

the
REFORMATION

herald

Vol. 58, No. 5

The
Patience
of the
Saints



PATIENCE

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 58, Number 5

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Freedom of CHOICE



From the very beginning God gave the human race power to choose between right and wrong, obedience and rebellion, life and death. To the first couple, He said: “Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16, 17).

There are some interesting points to be considered in this Scripture:

1. God said that they could eat **freely** of every tree of the garden. Here is true freedom—found in obedience to God.

2. On the other hand, God did not prevent Adam from eating of the forbidden fruit but revealed to him the consequence of disobedience.

One well-known preacher has called freedom of choice a “terrible freedom”—full of consequences. Indeed, we should always think carefully before making a decision, especially when it could potentially involve something contrary to God’s will. It’s vitally important to make wise use of our freedom of choice.

To Cain and Abel was also given freedom to choose between following God’s instruction regarding true worship *vs.* doing their own will. Abel chose the first, Cain the second. We know very well the consequence of each choice.

Before entering the promised land, Moses conveyed two options to Israel: “I have set before you life and death,

blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live” (Deuteronomy 30:19). We can choose either life or death, but the Lord strongly advises us to choose life. This is a very intelligent choice.

Just before his death, Joshua invited Israel to renew their vow to obey the Lord. He said to them: “If it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15). Joshua made it clear that those gods of Canaan could not keep their land. But Israel was free to choose.

During the great apostasy in the time of king Ahab, Elijah, God’s messenger, put two options before the people: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him” (1 King 18:21).

Before that day, Israel had suffered for three and a half years because they trusted in Baal. What would be the intelligent choice? But they were free to choose Baal and suffer the terrible consequences.

In Matthew 7:13, 14, Christ placed before His hearers two ways, explaining the sure results of either: “Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat: Because

strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Also in this regard, Christ strongly recommends us to enter in at the strait gate. But we are free to choose which way we want to follow: life or death.

During World War I, the Seventh Day Adventist people had to choose between

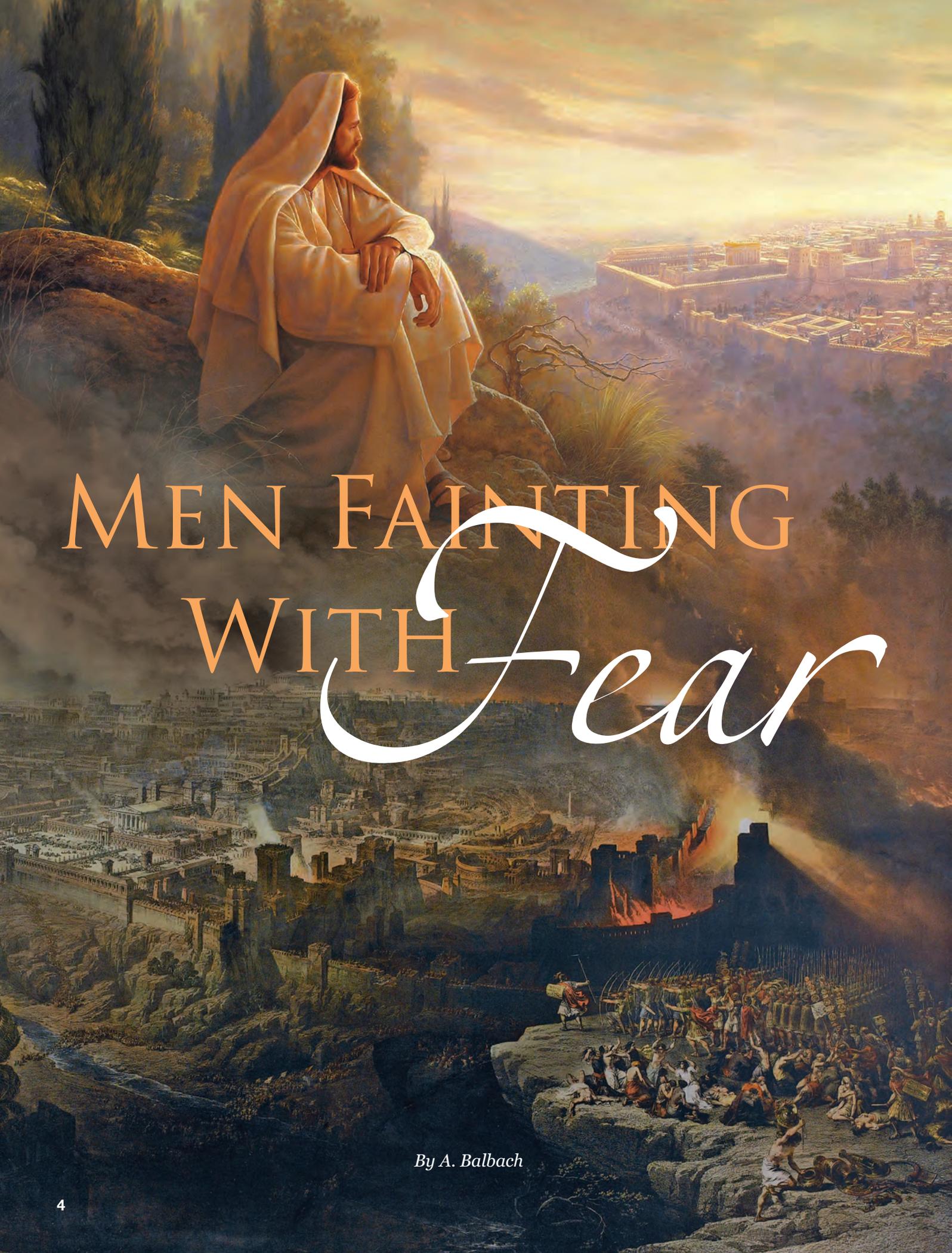
- Obeying God and suffering oppression and persecution from the country, or
- Obeying the civil authorities and suffering the displeasure of God.

A small remnant, by God’s grace, chose to obey the Ten Commandments of God’s law, and these were disfellowshipped from the church they loved and persecuted by the authorities. This faithful stand resulted in the beginning of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement.

Under the preaching of the third angel’s message, everyone will choose between

- Receiving the sign of God and suffering the persecution of the civil and religious authorities, or
- Receiving the mark of the beast and suffering the seven last plagues. (See Revelation 13, the whole chapter, and 14:9–13).

Which way shall we choose? Only by God’s grace we can choose the right path and be faithful to the Lord. *R*



MEN FAINTING WITH *Fear*

By A. Balbach

The fall of ancient Jerusalem

Before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, there was much fear among the people of Judah. Jeremiah wrote:

“Thus saith the Lord, Behold, a people cometh from the north country, and a great nation shall be raised from the sides of the earth. They shall lay hold on bow and spear; they are cruel, and have no mercy; their voice roareth like the sea; and they ride upon horses, set in array as men for war against thee, O daughter of Zion. We have heard the fame thereof: our hands wax feeble: anguish hath taken hold of us, and pain, as of a woman in travail. Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and fear is on every side” (Jeremiah 6:22–25).

The people directed their eyes to Babylon, whose expansionist program was involving nation after nation. And it was evident that the days of Judah and of its capital city, Jerusalem, were numbered. But were the Jews able to identify their real enemies? No. Their greatest danger was in their midst. Nations, families, and individuals allow themselves to be destroyed by their internal enemies, their unsolved problems.

The prophecy of Jeremiah was finally fulfilled. The fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity were caused by:

1. Their refusal to repent at the call of the prophets.
2. Their loss of moral strength due to their apostasy, and their lack of interest in working for the conversion of those who lived all around them.
3. Their political alliances with idolatrous nations.

The prophet specified their guilt in these words:

“Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? nay, they were not at all ashamed, neither could they blush: therefore they shall fall among them that fall: at the time that I visit them they shall be cast down, saith the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is

the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein. Also I set watchmen over you, saying, Harken to the sound of the trumpet. But they said, We will not hearken. Therefore hear, ye nations, and know, O congregation, what is among them. Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it” (Jeremiah 6:15–19). The Babylonian captivity lasted seventy years (605–536 B.C.).

In the first century after Christ

Several hundred years later, again, there was much fear among the Jewish people prior to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman armies (A.D. 70). At that time the religious authorities hired false prophets to calm down the inhabitants of the city through a “peace and safety” message. Many held fast to the presumptuous belief that the Lord would protect Jerusalem through a miracle. Among others, however, there was growing fear.

“Signs and wonders appeared, foreboding disaster and doom. In the midst of the night an unnatural light shone over the temple and the altar. Upon the clouds at sunset were pictured chariots and men of war gathering for battle. The priests ministering by night in the sanctuary were terrified by mysterious sounds; the earth trembled, and a multitude of voices were heard crying: ‘Let us depart hence.’ The great eastern gate, which was so heavy that it could hardly be shut by a score of men, and which was secured by immense bars of iron fastened deep in the pavement of solid stone, opened at midnight, without visible agency. . . .

“For seven years, a man continued to go up and down the streets of Jerusalem, declaring the woes that were to come upon the city. . . . This strange being was imprisoned and scourged, but no complaint escaped his lips. To insult and abuse he answered only, ‘Woe, woe to Jerusalem!’ ‘woe, woe to the

inhabitants thereof!’ His warning cry ceased not until he was slain in the siege he had foretold.”¹

The Jews feared and hated the Romans, but their most dangerous enemy was in their own hearts, in their minds, in their attitudes, in their actions. They had chosen to serve the devil, who became their father (John 8:44), and, of course, they could not hide the evidence of their wrong choice.

“Men did not reason; they were beyond reason—controlled by impulse and blind rage. They became satanic in their cruelty. . . . Satan was at the head of the nation.”²

If the trunk of a tree is worm-eaten, a strong wind will easily cause it to collapse. So, while the Jews feared the external enemy (the Romans), there were those who feared the internal enemy (their moral and spiritual decadence) as the main cause of the expected calamity. With reference to the “holy city,” which could be compared to a stem full of wormholes, Jesus prophesied its destruction (which took place in the year A.D. 70).

“When [Jesus] was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it, saying, If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another; because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation” (Luke 19:41–44).

What about us today?

History teaches that it is wise to learn lessons from the past. In our days, also, there is growing fear among the nations. “Men’s hearts [are] failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). Men of intellect say that the future of the world seems uncertain. Some admit that it looks ominous. Many doomsaying books are calling our

attention to a number of events that trend toward a global disaster.

Population growth, dwindling farmlands, soil depletion, changing weather patterns, environmental disasters, energy shortage, economic crises, and the threat of nuclear wars are haunting the intellectual classes with terrible nightmares.

“Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority . . . are watching the relations that exist among the nations. They . . . recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.”³

“Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not

rise again. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall punish the host of the high ones that are on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth” (Isaiah 24:17–21).

According to a Bible commentator, in ancient Israel, “fear” was a device set up to scare away birds and animals that would destroy crops. It was a stick with many cords with feathers of all colors attached to them. When they fluttered in the air, they would scare beasts into the pitfall and birds into the snare. Whether in the days of old or in our days, the symbolic application should be understood.

Today the “fear” caused by the fluttering cords of motley feathers could be compared to the problems of the growing worldwide crisis. And as the leading men and women of the day seek solutions without being able to come to an understanding, they make it worse for the suffering human race. Millions of people are perishing as a result of wars, terrorism, genocides, diseases, and famine. The leaders of the nations seem to stand helpless before a serious crisis which is growing day by day.

Politicians cannot stop the crises. Religious leaders and philosophers cannot either. The men and women

of science are unable to prevent it. And people ask: Where is God? Why doesn't He help us out of this difficult situation? Listen to His answer:

“Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save; neither his ear heavy, that it cannot hear: but your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear. For your hands are defiled with blood, and your fingers with iniquity; your lips have spoken lies, your tongue hath muttered perverseness. None calleth for justice, nor any pleadeth for truth: they trust in vanity, and speak lies; they conceive mischief, and bring forth iniquity” (Isaiah 59:1–4).

As it happened in the past, so it is today. People cannot identify their real enemies. The great majority are blind to the fact that their greatest danger is in the way they think and act. “The whole world lieth in wickedness” (1 John 5:19). Satan has become “the prince of this world” (John 14:30) because men have “voted” for him. So they have to take the consequences of their choice.

In referring to the climax of the growing international crisis, the apostle Paul addresses this last



generation of Christians, saying:

“But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you [by surprise] as a thief.” “For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape” (1 Thessalonians 5:4, 3). “For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries” (Hebrews 10:26, 27).

That will be a fearful time when “the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity” (Isaiah 26:21). When the door of mercy is closed (Matthew 7:22, 23; 25:10–12; Luke 13:23–27; 17:28–30), those who are without God and without hope will not have a second chance.

“Satan will then plunge the inhabitants of the earth into one great, final trouble. As the angels of God cease to hold in check the fierce winds of human passion, all the elements of strife will be let loose. The whole world will be involved in ruin more terrible than that which came upon Jerusalem of old.”⁴

“Proclaim ye this among the Gentiles; prepare war. . . . Beat your plowshares into swords. . . . Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen. . . . Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for **their wickedness is great**. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near. . . . The Lord also shall roar out of Zion . . . ; the heavens and the earth shall shake: but the Lord will be the hope of his people” (Joel 3:9–16, emphasis added).

While men are fainting with fear (Luke 21:26), there will be a little remnant who will not fear. In one of his prophetic psalms, king David placed himself among them, saying: “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains

be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psalm 46:1, 2).

Fear is the result of disobedience to God (Genesis 3:9–11; Leviticus 26:3, 6; Job 11:14, 15), while absence of fear comes through reconciliation with God (Psalm 27:1; Isaiah 12:2; Romans 8:31). If we have the assurance of sins forgiven (Psalm 32:1–7), we will not be afraid, because we will be under God’s protection in the day of trouble.

“For, behold, the Lord cometh out of his place to punish the inhabitants of the earth for their iniquity: the earth also shall disclose her blood, and shall no more cover her slain.” Therefore, He invites us: “Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26:21, 20).

“What are the chambers in which [His people] are to hide?—They are the protection of Christ and holy angels. . . . Everyone must stand the test for himself.”⁵

At the coming of Christ there will be only two classes of people on this earth—those who, for lack of protection, will be fainting with fear (Revelation 6:15–17), and those who will have the promised protection and will therefore be singing with joy (Isaiah 25:9).

Today, while the door of opportunity is still open, every human being is deciding his or her destiny.

“To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:7, 8). *R*

References

- ¹ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 29, 30.
- ² *Ibid.*, pp. 28, 29.
- ³ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 537.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy*, p. 614.
- ⁵ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1143.

“HE CARETH”

What can it mean? Is it aught to Him
That the nights are long and the days are dim?
Can He be touched by the griefs I bear,
Which sadden the heart and whiten the hair?
Abut His throne are eternal calms,
And strong, glad music of happy psalms,
And bliss, unruffled by ay strife—
How can He care for my little life?

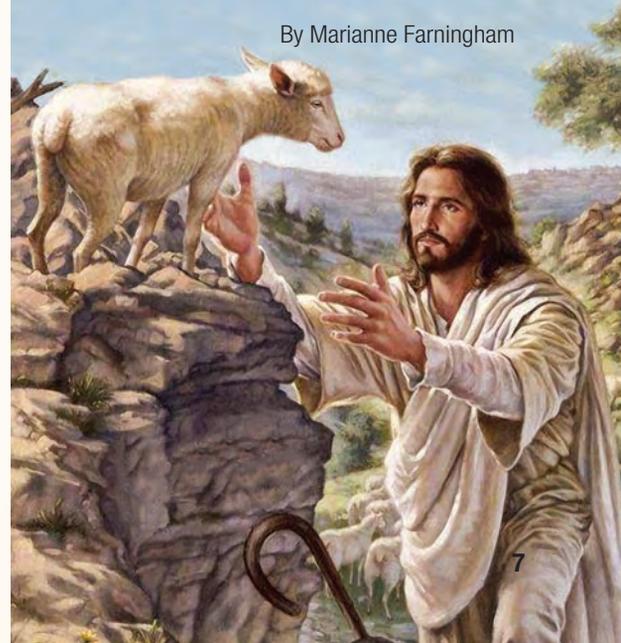
And yet I want Him to care for me
While I live in this world where the sorrows be!
When the lights die down from the path I take,
When strength is feeble, and friends forsake,
When love and music that once did bless
Have left me to silence and loneliness,
And my life-song changes to sobbing prayers—
Then my heart cries out for a God who cares.

When shadows hang over the whole day long,
And my spirit is bowed with shame and wrong,
When I am not good, and the deeper shade
Of conscious sin makes my heart afraid,
And the busy world has too much to do
To stay in its courses to help me through,
And I long for a Saviour—can it be
That the God of the universe cares for me?

Oh, wonderful story of deathless love!
Each child is dear to that Heart above;
He fights for me when I cannot fight,
He comforts me in the gloom of night,
He lifts the burden, for He is strong,
He stills the sigh, and awakes the song;
The sorrow that bowed me down He bears,
And loves and pardons because He cares!

Let all who are sad take heart again,
We are not alone in our hours of pain;
Our Father stoops from His throne above
To soothe and quiet us with His love;
He leaves us not when the storm is high,
And we have safety, for He is nigh.
Can it be trouble which He doth share?
Oh, rest in peace, for the Lord will care!

By Marianne Farningham



HEAVEN

Begins Now



*Compiled from the Bible, and the Spirit of Prophecy with comments by
Nathan Tyler. Emphasis supplied throughout.*

Heaven's law

How can the whole law be summarized? A lawyer once asked Jesus, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36–40).

"The **law condemns all sin**, and **requires all virtue**. It **demands** of man an **outward respect**, and it **requires purity of soul**."¹

"Thou shalt not kill." Sins pertaining to this commandment include murder, violence, suicide, war, hatred, racism, intemperance, overwork.

Virtues reflecting the opposite include the protection and preservation of life, temperance, self-care, healthful living, care for the poor and homeless, and to visit the sick and those in prison.

"Thou shalt not steal." Sins pertaining to this commandment include theft, robbery, slavery, extortion, conquest, dishonesty. Virtues reflecting the opposite include protecting property, helping others, giving, and exercising generosity and hospitality.

How does heaven operate? "Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee" (Nehemiah 9:6).

"The will of God is expressed in the precepts of His holy law, and the principles of this law are the principles of heaven. . . .

"But in heaven, service is not rendered in the spirit of legality. . . . In their ministry the angels are not as servants, but as sons. There is perfect unity between them and their Creator."²

What will be the basis of the judgment? "Then shall the King say

unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me" (Matthew 25:34–40).

Heaven's children

What challenge does Jesus present to us? "For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

"The **Jews held that God loved those who served Him**—according to their view, those who fulfilled the requirements of the rabbis,—and that **all the rest of the world lay under His frown and curse**."³

"The **Jews had been wearily toiling to reach perfection by their own efforts**, and they **had failed**. Christ had **already told them that their righteousness could never enter the kingdom of heaven**."⁴

What is Jesus' well-known statement about perfection? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

"The **conditions of eternal life**, under grace, are just what they were in Eden—**perfect righteousness, harmony with God**, perfect conformity to the principles of His law."⁵

What example does the Father give us? "**That ye may be the children of**

your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:45).

"**God is love**. Like **rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures**. It is **His nature to give**. His **very life** is the **outflow of unselfish love**."⁶

How can we fulfill God's law? "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law**" (Romans 13:8).

What opportunity has God given us to demonstrate love? "If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for **he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?**" (1 John 4:20).

What is the essence of true religion? "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To **visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction**, and to **keep himself unspotted from the world**" (James 1:27).

"**We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity**; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. . . . Then the **pity and compassion of Christ** will be **manifest in our life**. . . . **It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good**."⁷

What is the content of Christ's command to "be perfect"? "Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Matthew 5:43–45).

"**To be kind to the unthankful** and to the **evil**, to **do good hoping for nothing** again, is the **insignia**

of the royalty of heaven, the sure token by which the children of the Highest reveal their high estate."⁸

How is it possible to prepare to enter heaven? "By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him: for **before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God**" (Hebrews 11:5).

"The completeness of Christian character is attained when the impulse to help and bless others springs constantly from within.

It is the atmosphere of this love surrounding the soul of the believer that makes him a savor of life unto life and enables God to bless his work."⁹

What does Jesus want us to do? "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (John 15:10).

What commandment was He talking about? "This is my commandment, That ye love one another, as I have loved you" (verse 12).

"Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, 'Love one another, as I have loved you' (John 15:12); **when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished.** We are **fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts.**"¹⁰

Heaven's rest

What did God promise to Israel going into Canaan? "And he said, My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (Exodus 33:14).

What is meant by this "rest"? "But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when he giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that ye dwell in safety" (Deuteronomy 12:10).

What happened to those who did not believe? "For he is our God; and

we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: Unto whom I sware in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest" (Psalm 95:7-11).

Why were they not able to enter God's rest? "For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief" (Hebrews 3:16-19).

Was the promise fulfilled in the day of Joshua? "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned. But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city" (Hebrews 11:13-16).

What about us? "Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless" (2 Peter 3:13, 14).

How does this challenge us? "Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it" (Hebrews 4:1).

What is Jesus' invitation and promise? "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28).

What will He do for us? "And the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and assurance for ever. And my people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places" (Isaiah 32:17, 18).

How do we receive peace? "Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee" (Isaiah 26:3).

"Those who **take Christ at His word, and surrender their souls to His keeping, their lives to His ordering, will find peace and quietude.** Nothing of the world can make them sad when Jesus makes them glad by His presence. **In perfect acquiescence there is perfect rest.** . . .

"As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and **in thus coming we begin the life eternal.**"¹¹

Heaven is here

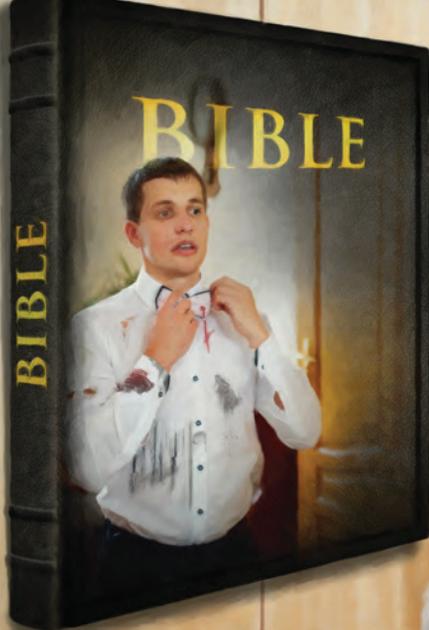
How do we appear to the world around us? "Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men" (2 Corinthians 3:2).

"In every one of His children, Jesus sends a letter to the world."¹²

"When God's people open the door of the heart to His love, the light of His glory will be revealed in their work, as we have not yet seen it."¹³ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Review and Herald*, February 26, 1901.
- ² *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 109.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- ⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 384, 385.
- ⁸ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 75.
- ⁹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 551.
- ¹⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 641.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 331.
- ¹² *Steps to Christ*, p. 115.
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“Thus Saith the Lord”

By Joseph Clarke

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth; for in these things I delight, saith the Lord” (Jeremiah 9:23, 24). See also 1 Corinthians 1:31; 2 Corinthians 10:17.

When the disciples came to Jesus with joy because the devils were subject to them through His name, He confirmed to them this and still greater power, but He warned them thus: “Notwithstanding in this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you; but rather rejoice, because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). Christ would guard His followers against pride, and here He gives to them a thought to occupy their minds when they were tempted to glory in the power they had received from Him; not to rejoice in this power as it might lead to vainglory.

In both of these lessons, one from Jeremiah, the other from the precepts of our Lord, we behold the very same principle, a warning against pride, and a cure for pride, or a preventive for the vice; for truly pride may very properly be called a vice. All that may possibly lead to pride we should studiously avoid. There is a beautiful feature in a lesson given in this way. Instead of forbidding pride, and leaving the learner so, the teacher gives a

complete, a radical, and specific remedy. When we are pleased because of powers granted to us, or we are self-complacently joyous in possession of gifts from God, we may well be on our guard, and cease to be joyous on these accounts; but we should not wholly cease to be joyous but should rejoice for a different reason; that is, that God is altogether and in all respects a good and just and holy being, and that we are safe and all our interests are safe in His hands, and that He will continue to favor us with His good Spirit and bring us finally to His own inheritance.

It is natural for people to glory in something. This is a world of sorrow, and we all need something to brace up the spirit against the constant wear and friction of life. And this is what brings out character—the motive. If we lean on our gifts, the same thing as rejoicing and glorying in them, we are on a sandy foundation. We are duty-bound to be thoroughly grateful to God for gifts, whether they are mental or material; but here is the point: We may not safely lean upon them, that is, to glory in them, or rejoice in them, for they are only gifts, but we may rejoice in the Giver and in the promised inheritance of the saints.

Such glorying and rejoicing is infinitely above the other, in purity and excellence, and its tendency is to elevate the mind, while self-complacent and selfish joys tend to lower the standard and, in the end, to degrade the mind.

To understand and know about God will cause us to long for that purity of the heart which will bring us into a closer communion with Him, and that will not rest content until we are sure that our sins are washed away in the blood of Christ; and then we will feel the obligation to depart from all iniquity.

Whether we view His work through the microscope, which reveals His skill in the minutest of His works, or through the telescope, which peers far out in the ocean of space to other systems of worlds and suns, we are deeply impressed with the wisdom, power, and skill of the Creator; but all this is not to compare with the consideration that the infinite Creator possesses a character such as revealed in Christ, who is “the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person” (Hebrews 1:3).

After all we may learn of the character and works of God in this world, it is only as through a glass darkly, as we shade the eye to view the sun. But we see all we need to make us thoughtful, humble, reverent, and pure. We see enough to keep us from unbelief and sin; enough to encourage us to labor and devotion to His truth; but our knowledge of the infinite power and wisdom and love of God will continue to increase as we continue to grow in grace and in the love of God. Throughout the ages upon ages of eternity, His perfections will be a continual joy and admiration and surprise to the ransomed host. *R*



The Dignity of **Self- Government**

By Gerson Robles

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

Original freedom

Freedom is a human right and it is a God-given right. People are free **only** when they can choose to do as they please. But whenever our choices affect others, there are limits. In the Bible, these limits are the restrictions of the law of God. True freedom, then, is self-control or self-government according to the will of God. This is the ultimate type of freedom.

Our ability to self-govern, however, has been seriously hindered. One of the effects of the original apostasy is seen in the loss of our power of self-government. Sometimes we lose our temper. Sometimes we cannot control what we eat. Sometimes we cannot control how we feel. The struggle of the man in Romans chapter 7 is a perfect example of that.

Sin-bound

When sin entered the world through Adam, a state of sin entered

the human race and sin then seized the reins of government. Judgment, reason, and conscience were dethroned, and the lusts of sin then took control. The human race became a slave to sinful lusts. Each new individual born into the human race is born into a family that is dominated by sin. All are born into slavery. All have a death sentence hanging over them.

“Wherefore, as by one man **sin entered into the world**, and death by sin; and so **death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned**” (Romans 5:12).

“For of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in **bondage**” (2 Peter 2:19).

Freedom restored

This is why Christ came to set us free. He came “**to preach deliverance to the captives . . . to set at liberty them that are bruised**” (Luke 4:18). The whole purpose of Christ’s sacrifice upon the cross is to restore

to humanity the dignity of freedom. To restore to us the dignity of self-government.

In Philippians 2:12, 13, Paul shows how God is restoring this power of self-government in you and me. He writes, “. . . **Work out your own salvation** with fear and trembling. For it is **God which worketh in you**, both to **will and to do** of his good pleasure.”

Some might say that true freedom is self-government, full stop, period—without the need to live in reference to the will of God. But I prefer to get my definition of freedom from the scriptures. Where do we see an example of true freedom in the Bible? Right in Genesis.

Before there ever was anything known in this world as captivity, there was freedom. Before ever there was sin, there was freedom from sin. Freedom from disease. Freedom from all corruption.

In Eden we see our first parents tasting of freedom in its highest sense.

We see Adam and Eve endowed with the power to self-govern. They were free to do as they pleased. This is the power of the individual. The power to think, choose, and do. Adam and Eve were free in themselves and by themselves, as individuals, to think, choose, and do. But in this freedom to self-govern, we also see them made subject to law:

“And the Lord God **commanded** the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest **freely eat**: but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, **thou shalt not eat of it**: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die” (Genesis 2:16, 17).

So, our first parents possessed a freedom within the boundary of a law. That law is called “the law of liberty” (James 2:12). The fact that Adam and Eve were made subject to this law did not undermine their freedom. God created the human race with the freedom whether to choose Him or not. And He gives us this same power. We have the ability to do whatever we please, whether it pleases God or not.

As we read through the narrative of Genesis, it becomes obvious that with this power to self-govern, there was the possibility for Adam and Eve to disobey. However, God imposed consequences to disobedience. He said, “in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.”

Some will say, “Come on, it was only a little fruit—why didn’t God just let them eat it and let things carry on as they were before? Why all this suffering? Why no longer free?”

Freedom has limits

What was at stake here was not a fruit but the government of God. If He created me to do as I please, you to do as you please, and others to do as they please without any boundaries, then at some point our pleasing will collide and eventually there will be a state of anarchy (freedom from government).

But some will say, “Yes, but freedom from government today is a bad thing because we have evil people around. If you let them loose, we’re all doomed. But freedom

from government when everyone is perfect—can that be such a bad thing?”

Remember, this has already happened. In heaven, everything **was** perfect. All the angels of God lived in perfect freedom. But they were also free while they were in subjection to God as creatures to their Creator. Lucifer, however, began to entertain another concept of freedom. A freedom that would make him subject to nothing, to nobody, not even to God. Where would Lucifer’s freedom take him? What did he desire?

“For thou hast said in thine heart, . . . **I will exalt my throne above the stars of God**: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; **I will be like the most High**” (Isaiah 14:13, 14).

Lucifer’s freedom would ultimately drive him to depose God Himself from off His throne. He was dissatisfied with the position of subordination that God gave him. That position was given to him within the order of God’s perfect government. But God was not going to let Lucifer’s desire to be free of government to destroy the order of the universe. Eventually, when the order and stability of God’s government was threatened, it had to be met in actual conflict.

“And **there was war in heaven**: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven” (Revelation 12:7, 8).

So the freedom that claims no restrictions of government is actually anarchy. It is a threat to peace, stability, and order in God’s society. It doesn’t work, and it only results in certain destruction.

Freedom and social relations

When God made all things, He made all things relational. What do we see in the solar system? The balance of planets with the sun demonstrates a relationship between them all. What do we see in nature and in the animal and plant kingdoms? The dependence of trees,

plants, and animal species on each other demonstrates a relationship. For example, plants help to provide oxygen in the place of carbon dioxide in the air; and people and animals help provide carbon dioxide in the place of oxygen in the air. What do we see in the original man and woman? A clear and divinely ordered relationship between plants, animals, humans, and God. It was a society built upon love. And although there is an element of sin in the world today, God’s society is still the reality into which we are all created.

So there are a couple of things we should realize about freedom and, by extension—self-government. Freedom can only be maintained while we live in harmony with God as a creature to a Creator and live in harmony with each other as equals in our relationship to God.

When we live as though God didn’t exist—when we exercise our “freedom” outside of the limits of His will; when we assert this kind of “liberty” and “despise government”—we are in fact in the most hopeless slavery. Look at these verses:

“But chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness [freedom from restrictions], and **despise government**. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities. . . . While **they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption**: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:10, 19).

When we embrace this type of liberty—a liberty outside of the restrictions of God’s will; our relationship to others will naturally deteriorate. Why? Because we were created subject to these two laws—love to God and love to our fellow men. The power to self-govern was not given at the expense of our relationship with God nor at the expense of our relationship with others.

It is when people feel they can dispense with their relationship with God that they begin to lose the power to self-govern and, in consequence, their relationship with others deteriorates. It is because of this that

we see people do horrible things to themselves and to each other. They forget that we were created to live within the jurisdiction of a society built upon love.

The apostle Paul, who was free in Jesus Christ, wrote, “Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).

The order, prosperity, and happiness of this society is based upon the ability of individuals to self-govern according to the will of God—not outside of it.

Self-governing individuals in society

Today, everyone wants to know his or her function in society. The larger question, though, is why am I here in this world? What is my purpose in life?

People have tried to come up with some answers to this question. Someone says, “We are here to help each other get through this thing, whatever it is.” Someone else says, “The true meaning of life is to plant trees under whose shade you do not expect to sit.” There are so many different versions of this in the world, but sadly, as I look at these answers—they fail to satisfy.

Those who advocate evolution run into a similar problem with this question. Evolutionary theory seeks to explain “where we came from” but does not do so much to explain what our purpose is for being here. In fact, here’s the basic difference between Christianity and Evolution.

Christianity says: The purpose of a giraffe’s long neck is because God

created it to feed upon the leaves of tall trees.

Evolution says: The reason a giraffe has a long neck is not for it to achieve any purpose—it has a long neck because long-necked giraffes in the past were more likely to survive and reproduce than were all the short-necked giraffes.

So the reason you’re here is because you have good genes. That hardly answers the question. If there is any purpose to life perceived by the evolutionary worldview, it is in the cooperation seen in nature between species. Some see this cooperation between species as some sort of path the human race is moving in towards greater cooperation between races, genders, families, society, and nations. This cooperation, however, is limited because, in this trajectory the will of society will sooner or later undermine the will of the individual, especially the will of the individual to serve God according to the dictates of his or her own conscience. That individual is perceived as a threat. It’s the survival of the fittest. The little, weak people in this world that are perceived as threats are eliminated. They don’t go along with the rest.

A worldly society will have their view of freedom. But any idea of freedom that dispenses with the order and restrictions of God upon the individual cannot make for a good and everlasting society. While God’s society gives freedom to the individual to self-govern, it does so upon the basis of the law of love.

When love is not the governing principle in the individual, sin is—for sin is only the absence of love. And sin operates only in the domain of this temporary world.

Our purpose in creation

It matters where we look for an answer to this question of life’s purpose. As Christians, we get our purpose and meaning in life by understanding where we came from and the reason why God made us.

The Lord says, “I have **created him for my glory**, I have formed him; yea, I have made him” (Isaiah 43:7).

It is for God’s glory that we were created. To glory in something means to rejoice over it. God rejoices over His creation, and “all things were created by him, and **for him**” (Colossians 1:16).

The heavenly beings declare to God, “Thou hast created all things, and **for thy pleasure they are and were created**” (Revelation 4:11).

All parents know what this pleasure is. All parents know what it means to rejoice in our children. Especially is this the case when they embrace our values, our love, our nurture, our careful restrictions—then they bring to us a great deal of delight. And when we see them become morally independent, when they choose of themselves to do good, that is a great delight.

In turn, if you recall when you were a child, you felt happy and deeply fulfilled when you knew your parents rejoiced over you. We fit perfectly, like a piece in a puzzle, into God’s purpose for our creation.

But sinful humanity no longer reflects God’s values, His love. Sinful and corrupt, we have all wandered away from Him. God cannot then rejoice over us until He saves us from this condition. Then we can thank Him for the prophecy of what will take place after the restoration: “The Lord thy God in the midst of thee is mighty; **he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love**, he will joy over thee with singing” (Zephaniah 3:17).

Dignity restored

We are affected by sin in two ways. It dominates us, and it curses us. Christ brings deliverance to us on both these fronts. He delivers us



from the dominance of sin by giving us the divine grace to conquer it, “For **sin shall not have dominion over you**: for ye are not under the law, but **under grace**” (Romans 6:14). And He delivers us from the curse of sin by “**being made a curse for us**: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree” (Galatians 3:13).

To be delivered by Christ means to regain the freedom that we had lost. “If the **Son therefore shall make you free**, ye shall be **free indeed**” (John 8:36).

Christ restores to us the dignity of true freedom. He restores to us the power of self-government. With Christ, we again stand tall in the dignity of men and women in Christ Jesus. This power that Christ gives us to self-govern is most often expressed in the words “self-control”. In the King James Version, self-control is inferred by the term *temperance*. Temperance is one of the graces of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians chapter 5.

This is the faith in Christ that Paul taught and preached. When Felix called Paul from the prison house and “heard him concerning the faith in Christ” (Acts 24:24), He heard Paul reason “of righteousness, **temperance**, and judgment to come” (verse 25).

Unfortunately, Felix wanted to enjoy his earthly “freedom” a little longer and we never hear from him again. Let’s not be like Felix!

People who are in slavery to habits of sin often feel deeply remorseful. They often experience severe feelings of self-loathing and shame. These awful feelings lead them to hate themselves with intense hatred. Their sense of utter weakness in themselves to resist besetting sins leads them often to despair. But they don’t know how to escape the pit of sin they are sunken into. At these times, we echo the cry of Paul, “**O wretched man that I am!** who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:24).

Here is where Christ alone brings help. Humanity enslaved by sin, needed a divine-human Saviour to break the power of sin in humanity. The hope of the human race rests upon

the fact that the Son of God lived a life of perfect self-government in keeping with God’s law. He did this while living on earth, as a man, in the same weak, degraded, human nature that we possess. Nobody on earth could do what He did. No one ever was able to escape the curse and domination of sin over humanity. That is why we needed Christ.

“Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, **he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death**, that is, the devil; And **deliver them who through fear of death** were all their lifetime subject to **bondage**” (Hebrews 2:14, 15).

There is not a soul on earth that was ever able to meet the claims of justice. “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Here is where Christ brought divine aid. He was the only one able to meet the claims of justice, both in life and in death.

“For what the law could not do, in that it was **weak through the flesh [sinful nature]**, God sending his own Son in **the likeness of sinful flesh [nature]**, and for sin, **condemned sin in the flesh**” (Romans 8:3).

I can’t be righteous in my flesh. Nobody can. The law of God could not produce righteousness in my flesh because all it found was weakness. The law of God failed in my flesh—in fact all it found in my flesh was “nothing good.” So Jesus took upon Himself that same weak flesh with all my sins and what the law could not do in my weak flesh, it did in His. By living a perfect life of faith and dependence upon divine power, He condemned sin in His own weak human nature. And this He did “**that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us**, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit” (verse 4).

In Christ, the universe has seen the Son of man, in the weakness of human flesh, live up to the claims of justice through the power of divinity and humanity combined. It has seen One, who, by the grace of God, has lived in perfect harmony with the law of God in human flesh.

It is not the purpose of this article to expound on how He did it, but to highlight the fact that He brought “deliverance to the captives.” In this deliverance, He restores to us the power of self-government or self-control. And it is in this, that we regain our human dignity—for we were created in the image of God.

The Spirit of Prophecy makes three beautiful statements about this. As you read them, notice how God restores the power of self-government through the plan of redemption:

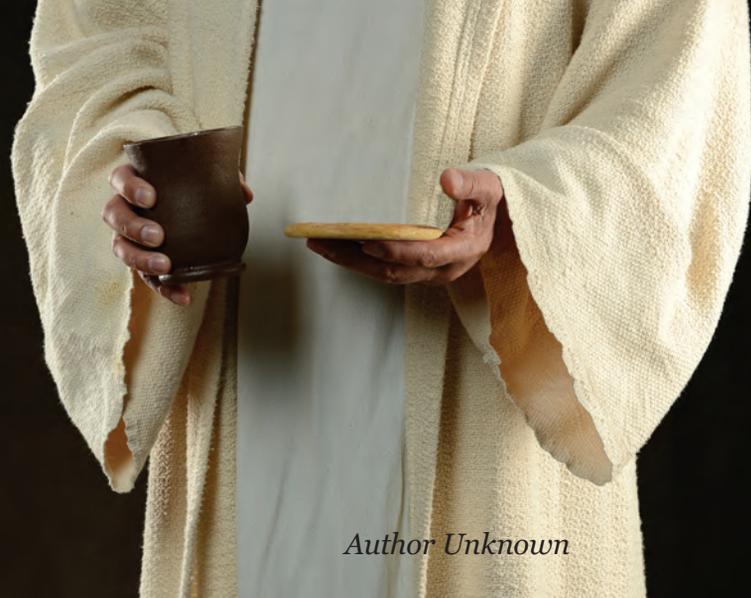
“**The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself**. In its great need the soul cries out for a power out of and above itself; and through the operation of the Holy Spirit the nobler powers of the mind are **imbued with strength to break away from the bondage of sin**.”¹

“In order to reach excellency of character, we must realize the value which Christ has placed upon the human race. In the beginning, man was invested with **dignity**; but he fell through indulgence of appetite. Notwithstanding the great gulf thus opened between God and man, Christ loved the hopeless sinner and came to our world to bridge the gulf and **unite divine power to human weakness, that in His strength and grace man might wrestle for himself against Satan’s temptations, overcome for himself, and stand in his God-given manhood**, a victor over perverted appetite and degrading passions.”²

“Jesus endured the painful fast in our behalf and conquered Satan in every temptation, thus making it possible for man to **conquer in his own behalf, and on his own account, through the strength brought to him by this mighty victory** gained as man’s substitute and surety.”³ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 20, 1900. [Emphasis added.]
- ² *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 146. [Emphasis added.]
- ³ *The Review and Herald*, April 19, 1887. [Emphasis added.]



The Original Attitude Toward the Lord's Supper

Author Unknown

The following article appeared in *The Signs of the Times*, August 6, 1885, and clearly sets forth the position taken by the pioneers of the Advent movement.

The church

It has been remarked that it is quite uniformly believed that baptism is an *initiatory rite*. It is therefore not a church ordinance in the same sense that the Lord's Supper is a church ordinance. The supper is for those only who are fully church members, and it is to be celebrated repeatedly; of this it is said: "As often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come" (1 Corinthians 11:26).

Baptism being initiatory, [it] is a means of constituting a person a member of the church, but it does not necessarily constitute a person a church member. This is accomplished only *by the action of the church*. From what has already been said, it is evident that the church has control of its own membership. It must exercise discipline; it must withdraw from those who walk disorderly; he that will not hear the church is to be unto them as a heathen man and a publican. Of course it is to determine who may become members. When Paul "assayed to join himself to the disciples" at Jerusalem (Acts 9:26), they would not receive him until he was recommended by Barnabas. And Paul's order given to the church of Rome is evidence that they exercised due care

over their membership, or as to whom they received into their fellowship. Romans 14:1. "Him that is weak in the faith receive ye." "Admit the weak brother to Christian fellowship."—*Bible Commentary*. "The design here is to induce Christians to receive to their fellowship those who had scruples about the propriety of certain things," etc.—*Barnes*. "He exhorted the pastors and members of the church at Rome, to receive among them as a brother, the weak believer."—*Scott*. "Receive to your fellowship."—*Clarke*. "Give him your hand as the old Syriac version renders it; count him one of you."—*Dean Stanley*.

As the Lord's Supper belongs to church members only, it becomes important that we understand who are church members, or who are entitled to the privilege of communion. We say then, (1) No one can be a member of the church until he has been accepted by a vote of the church. (2) No one can be a member of the church until he has been baptized.

As we are treating of *the visible church*, or the church as an organized body, we are speaking of those qualifications which may always be ascertained to a certainty. We hold as a matter of course that the church should not accept anyone to its membership without suitable evidence of his fitness for the position. Repentance and faith are almost universally recognized as requisites to Christian character. But beyond this brief statement—too brief to indicate the position of the church or of the candidate—each denomination of

professed Christians has some definite declaration of its faith; some peculiar expression of faith and practice, which it requires that all its members shall endorse and receive. Were this not the case, they could not possibly satisfy even their own minds that there is any reason for their denominational existence. Which is to say that different denominations attach different ideas to the words repentance and faith, and these definitions with their results become the peculiar basis of their organizations. With some, repentance is but a vague indeterminate word, but there is not nearly that difference of opinion in regard to repentance that there is in regard to what constitutes faith—the faith of the gospel.

Our rule of testing the qualifications of members is briefly stated in the concluding part of the message of Revelation 14:9–12: "Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." These terms express the whole sum of every possible duty of fallen man; the commandments of God, the moral law "summarily contained in the ten commandments" (Webster), the duty of man under all circumstances, but now broken and therefore convicting all the world of sin. And the faith of Jesus, comprising all that is peculiar to the gospel of Christ as a remedy for sin; as the means of pardon, of restoration to obedience, and imparting a hope of eternal life through Christ our Lord. In a word, we have in these the sum total of all pure morality and all true religion.

It is our firm belief that a person ought to have in his life and purpose a well-defined religious experience—a conviction of sin by the aid of the Holy Spirit, and a fixed determination to walk in the truth—before he should be accepted to church membership. But while these are among the requisites to membership, they do not impart to any individual the privileges which belong exclusively to church members. We speak now especially of that which we consider the third gospel ordinance—the Lord’s Supper. Many seem to suppose that, whatever may be their church relations, or if they have no relation to any church, they are entitled to the privilege of “communion” by virtue of their conversion; by reason of what they “feel” or have “experienced,” rather than by virtue of their conformity to the rules and regulations laid down for the guidance of the church and of church members. Against their claim we enter our hearty protest.

We deeply regret that such loose views have so largely obtained as they have throughout the land. It is to be lamented that the obligations of church membership are so lightly regarded as they are by multitudes of professed Christians; but we can expect nothing else where individuals claim, and are often allowed to receive, the benefits and privileges of church membership without taking upon themselves its obligations or showing a willingness to bear its responsibilities. They profess to be followers of Christ, but they lightly regard His teachings in regard to His church—His body. To such His words appeal: “And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

And we go farther. We may admit all that these individuals claim in regard to their conversion; we may admit that they are truly converted, and are accepted of God as believers in His Son, and yet not admit that they are entitled to the privileges of church members, unless they formally and properly become church members. This we cannot admit without breaking down every rule of church government and denying that the church has any control of its membership, or that

it has any right of discipline and of determination as to who are and who are not members.

Let it then be distinctly understood that evidence of good Christian character is not, of itself, evidence of a right to the privileges of sacramental communion. Were this to be received as sole or sufficient evidence of such right, it would become the means of breaking down all church authority, and of destroying all the safeguards which the Lord has seen fit to set around His church. We think this proposition cannot be controverted. True, it may be contrary to the *feelings* of many well-intentioned Christians; but feelings are no argument, no test of duty. It cannot be denied that every Scripture ordinance has been changed or entirely ignored under the guise of *pious feelings*. There is no security in these matters except in strict conformity to divine instructions.

An individual is not a member by vote of the church, without baptism; neither is he a member by baptism without by a vote of the church. And to baptize a person with the understanding that he shall be voted into the church at some future time, is irregular. Baptism being an initiatory rite, must be under the control of that authority which accepts and rejects members, and not under the control of a minister, the pastor, or the officers of the church. The church alone can authorize the elder or pastor to administer baptism.

These remarks on baptism are made in this connection only because it is a prerequisite to partaking of the Lord’s Supper. That it is so has been the opinion of the church in all ages. Some opinions which are now popular have become so by a struggle; but as far as we know there has never been a question raised on this point. It is not possible to draw a contrary view from the Scriptures.

But this directly involves the subject of communion with all denominations. Many charitably-disposed brethren, in the kindness of their hearts, consider themselves under obligation to admit to our communion, or to go to the communion, of those who appear to be honest, pious people. It is then

pertinent to inquire of such, Would you admit those same people, on the ground of their piety, to membership in your church? To be consistent with the Scriptures, and with their own faith of the Scriptures, they would have to reply, We could not admit them to our church as members unless they should first be baptized, and should conform to the requirements of our church. But then the inquiry further arises, Is it consistent to admit to the privileges of church members, those who have not the qualifications to become church members? If you cannot fellowship them *as members*, how can you fellowship them *not being members*?

In order to make our investigations practical, it will be proper to answer queries and objections which have actually been raised on the subject. Thus it is said, It is the Lord’s Supper—the Lord’s table—not ours, and we have no right to exclude any who wish to come and who profess to be the Lord’s servants. But that is the very reason why we would be careful, and even exclusive. If it were our own table, we would admit many whom we cannot now admit. If the church were our own arrangement, we would accept many on the score of kindness, sympathy, and favor, whom we cannot now accept. But it is indeed the Lord’s church, and the Lord’s table, and as those to whom the truth and the ordinances are committed, we are in duty bound to keep the church as pure as may be possible, and admit to the Lord’s table those only whom we would admit to the Lord’s church. We might with equal propriety argue that baptism is the Lord’s ordinance, and we have no right to deny it to any applicant who profess a desire to have follow the Lord. And the church is the Lord’s church, and we do not have the right to deny admittance to any who profess to be the Lord’s servants. But to follow out this rule would soon make the table *a common table*, and bring the church and its ordinance into contempt. We cannot believe that any person will put forth claims which lead to such results, if he will use reason and examine the Scriptures as to our obligations to the Lord and to His house. *R*

By Simeon Karvatskii

The Fifth

Commandment

“Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5).

In order to recover humanity from the loss suffered through sin, God in His love gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. There are “waymarks” along the path leading to eternity, as God says, “Set thee up waymarks, make thee high heaps: set thine heart toward the highway, even the way which thou wentest” (Jeremiah 31:21).

The way in which Jesus leads us has signs that point, warn, and prohibit for our best good—not only in this life, but also in the life to come. And these signs or waymarks are established on God’s Ten Commandments which Jesus Christ did not destroy or change when on earth, but rather fulfilled and vindicated, thus giving us an example for daily life.

One of these commandments is, “Honour thy father and mother; (which is the first commandment with promise;) that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth” (Ephesians 6:2, 3; see also Exodus 20:12). “To Israel, expecting soon to enter Canaan, it was a pledge to the obedient, of long life in that good land.”¹

But this commandment has a wider meaning and applies to all the Israel of God, and it promises to those who keep it everlasting life on the new earth cleansed from the curse of sin.

In the beginning

With loving care God crowned the formation of our planet with the creation of a truly unique being—man. As the Creator breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, “man became a living soul” (Genesis 2:7). God Himself is the Father of humanity (Luke 3:38). In His desire that this creature would live harmoniously with others of his kind in loving obedience to his Creator and Father, “the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him. . . . And the rib,

which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh” (Genesis 2:18, 22–24). Thus, God established the first family, laying that foundation to promote the satisfaction of all our individual and social needs.

There is a special place for every member of the family—for father and mother, son and daughter, and other relatives.

“Society is composed of families, and is what the heads of families make it. Out of the heart are ‘the issues of life’ (Proverbs 4:23); and the heart of the community, of the church, and of the nation is the household. The well-being of society, the success of the church, the prosperity of the nation, depend upon home influences.”²

God’s beautiful plan for the family given to man in paradise was further expressed in the fifth commandment. But sadly, this beautiful plan is being destroyed. Through disobedience to this commandment, Satan has deceitfully done his destructive work and has crushed the heart of the human family. The dreadful results include: 1. the loss of eternal life, and 2. the shortening of the temporal life (Ephesians 6:3).

The first human family shrank with horror when struck with the terrible crime of fratricide. Yet the problem did not stop there—it has grown worse over the past 6,000 years, and the enemy of souls is ever escalating his plot to ruin every home possible.

“While men are ignorant of [Satan’s] devices, this vigilant foe is upon their track every moment. He is intruding his presence in every department of the household, in every street of our cities, in the churches, in the national councils, in the courts of justice, perplexing, deceiving, seducing, everywhere ruining the souls and bodies of men, women, and children, breaking up families, sowing

hatred, emulation, strife, sedition, murder.”³

Today we see the rampant estrangement of families, an increase of the spirit of jealousy and unforgiveness that sows discord among the very brothers, sisters, parents, and children whom God designed to be a blessing for us. Today we can see many children forsaken by parents and many aged parents forgotten and virtually abandoned by their children. Today we can see the fulfillment of the words of Jesus that the world is reverting to the condition of the antediluvians. And it is happening everywhere. Describing the condition of our days, the apostle Paul says, “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy” (2 Timothy 3:2).

The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement has a special privilege of bearing to the world a message which not only speaks of the dreadful judgments that are soon to come to our rebellious planet, but also to reveal to the people a Saviour full of love, ready to save His children. In our church and in life’s practical acts we should show how God can protect and preserve our families from the corrupting influences which are in this world. And God reveals this to us in the fifth commandment. The behavior of children depends on their education.

Parents—what do you wish for your children?

Great is the honor and responsibility placed upon fathers and mothers. “‘Take this son, this daughter,’ God says; ‘train it for Me; give it a character polished after the similitude of a palace, that it may shine in the courts of the Lord forever.’”⁴ Parents have a task of great importance before them. The future of the church and society in this generation depends to a great extent upon what we are doing during the few years that our children are with us. Therefore, it is very important for us to fully understand that God expects us to render a faithful influence on

our children to help them reach the heavenly ideal. And God Himself “has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children.”⁵ In order to fulfill this work of education, we should be looking for counsel and help from God. (See Judges 13:8, 12.)

“Too much importance cannot be placed upon the early training of children. The lessons learned, the habits formed, during the years of infancy and childhood, have more to do with the formation of the character and the direction of the life than have all the instruction and training of after years.”⁶

“Now therefore beware, I pray thee, and drink not wine nor strong drink, and eat not any unclean thing. . . . She may not eat of any thing that cometh of the vine, neither let her drink wine or strong drink, nor eat any unclean thing: all that I commanded her let her observe” (Judges 13:4, 14).

“The effect of prenatal influences is by many parents looked upon as a matter of little moment; but heaven does not so regard it. The message sent by an angel of God, and twice given in the most solemn manner, shows it to be deserving of our most careful thought.”⁷

Parents can lay the foundation of a healthy, happy life for their children.

They can let them go forth from home with rich supplies of moral firmness and be able to withstand all the world’s temptations with courage and strength, and successfully face all the problems in their lives.

The responsibility of fathers

Fathers! Your responsibility in the education of your children (Deuteronomy 6:7) is not only to teach and instruct them. The greatest work is your PERSONAL EXAMPLE. In Abraham we can see an excellent example of a father who walked according to the will of God. Wherever Abraham went, he built an altar unto the Lord and called upon His name (Genesis 12:8). “Not until parents themselves walk in the law of the Lord with perfect hearts will they be prepared to command their children after them.”⁸ Fathers of today may learn from Abraham how to establish morning and evening worship in their homes, giving it a paramount attention. Even Ishmael it is written that “in his latter days he repented of his evil ways and returned to his father’s God.”⁹ Fathers! God has chosen you to “command (your) children and (your) household after (you), and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment”

(Genesis 18:19). The father is the lawgiver in his family; he must bring the law of God into his home. But, he must also remember to “provoke not [his] children to wrath” (Ephesians 6:4).

Eli was a father who ignored his children. As high priest he made intercession for the people, but he did not educate or pray for his own sons. Careless in character, he did not train them in habits of order. This resulted in the destruction not only of himself and his generation, but also the demoralization of the whole nation. (Compare with Psalm 103:13.)

The responsibility of mothers

Moses’ mother knew that her son would be soon returned to Pharaoh’s palace, and amidst all the luxury and temptations that would surround him, he could be in great danger of leaving God. She spent twelve years raising Moses and, as a result of this solid training, he never forgot God, even though he was forced to live outside the home for the next twenty-eight years. While surrounded by Egyptian culture, idolatry, and many worldly temptations, Moses was ever faithful to the instruction of his mother. “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward” (Hebrews 11:24–26). And throughout the remainder of his life, Moses’ great mission as a leader of Israel testifies to the important work of the Christian mother. “To a very great extent the mother holds in her own hands the destiny of her children.”¹⁰

“John Huss was of humble birth, and was early left an orphan by the death of his father. His pious mother, regarding education and the fear of God as the most valuable of possessions, sought to secure this heritage for her son. . . . He was accompanied on the journey to Prague by his mother; widowed and poor,



she had no gifts of worldly wealth to bestow upon her son, but as they drew near to the great city, she kneeled down beside the fatherless youth and invoked for him the blessing of their Father in heaven.”¹¹

The mother is the child’s first teacher in the time of his or her greatest potential and most active development. The main aspects of the education of the little one are, to a great extent, in her hands (Isaiah 66:13, first part). The home is the first school, and here the foundation for a profitable life should be laid.

Important points of education

1. Health. The realization that humans should be the temple of God and the place where His glory is revealed must be the best motive for the care and development of our physical powers.

2. Food. Our bodies are composed of what we eat. Every organ of the body needs proper food. We should always choose those foods that would provide us with all the necessary components in the most healthful manner. Wrong habits in eating cause perverted appetites. We also cannot rely on social customs. Disease and suffering everywhere is, to a great extent, caused by mistakes in eating. The One who created the human race and knew all of our needs ordained that Adam should eat proper food (Genesis 1:29). After falling into sin, humanity was to till the ground and eat “the herb of the field” (Genesis 3:18). Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables are the food that God has ordained for our nutrition. And it is the best food for children.

3. Dress. Our dress must promote in every respect good health of body and soul. Fashion has a powerful and often detrimental influence on children and youth, and a true understanding of dress reform should play a significant role in their Christian education.

4. Reading and seeing. Satan has prepared many different snares for our children. Every kind of literature is offered today. The world abounds with sensational detective stories,

novels, magazines full of obscene pictures, TV programs, video films, computer games; modern charismatic songs, dances, amusements, and different games. Can you recognize all this as Satan’s arsenal? These things destroy the morality of children and youth. We should never give our children and youth even the various so-called theological books that only pervert the truth by subtly mingling it with error. Christian parents should also control the influences exerted over their children by their FRIENDS. We must also teach them the benefits of physical labor, and be watchful over all that could sway their tender, pliable minds.

Children

Children, does Jesus know about you? “Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows” (Matthew 10:29–31). Do you sometimes wonder whether He really loves you? “And they brought young children to him, that he should touch them: and his disciples rebuked those that brought them. But when Jesus saw it, he was much displeased, and said unto them, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God” (Mark 10:13, 14).

“Children, obey your parents in the Lord” (Ephesians 6:1). This commandment is in the center of the law, just as children are in the center of the family. The Bible gives us the example of Jesus’ childhood and youth. Remember where Jesus was brought up. “Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). Yet there is an amazing description of His early life in that city. “And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him. . . . And he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them: but his mother kept all these sayings in her heart. And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and

in favour with God and man” (Luke 2:40, 51, 52). Today, the sinfulness of Nazareth covers the whole world. Jesus is our Example, and His life in His parents’ house provides important lessons for us. He grew up in poverty to show us that we also can live in close communion with God when surrounded by such conditions. Consider deeply the texts written above.

Children! We are living even at the time of the second coming of our Saviour, who will change everything and return it to the beauty and splendor it had before the fall of man. Are you eager to see this great event? God calls on you today, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord.”

The fifth commandment applies also to rulers and to all others to whom God has delegated authority. We should give them respect as long as their commands do not conflict with the requirements of God, as revealed in the Ten Commandments. With all respect to the authorities, they are not to interfere in our relationship with God. (Acts 4:19.)

The highest honor, glory, and obedience belong to our heavenly Father. And above all, children and youth should learn to trust God and seek to understand His will. This is the work of John the Baptist “in the spirit and power of Elias” (Luke 1:17), to turn our heart to the Lord so that we may not perish. And there will be a result: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth” (Isaiah 42:1).

Let us do our utmost to draw nearer to our heavenly Father and allow the guidance of His Word and His Spirit to strengthen our families. Amen. *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.
- ² *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 349.
- ³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 508.
- ⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 376.
- ⁵ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.
- ⁶ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 380.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 372.
- ⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 143.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 174.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 244.
- ¹¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 98.



THE PATIENCE OF THE SAINTS

Are you patient enough to read this article? Many people today would not be. There are usually too many things to do, too many places to go, too many people to see . . . and the list goes on. Hopefully, you will choose to press on and patiently persevere.

We all often fail to realize how essential the quality of patience is in the Christian life. Many assume that if a person is not quick-tempered—if he or she does not become fretful or yell or otherwise lose control when under stress—that patience is therefore a complete virtue in that person's life. It is falsely assumed that the quiet person who is relatively easy to get along with must surely have mastered patience in its fullness. But there is much more depth to patience than is normally seen on the surface!

Abraham

Abraham had been promised that he would be the father of a great nation (Genesis 12:2). Yet, following

that promise, 25 years passed and no child arrived. That's a long time when you're going through it! His wife had already passed the age of childbearing, so it was then humanly impossible to have a child. Surely they had been patient after waiting for so long, had they not? Yet most of us are familiar with the experience that occurred in Genesis chapter 16. Violating a principle of God's law ("Thou shalt not commit adultery") produced a child who eventually was to trigger turmoil in the household and needed to be sent far away (Genesis 16:2–4, 10–12; 21:9–12). This was all due to a lack of patience.

What would we do under similar circumstances? In our current spiritual state, might we easily have fallen into the same trap after waiting for so many years? When seeking to accomplish a goal, beware of improvising any method that is contrary to God's express commands. This may seem like an obvious statement to the Christian, but even

Abraham, the father of the faithful, forgot about it—evidently during a weak moment. We may think we have waited long enough for something, but usually that is really not for us to decide. Beware!

Jacob

Jacob was "a plain man, dwelling in tents" (Genesis 25:27). Surely he and his mother, Rebekah, appeared to be patient people, waiting for the birthright to be bestowed upon him as promised. Before the birth of her twins, Rebekah was given a message from God: "The elder shall serve the younger" (verse 23). From childhood Jacob, the younger twin, was much more devoted to religious matters, the one who yearned for that spiritual blessing.

In contrast, Esau, the firstborn "had no love for devotion, no inclination to a religious life. The requirements that accompanied the spiritual birthright were an

unwelcome and even hateful restraint to him. The law of God, which was the condition of the divine covenant with Abraham, was regarded by Esau as a yoke of bondage. Bent on self-indulgence, he desired nothing so much as liberty to do as he pleased. To him power and riches, feasting and reveling, were happiness. He gloried in the unrestrained freedom of his wild, roving life.”¹

So, the attitude of God-fearing Jacob was a refreshing opposite. Yet, surprisingly, after many years of waiting, it was Jacob and his mother that became the impulsive ones. They rushed to seize the birthright by fraud and deception. The history of the incident recorded in Genesis chapter 27 is well familiar.

“God had declared that Jacob should receive the birthright, and His word would have been fulfilled in His own time had they waited in faith for Him to work for them. But like many who now profess to be children of God, they were unwilling to leave the matter in His hands. . . . In one short hour [Jacob] had made work for a lifelong repentance. This scene was vivid before him in afteryears.”²

Such bitter regrets! Regrets that had to be borne by a man whose life had always been quiet and religious! After all, it was the impulsive twin Esau who in his youth had sold the birthright for a mess of pottage to satisfy his appetite—not Jacob. Surely, one would think, Jacob was the patient brother. But the stolen birthright reveals that—in his heart’s inmost recesses—Jacob was not really as patient as he should have been. Nor was his mother, even though she wanted the best for him.

What would we do under similar circumstances? After decades of waiting, and with Isaac seemingly on his deathbed, might we have rushed into taking matters into our own hands? Amazingly, Isaac did not end up dying until many years later! There was actually plenty of time in which he would have come around to recognizing that Jacob should receive the birthright. Inspiration reveals:

“Rebekah and Jacob should have waited for God to bring about His

own purposes, in His own way, and in His own time, instead of trying to bring about the foretold events by the aid of deception. If Esau had received the blessing of his father, which was bestowed upon the firstborn, his prosperity could have come from God alone; and he would have blessed him with prosperity; or brought upon him adversity, according to his course of action. If he should love and reverence God, like righteous Abel, he would be accepted and blessed of God. If like the wicked Cain he had no respect for God, nor for His commandments, but followed his own corrupt course, he would not receive a blessing from God but would be rejected of God as was Cain. If Jacob’s course should be righteous; if he should love and fear God, he would be blessed of God, and the prospering hand of God would be with him, even if he did not obtain the blessings and privileges generally bestowed upon the firstborn.

“Rebekah repented in bitterness for the wrong counsel which she gave to Jacob. . . . **Isaac lived many years after he gave Jacob the blessing, and was convinced, by the course of Esau and Jacob, that the blessing rightly belonged to Jacob.**”³

Jacob and his mother miscalculated God’s timing through their lack of patience. They could not read the future, for no mere mortal can. That is understandable. But right at the crucial moment of temptation, after waiting what they felt was long enough, they failed to ask God first about what to do. Disaster.

Seeking God’s guidance

The question of patience flows naturally into the subject of guidance. How often do we ask God to guide us, yet, like Pilate in the judgment hall, we are too impatient to receive the answer? The Bible has plenty of promises assuring us that God will guide the life of those who seek Him. Yet too often we fail to obtain that guidance in its fullness because we are too impatient to receive the answer. We rely on chance methods or rush through our prayers and rush through

our life without pausing sufficiently to think through everything. (Remember, surprisingly, it was religious Jacob—not impulsive Esau—who impatiently stole that birthright. Yes, Esau had once bartered it away as a rash youth, but Jacob stooped to fraud to obtain it at a more mature age, when he was already a seasoned Christian young man.)

Two keys to guidance

1. Go by principle.

In virtually every **decision** we have to make in life, there is normally a principle involved, based on the light that God has already entrusted to us. What is the principle relative to this case? Where is it? Find it. Don’t hide from it; don’t try to escape it. It may even be as basic as one of the Ten Commandments. Make your decision on that principle, whichever of the commandments and/or appropriate inspired Testimonies may be involved.

2. What am I supposed to learn from this?

In virtually every **difficulty** one has to face, there is something to be learned. Something **I** need to learn, **you** need to learn. Something needs to be learned. What is it? Find it. Patiently persevere for that proverbial needle in the haystack. It’s no mystery—the Bible tells why this trial is happening. It is to develop faith—**your** faith. (Perhaps somebody else’s as well, but also yours personally. Otherwise God would not allow circumstances to go in such a way as for you to be involved in it.) So view it as a special assignment bestowed in love by your Master Teacher who is entrusting you with a custom-designed treasure. This is why we are to “glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience experience; and experience, hope,” “knowing this, that the trying of your faith worketh patience” (Romans 5:3, 4; James 1:3).

What good is patience?

We are told to “let patience have her perfect work, that ye may be

perfect and entire, wanting nothing” (James 1:4). Patience is essential in perfecting Christian character. Jesus says, “In your patience possess ye your souls” (Luke 21:19). In what context does our Lord give this important injunction? The verses leading up to it all speak of persecution from rulers and betrayal by family members—the type of thing that tends to be extremely perplexing to a person.

For young, old, and those in-between

In preparing this article, the thought came to design it for our periodical for the young, the *Youth Messenger*. Surely the youth all need patience—we all know that. . . . But they’re not the only ones! Abraham revealed a lack of patience while in his mid 80s at the birth of Ishmael (Genesis 16). The aged Moses lost his patience in the desert of Zin just before the Israelites were to enter the Promised Land (Numbers 20:8–11). Doesn’t even greater patience need to be exercised after many long years than after just a few short minutes or months? Sometimes the greatest test of a lifetime comes only after many decades. Patience is just as much needed by those who can already handle “strong meat,” those with many years in the three angels’ messages, as it ever was. Perhaps we have not truly mastered patience yet—otherwise we would all be perfect, and Jesus would have been able to come already.

Spiritual bicycling uphill

We often think of patience as merely a passive virtue of pacific people. Yet, interestingly enough, patience is a very active quality as well. Why? It is noteworthy that the word “patience” is usually coupled with “exercise,” as in “exercising patience.” For the young, exercise comes more naturally. With brand new muscles, they begin wiggling at birth and continue from there. As time rolls on, however, exercise tends to take a little more effort. Patience brings experience (Romans 5:4), but the “exercise” of patience takes a bit

more effort, just as the exercise of the muscles do. This explains why sick or elderly people too often become disgruntled and ornery. They are understandably frustrated by their sudden or gradual inability to do some of what they used to be able to do. But is frustration an excuse for impatience? We do not condone it in the young, so how much less should we tolerate it in ourselves when our character maturity should already be ripening for the harvest? Jesus is coming again soon, and now is no time to be impatient—even in well-intentioned zeal.

A few examples where the need for patience is often overlooked:

1. Successful family life—and even in understanding difficult, challenging doctrines, such as no remarriage after divorce.

“[Jesus said:] Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given. For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother’s womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven’s sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it” (Matthew 19:9–12).

A person who truly loves his or her spouse with Christlike love will believe in God’s power to work in that person’s behalf—manifested by willingness to wait for that person to repent of wrong as long as he or she lives, just like Christ does for the human soul. Where there’s life, there’s hope. Don’t rule out the possibility of repentance as long as the breath of life remains. The life that God has given is a very powerful, meaningful thing. Jacob snatched the birthright because he thought Isaac was about to die. But Isaac did not

die until a long, long time afterwards. And don’t jump prematurely the way Abraham did. God specializes in the impossible. “Is any thing too hard for the Lord? At the time appointed I will return unto thee, according to the time of life, and Sarah shall have a son” (Genesis 18:14). (And don’t laugh, like Sarah did.)

2. Striving to be sealed with the 144,000.

“Here is the **patience** of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12, emphasis added).

3. Successful missionary effort in a hostile world.

“Whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain” (Matthew 5:39–41). “The people must be given the truth, straightforward, positive truth. But this truth is to be presented in the spirit of Christ. We are to be as sheep in the midst of wolves. **Those who will not, for Christ’s sake, observe the cautions He has given, who will not exercise patience and self-control, will lose precious opportunities of working for the Master.**”⁴

“We must imitate the long-suffering of God toward us. The Lord requires of us the same treatment toward His followers that we receive of Him. We are to **exercise patience** and to be kind, even though they do not meet our expectations in every particular. The Lord expects us to be pitiful and loving, to have sympathetic hearts. The fruits of the grace of God will be shown in our deportment to one another. . . . Christ did not say, You may tolerate your neighbor, but, ‘Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself’ (Matthew 19:19). **This means a great deal more than professing Christians carry out in their daily life.**”⁵



is one strong reason for overcoming the appetite for all stimulants, for as the nerves become excited under the influence of these irritating substances, how many and grievous are the evils that are done! But the healthful use of the unstimulating articles of food will not excite the nerves by irritating the stomach and debilitating brain nerve power. There is necessity for the Christian adding patience to temperance. . . . There must be a rising above the customs of the world in order to bear reproach, disappointment, losses, and crosses, without one murmur, but with uncomplaining dignity.

“It is easier to act the part of a martyr than to be patient under provocation and to control a bad temper. Sound religious principles must be brought into the life to repress anger rather than inflame it by giving vent to it. We feel very angry, but if we control that anger and are not betrayed into expressions of hasty feeling, we will not lose the respect of our brethren or respect for ourselves. The Pattern, Christ Jesus, is our example. **Patience is a heavenly attribute, and Christians must cultivate it.**”⁶

Conclusion

“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath **long patience** for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. **Be ye also patient**; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: **behold, the judge standeth before the door**” (James 5:7–9, emphasis added).

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 178.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 180.
- ³ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 115, 116. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 236. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, November 16, 1886. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁶ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 343, 344. [Emphasis added.]

A constant need in daily life

The apostle Paul reveals to us the secret of his successful walk with Christ: “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31).

“Patience under trials will keep us from saying and doing those things which will injure our own souls and injure those with whom we associate. Let your trials be what they will, nothing can seriously injure you if you exercise patience, if you are calm and unexcited when in trying positions. . . .

“There is a moral grandeur in being patient under trials and provocations. ‘He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth

his spirit than he that taketh a city’ (Proverbs 16:32). It requires discipline and firmness of purpose not to give expression to passion but at all times to take care that words shall escape the lips that will dishonor the Christian character. Self-control will be a valuable acquisition to the graces of the Spirit, and parents should teach their children, by precept and example, this precious lesson of patience and self-control.

“Patience implies that we have difficulties to encounter, annoyances to meet. . . .

“We can see the wisdom of Peter in placing temperance to be added to knowledge before patience. This

WHAT ARE THESE WOUNDS IN YOUR HANDS?

The book of Zechariah presents several prophecies directly pointing to Christ, either: (1) At His first or second coming, or (2) following the 1,000 years referred to in Revelation 20.

In this article we would like to consider a special Christ-centered prophecy: “One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (Chapter 13:6).

What an awful thought, for someone to be wounded “in the house of my friends.” A friend’s home is a place of refuge, a safe haven, a place where you “take off your hat” and relax, because you are in the house of your “friend.” It certainly is not a place to be wounded. However, real friends, when necessary, will not fail to admonish and even chastise when they see a friend needing correction.

So, what is the meaning of Christ’s wounded hands “in the house” of His friends? The wounds in His hands were not, however, the type of “wounds” that friends would inflict, for He needed no reproof, no correction, no punishment. These wounds are the result of the “punishment” Christ received on the cross. He received

an undeserving punishment, for He had done no wrong. The psalmist also prophesied about the wounds Christ would suffer: “They pierced my hands and my feet” (Psalm 22:16). Christ with His wounded hands will forever be noticed, will forever be admired by God the Father and by the holy angels, and will forever be worshipped by the redeemed.

“What are these wounds?” Was Christ wounded (punished) for His own sins? No. He had none. He knew no sin. He was wounded (punished) for my sins, for our sins. He was wounded for the sins of friends and enemies. Yet, the prophecy foretold of this future event, when in the kingdom of God, some saints will ask Him the question: “Lord, What are these wounds in Thine hands?” Then He shall answer, those are the wounds “with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.” He does not say, “You in your rebellion, in your sin caused Me this pain.” He does not say, “This is the beating I received because of you.” He does not say, “Do you see what you (your sins) have done to Me?” He does not say, “This is to remind me and to remind you of how much I suffered for you.” He just

says, “I received these wounds in the house of My friends.” What love, what compassion is demonstrated towards human beings!

Again the question: “What are these wounds?” These wounds were necessary because of sin. Sin is the problem, the great problem. There has been suffering since sin entered into the world. Adam and Eve suffered from the moment they sinned. But do we realize that God the Father and Jesus Christ have suffered even infinitely more? The wounds in the hands of Jesus are proof of God’s mercy and justice combined. We suffer from guilt and remorse, and we suffer the results of our sins. We even partake in the suffering of the results of Adam’s sin. But Christ suffered the most. He suffered an unjust, undeserving punishment. He suffered on our behalf. Please stop to reflect: What a Friend, what a Saviour!

Christ was not only wounded by His friends, but in the “house of” His friends. Christ “came unto his own, and his own received him not” (John 1:11). From His very birth Christ was rejected by His people, for they (the Jews) received Him not. He came to His own, and though they were His



bitter enemies, He still called them His friends. They should have been His friends, but tradition had blinded their perception, their understanding of Scripture. What manner of Man is He that called His enemies “friends?” He called Judas His friend: “Friend, wherefore art thou come?” (Matthew 26:50). Do you know another man who calls his enemies, “friends?” Do you know another man who took beatings for his so-called “friends?” Yes, I know a Man who took beatings, not only for “friends” but for enemies. This Man is the Man Christ Jesus, and I invite you to know Him.

How privileged we are to be called His “friends.” We are more than friends to Christ. We are His children, according to Paul in Ephesians 1:5, 6: “Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, to the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.”

More than children, we are His brothers and His sisters. He is our Brother. “For whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and my sister” (Mark 3:35). He is our bones and our flesh, for He was “found

in fashion as a man” (Philippians 2:8).

The Spirit of Prophecy says that “[The Son of God] came to die for us, to lie in the tomb as human beings must, and to be raised for our justification. . . .

“Christ ascended to heaven, bearing a sanctified, holy humanity. He took this humanity with Him into the heavenly courts, and through the eternal ages He will bear it as the One who has redeemed every human being in the city of God, the One who has pleaded before the Father, ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands’ (Isaiah 49:16). The palms of His hands bear the marks of the wounds that He received. If we are wounded and bruised, if we meet with difficulties that are hard to manage, let us remember how much Christ suffered for us. Let us sit together with our brethren in heavenly places in Christ. Let us bring heaven’s blessing into our hearts.”¹

Oh, precious wounds. Christ took these wounds with Him up to heaven. When we cry to Jesus with our life’s troubles, we know that we are heard. “We can carry all our sorrows and griefs, troubles and trials, afflictions and cares, and pour them into the

ear that is open to hear, of One who is pleading before the Father the merits of His own blood. He is pleading His wounds—My hands, My hands! ‘I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands.’ He offers the wounded hands to God, and His petitions are heard, and swift angels are sent to minister to fallen man, to lift up and to sustain.”²

“Heaven had viewed with grief and amazement Christ hanging upon the cross, blood flowing from His wounded temples, and sweat tinged with blood standing upon His brow. From His hands and feet the blood had fallen, drop by drop, upon the rock drilled for the foot of the cross. The wounds made by the nails had gaped as the weight of His body dragged upon His hands. His labored breath had grown quick and deep, as His soul panted under the burden of the sins of the world. All heaven had been filled with admiration when the prayer of Christ was offered in the midst of His terrible suffering—‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34). Yet there stood men, formed in the image of God, joining with Satan to crush out the last spark of life from the heart of the Son of God.”³

Other prophecies

Ellen G. White, the servant of the Lord, clearly connects Zechariah's prophecy with the prophets predicting the suffering of Christ in behalf of humanity's redemption.

"How unmistakably plain were Isaiah's prophecies of Christ's sufferings and death! 'Who hath believed our report?' the prophet inquires, 'and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: He hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from Him; He was despised, and we esteemed Him not.

"Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed.

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare His generation? for He was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was He stricken' (Isaiah 53:1-8).

"Even the manner of His death had been shadowed forth. As the brazen serpent had been uplifted in the wilderness, so was the coming Redeemer to be lifted up, 'that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life' (John 3:16). . . .

"What are these wounds in Thine hands? . . . (Zechariah 13:6).

"He made His grave with the wicked, and with the rich in His

death; because He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in His mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He hath put Him to grief' (Isaiah 53:9, 10).

"But He who was to suffer death at the hands of evil men was to rise again as a conqueror over sin and the grave. Under the inspiration of the Almighty the Sweet Singer of Israel had testified of the glories of the resurrection morn. 'My flesh also,' he joyously proclaimed, 'shall rest in hope. For Thou wilt not leave My soul in hell [the grave]; neither wilt Thou suffer Thine Holy One to see corruption' (Psalm 16:9, 10)."⁴

These Old Testament prophecies met a complete fulfillment in Christ's mission, especially during His last hours from Gethsemane to His resurrection.

"Paul showed how closely God had linked the sacrificial service with the prophecies relating to the One who was to be "brought as a lamb to the slaughter." The Messiah was to give His life as "an offering for sin." Looking down through the centuries to the scenes of the Saviour's atonement, the prophet Isaiah had testified that the Lamb of God "poured out His soul unto death: and He was numbered with the transgressors; and He bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:7, 10, 12).

"The Saviour of prophecy was to come, not as a temporal king, to deliver the Jewish nation from earthly oppressors, but as a man among men, to live a life of poverty and humility, and at last to be despised, rejected, and slain. The Saviour foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures was to offer Himself as a sacrifice in behalf of the fallen race, thus fulfilling every requirement of the broken law. In Him the sacrificial types were to meet their antitype, and His death on the cross was to lend significance to the entire Jewish economy."⁵

"Poor, weak, miserable man spat in the face of the King of glory, while a shout of brutal triumph arose from the mob at the degrading insult. They marred with blows and cruelty that face which filled all heaven with

admiration. They will again behold that face, bright as the noonday sun, and will seek to flee from before it. Instead of that shout of brutal triumph, they will wail because of Him.

"Jesus will present His hands with the marks of His crucifixion. The marks of this cruelty He will ever bear. Every print of the nails will tell the story of man's wonderful redemption and the dear price by which it was purchased. The very men who thrust the spear into the side of the Lord of life will behold the print of the spear and will lament with deep anguish the part which they acted in marring His body."⁶

"One shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends."

There is here a friendly dialogue between some saved ones and Christ in God's kingdom. The questioners seem ignorant about the reason why Christ's hands were wounded. When will it be possible for such a dialogue to take place? It clearly refers to the second coming of Christ when God's people will be with Him in His kingdom.

Is there a possibility that someone who had never heard the everlasting gospel might be in heaven with Christ? Yes. We call attention to the following Scriptures:

"(For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel" (Romans 2:14-16).

"Among the heathen are those who worship God ignorantly, those to whom the light is never brought by human instrumentality, yet they will not perish. Though ignorant of the written law of God, they have heard His voice speaking to them in nature,



and have done the things that the law required. Their works are evidence that the Holy Spirit has touched their hearts, and they are recognized as the children of God.”⁷

Since our God is a merciful and just God, and since Christ gave His life to save the whole humanity, it is understandable, then, that those sincere people who walk in the light they possess will be saved by the amazing grace and sacrifice of Christ through the mercy of God, even

though they have never heard of Jesus.

The second coming of Christ

The prophet Habakkuk thus describes the second coming of Christ: “God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had bright beams coming out of his side:

and there was the hiding of his power” (Chapter 3:3, 4, margin).

“Upon [our Redeemer’s] wounded head, upon His side, His hands and feet, are the only traces of the cruel work that sin has wrought. Says the prophet, beholding Christ in His glory: ‘He had bright beams coming out of His side: and there was the hiding of His power’” (Habakkuk 3:4, margin). That pierced side whence flowed the crimson stream that reconciled man to God—there is the Saviour’s glory, there ‘the hiding of His power.’ ‘Mighty to save’, through the sacrifice of redemption, He was therefore strong to execute justice upon them that despised God’s mercy. And the tokens of His humiliation are His highest honor; through the eternal ages the wounds of Calvary will show forth His praise and declare His power.”⁸

A special class in heaven

Ellen G. White writes about a special class in heaven made up of those who, however loyal to the truth they knew, could not comprehend the plan of salvation thoroughly.

“Some among the redeemed will have laid hold of Christ in the last hours of life, and in heaven instruction will be given to those who, when they died, did not understand perfectly the plan of salvation. Christ will lead the redeemed ones beside the river of life, and will open to them that which while on this earth they could not understand.”⁹

Have you ever imagined the wonderful privilege to be a student at the feet of Christ in heaven? What joy will it be to receive from Him personally an explanation about the plan of salvation? It really will be worthwhile to be there! It is certainly worthwhile to accept Christ as our Saviour and Lord today!

References

- ¹ *The Review and Herald*, March 9, 1905.
- ² *Ibid.*, January 4, 1887.
- ³ *The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, pp. 185, 186.
- ⁴ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 225–227.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 227, 228.
- ⁶ *Early Writings*, p. 179. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 638.
- ⁸ *The Great Controversy*, p. 674.
- ⁹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 262.



Guyana

A group of interested people in the remote village of Caria Caria, June 2017.

Belize

A chapel was dedicated in the town of Armenia, July 2017.

Brazil

Church officers and gospel workers' seminar, Itu, SP, May 2017.



Colombia

A youth congress was held in Medellin, July 2017.

U.S.A.

SEUSF youth convention, Christiansburg, VA, August 2017.

Liberia

A group of believers and friends. Recently, 8 souls were baptized, July 2017.



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MOVING? Please let us know.

Making a Peaceful Picture

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matthew 5:9).

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.” “Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded” (James 1:8; 4:8).

One of the saddest sights that a person may behold is that of children suffering amid the ravages of war. When men go to battle, everyone loses, especially the youngest and weakest members of the human family. Have you ever seen pictures of such a scene? It makes us want to do everything we can to help. Sometimes, beyond simply praying, it's not so easy to relieve much of the suffering in faraway places. But one thing we can do to make the world a better place is to avoid even the slightest break in harmony with others around us, as far as possible. War starts with anger, a condition of the heart. The Bible bids us “Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled” (Hebrews 12:14, 15).

Do you know what a root of bitterness is? A root is something that grows underneath the surface of the ground, and it nourishes the whole plant. Often a plant may have beautiful leaves, but if the root system is unhealthy, the whole plant may suddenly wither away and die rather quickly.

Similarly, a root of bitterness can grow in a person's heart by allowing one's self to become angry at somebody. It may even happen over a small, silly matter. This root then grows bigger and bigger until it ends up coming to the surface and spreading to other people in an ugly way. It may reveal itself by gossip against the one who—maybe even unconsciously or accidentally—caused the offense. That's why God warns us against letting anger sprout in our heart. It is sinful to allow such roots of bitterness to form.

In Isaiah 9:6, Jesus is referred to as “The Prince of Peace.” He is the author of peace. And the peace that He brings is not only for grown-ups. His promise to the faithful is that “All thy children shall be taught of the Lord; and great shall be the peace of thy children” (Isaiah 54:13).

But there's more. Jesus calls us not only to be peaceable ourselves but actually to be peace

“makers.” Most children enjoy making things. You may like to make bread or cookies, or art projects, or sand castles. God has placed in human hearts the desire to make things—to create them—because we are made in our Creator's own image. So, when He pronounces a blessing on the peacemakers, He is inspiring us also to do whatever we can to help our friends, family, and neighbors get along with one another, too.

“Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another” (Romans 14:19). To edify others is to build them up spiritually, just as you would add bricks in making a building. And such a picture of kindness is one of the happiest sights a person can behold.—*BHM.*

