, or must make a demonstration of
29 perfect obedience to the universe. There is not the slightest hint that God is waiting on
30 them to accomplish anything to bring the plan of salvation or the great controversy to a
31 close. The emphasis, rather, is their total dependence on God to make it through that
32 fearful time without yielding their faith.

33 I will also point out that God's people will be *sealed* after the close of probation.
34 While I don't understand all that this implies, it apparently closes up their characters in
35 such a way that they cannot be changed, and therefore they will not sin. That being the
36 case, it hardly makes sense to say that God has been waiting thousands of years for a
37 generation of saints to demonstrate a point that only the final generation will have the
38 sealing experience to demonstrate.

39
40 **How to think about end-time perfection**

41 One of the functions of the Holy Spirit's ministry on our behalf is to convict us of
42 sin. Paul said that we should "examine [ourselves] to see whether [we] are in the faith (2
43 Corinthians 13:5). And Ellen White said, "To men whom God designs shall fill
44 responsible positions, He in mercy reveals hidden defects, that they may look within and

1 examine critically the complicated emotions and exercises of their own hearts, and detect
2 that which is wrong” (*Counsels to the Church*, 54). We should always be proactive in
3 asking God to show us the defects in our character that keep us from reflecting the image
4 of Jesus.

5 However, the Christian knows that even as he examines himself, he is covered
6 with the robe of Christ’s righteousness, so that he stands perfect in God’s sight even
7 though he still has many character defects. Thus, while he wants to learn all he can about
8 developing a character like Christ’s, he doesn’t have to be anxious that his acceptance by
9 God depends on his success in carrying out this exercise.

10 Perfectionism is an obsession with being perfect, the looking within carried to an
11 anxious extreme. Perfectionists tend to worry that they aren’t acceptable to God unless
12 they are absolutely perfect. Perfectionism takes one’s eyes off of Jesus and puts them
13 onto self.

14 I like to compare the search for perfection to the search for happiness. Some of
15 the most miserable people in the world are those who are constantly trying to be happy.
16 Unfortunately, people who are searching for happiness tend to search for it in all the
17 wrong places: alcohol, drugs, night clubs, illicit sex, violent video games and movies,
18 unhealthful eating and drinking, and on and on. The way to find happiness is to forget
19 about happiness and do the things that lead to happiness: Serving others, developing a
20 hobby, spending time with friends and family, and, of course, cultivating a relationship
21 with Jesus through Bible study, prayer, and other devotional activities.

22 Similarly, perfection doesn’t come by searching for it. Some of the most
23 miserable Adventists are those who are constantly trying to be perfect. In a very real
24 sense, perfection comes by forgetting about perfection and simply doing the things that
25 lead to perfection of character. And that list looks surprisingly like the list of things that
26 lead to happiness: Serving others, developing a hobby, spending time with friends and
27 family, and, of course, cultivating a relationship with Jesus through Bible study, prayer,
28 and other devotional activities.

29 A major problem with perfectionism is that it’s reaching for an indefinable goal.
30 We can give a theological definition to perfection: It means to be without sin. But there is
31 no meaningful way we can know when we have reached that lofty estate. In fact, the
32 Bible cautions us that we shouldn’t even try to figure out when we are perfect. In chapter
33 1:8 of his first epistle, John said, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and
34 the truth is not in us.” We can say, then, that we will never know when we have reached
35 perfection and we cannot claim perfection. I assume that the events associated with the
36 seven last plagues will cause God’s people to realize that probation has closed. However,
37 they will not claim to be perfect. To the contrary, speaking of God’s people at that time,
38 Ellen White said that “their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good.
39 They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness” (*The Great Controversy*,
40 618, 619). God’s people will feel very *imperfect* after the close of probation, and they
41 certainly won’t be claiming to *be* perfect.

42 Fortunately, Jesus knows how perfect we will need to be in order to live without a
43 Mediator after the close of probation. Therefore, we don’t have to know. Jesus guarantees
44 to get us as good as we need to be for the close of probation. Our responsibility is to ask

1 Him to reveal to us the defects in our characters, and with His help work on overcoming
2 them. Our responsibility is to rest in His justification that counts us perfect even in our
3 imperfection, recognizing that we will need that justification after the close of probation
4 just as much as we do now. Our responsibility is to recognize that God knows how
5 perfect we must be in order to live without a Mediator after the close of probation, and
6 then trust that He won't close probation's door until we are ready.
7 And when we understand that, we'll be able to anticipate the close of probation
8 without going crazy.