

Youth Messenger



January–March 1998

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Editor: Brian Jaksic

Associate Editor: Barbara Monteiro

Design/Layout: Katherine Chang

Illustrations: PhotoDisc.

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Let Him In

*He's begging at the doorway,
And every heart's an inn;
The Son of God would now be born,
And will you let Him in?*

*At Bethlehem they told Him:
"We have no room to spare."
Their hearts were overcrowded
With greed and selfish care.*

*Their hearts were filled with boasting,
With envy, hate, and scorn;
They had no room to shelter
The Christ who would be born.*

*Their hearts were filled with evil,
With malice, doubt, and pride;
The room the Christ child needed
Was haughtily denied.*

*At Bethlehem that happened
Two thousand year ago,
And Christ has them forgiven
Because they did not know.*

*The Christ is at the doorway,
He knocks this very morn;
He seeks our hearts for shelter,
'Tis there He would be born.*

*He would be born within us,
'Tis us He seeks to win;
And how shall we make answer
Who do not let Him in?*

by Edgar A. Guest

Youth Messenger, January–March 1998

Editorial



The Beauty of Belonging

In the Bible book entitled "Song of Solomon" (some translations title it as "The Song of Songs" or "Canticles"), there is one of the most sublime expressions of a bride to her husband. "I am my beloved's, and my beloved is mine" (Song of Solomon 6:3). This is a beautiful portrayal of the security of a husband and his wife who know they belong to each other. In a good marriage this sense of belonging extends to the whole family. Parents speak of their children with love and joy. Children in turn speak of their fathers, mothers, brothers, and sisters with this same love. This sense of belonging is available to all who have become sons and daughters of God (John 1:12). He is their heavenly Father. Jesus is their elder Brother, and all Christ's followers are their brothers and sisters.

Someone once told me this remark, "If you want to destroy somebody, you do not need to resort to any other means but to simply isolate him or her." I related this saying during my discourse while visiting a particular country. After my interpreter translated my words to the congregation, he turned to me and in a quiet tone whispered to me, "This is what is happening to me." This disturbed me very much—that one of our young people should be treated in such a manner or that he should feel that he was being rejected. Even more disturbing is that there are

those among us who are actually using such behavior.

I recall the experience of my daughter's friend whose parents were divorced. She told my daughter, "Since my parents were divorced and remarried, I now have two places to visit, but no home to go to." This young lady belongs nowhere. What a sad situation this is!

Irrespective of personal experiences, we sought to provide a golden opportunity to make everyone BELONG to the family of God at the recent Pacific Region Youth Congress. We are to BELONG to Jesus. We all are His children. We need to show this in our practice. It costs us nothing to say "hello," and to greet each other with a smile on our face and with a sense of belonging. Endeavor to make others happy.

We all have, of course, our own special friends and that is wonderful, but try to broaden your heart to make friendships with all. By making others happy, you will be happy yourself. May God bless you all.—B. Jaksic. ♣



Youth Messenger, January–March 1998

World Youth Congress

August 1-10, 1997

Mogyorod, Hungary

by D. Campodonico — Genova, Italy

View from the old fortress

h is past year the "World Youth Congress" was held again in Mogyorod (near Budapest), Hungary, from August 1-10, 1997, under the theme, "Save Our Youth."

On Friday, August 1, Bro. B. Jaksic (from Australia), the G.C. Young People's Department Secretary, opened the Congress—and the Sabbath—with the study, "God's Purpose for the Youth." The divine service of Sabbath, August 2, was held by Bro. F. Devai (from U.S.A.). The subject of his sermon was "God's Sons and Daughters." In the afternoon, Bro. R. Ionita (from Romania) conducted the youth meeting.

During the Congress, many important lectures and studies were presented, such as "Conformity or Conversion?" (B. Jaksic), "Light and Darkness" (V. Lukic from Canada), "Christ, the Complete Saviour" (B. Jaksic), "Relationships, Courtship, and Marriage" (B. Jaksic), "Christ My Substitute" (E. Palamarchuk from

Ukraine), "The Language of Music" (D. Bosanic from Yugoslavia), "The Mountains of the Bible" (R. Ludwig from Germany), "The Things of the World" (R. Denev, Bulgaria), "To Be in Christ" (D. Campodonico from Italy), "Health" (D. Laza from Romania), "Joy of Recreation" (G. Tinta from Italy), "Amusement or Recreational Exercise" (D. Campodonico), "Victory Over Self" (R. Araujo from South Africa).

On Wednesday, August 6, there was an outing in Budapest, on the Buda side. We went to Gellért Hill, 140 meters above the Danube River, from which there is a beautiful view of the city. There we spent a few hours in the Jubileumi Park. Afterwards we went to the castle district in Buda and visited the Matthias Church and Fisherman's Bastion.

Brn. M. Zagoni and B. Toth (both from Hungary) baptized eleven souls on Friday, August 8, in a nearby lake encircled by woods. In the evening,



Inside the church of Mogyorod

the Sabbath was opened by Bro. F. Devai, with the study, "A Day for Sanctification."

Before the divine service on Sabbath, August 9, was the fellow-

noon passed with many songs, choir anthems, experiences, and items for meditation. In the evening after the sunset, the spiritual meetings for the Youth Congress closed.



International choir

shipment of the new members. On that occasion, Bro. Jaksic spoke on "The Moment of Finality." The after-

On Sunday, August 10, there was a cruise along the Danube, from Budapest to Visegrád and back. In



Outing in Budapest

Visegrád we had a chance to visit an old fortress on top of a hill, from which the landscape on the Danube is stupendous.

The visitors at the Congress came from 20 countries: Australia, Austria, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, India, Italy, Macedonia, Poland,

Portugal, Romania, Slovakia, South Africa, Ukraine, U.S.A., and Yugoslavia. The largest attendance was on Sabbath, August 9, with more than 500 people. We thank God for this wonderful, soul-strengthening experience, and we really look forward to more of such gatherings in the future.



Music at the baptism

Young people for Jesus

Music & words
by
Daniel Campodonico
(Italy)

Allegro ♩ = 60

Young peo - ple for Je - sus, young peo - ple for Jesus. Lift
up your eyes----- and see the fields: the fields are ready, the
fields are white. Young peo - ple for Je - sus, young peo - ple for
Jesus. Je - sus is cal - ling, is cal - ling you.
Are----- you rea - dy? Are-----you rea - dy? To go in the
fields, to go in the fields. Young peo - ple for Je - sus, young peo - ple for
Jesus. I am rea - dy to go in the fie - lds. I----- want to
go! I----- want to go! To bring the news, the news of Jesus.

04-09-1997 Levì (GE) Italy
© Daniel Campodonico



The Joy of _____ Recreation

The happiness which must distinguish young Christians

by G. Tinta — Trieste, Italy

All young people would like to be happy; it is important, however, to distinguish worldly happiness from the Christian one.

Young people are privileged to refresh their spirit and strengthen their bodies with innocent recreation, with the purpose of using their physical and mental strength to the glory of God.

We must differentiate between recreation and amusement. Recreation provides refreshment for mind and body, enabling us to return with new vigor to the earnest work of life. Amusement, on the other hand, is sought for the sake of pleasure and is often carried to excess; it absorbs the energies that are required for useful work and thus proves a hindrance to life's true success.

Let us remember that we cannot unite ourselves with worldly, amusement-loving people and at the same time be able to resist temptation.

In Titus 2:6-8, the apostle Paul exhorts young people to sobriety. God invites us to renounce every bad custom, to be diligent, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord. This is more important today than ever before, as the world's corruption escalates and the prevailing influence of society is for young people to follow their natur-

al, carnal tendencies without regard to principle. See 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

The Spirit of Prophecy warns us concerning the unfortunate age in which we are living—especially the young. The current trend is to allow the youth to follow the natural turn of their own minds, making it hard for them to resist the worldly influences often perpetuated even by some who profess to believe the present truth. The majority of nominal Christians, while they profess to be living for Christ, are really living for the world. Since Christianity is considered honorable, people like to claim they are Christians, yet many do not discern genuine religion and do not restrain themselves from taking part in worldly pleasures. Flattering themselves that they are engaging in innocent amusement, many are separating themselves from God and becoming children of the world. Let us remember that God does not recognize the pleasure-seeker as His follower. Those only who are self-denying, living lives of sobriety, humility, and holiness are true followers of Jesus. And such do not enjoy the frivolous, empty conversation of the lover of the world.

The true followers of Christ will shun places of worldly amusement because they find no Jesus there, no

influence which will make them heavenly-minded and increase their growth in grace. Obedience to God's word will lead them to come out from all these things and be separate. "By their fruits ye shall know them" describes well what Christ said about real Christians (Matthew 7:20)! Jesus, who has chosen His people out of the world, requires them to be separate from the world! To love God and keep His commandments is far away from loving the world's pleasures and its friendship. The youth who follow Christ have a warfare before them; they have a daily cross to bear in coming out of the world and imitating the life of Jesus. But there are many promises for such who seek the Saviour early, including Proverbs 8:17 and 1 Peter 1:13-15.

Every youth should ask himself: what influence will this particular amusement have on my physical, mental, and moral health? Will my mind become so infatuated as to forget God?

The most dangerous pleasures of our time include the theatre, circus, card-playing, frivolous conversations, bad reading material, and the vast majority of what is found on television.

But if we must renounce everything, how can young people be happy? In reality, worldly amusements don't make us happy! That is only an illusion. In Ecclesiastes 2:26, Solomon tells us that it is God that gives joy to man. Peter repeats that in Jesus only can real happiness be found (1 Peter 1:8).

"Let us never lose sight of the fact that Jesus is a wellspring of joy. He does not delight in the misery of human beings, but loves to see them happy.

"Christians have many sources of happiness at their command, and they may tell with unerring accuracy what pleasures are lawful and right. They may enjoy such recreations as

will not dissipate the mind or debase the soul, such as will not disappoint and leave a sad after-influence to destroy self-respect or bar the way to usefulness. If they can take Jesus with them and maintain a prayerful spirit, they are perfectly safe.

"Any amusement in which you can engage asking the blessing of God upon it in faith will not be dangerous. But any amusement which disqualifies you for secret prayer, for devotion at the altar of prayer, or for taking part in the prayer meeting is not safe, but dangerous."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 513.

"These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

The Spirit of Prophecy presents these questions to us: Are our "recreations such as to impart moral and spiritual vigor? Will they lead to purity of thought and action? Impurity is today widespread, even among the professed followers of Christ. Passion is unrestrained; the animal propensities are gaining strength by indulgence, while the moral powers are constantly becoming weaker. Many are eagerly participating in worldly, demoralizing amusements which God's word forbids. Thus they sever their connection with God and rank themselves with the pleasure lovers of the world. The sins that destroyed the antediluvians and the cities of the plain exist today—not merely in heathen lands, not only among popular professors of Christianity, but with some who profess to be looking for the coming of the Son of man. If God should present these sins before you as they appear in His sight, you would be filled with shame and terror.

"And what has caused this alarming condition? Many have accepted the theory of the truth who have had no true conversion. I know

whereof I speak. There are few who feel true sorrow for sin, who have deep, pungent convictions of the depravity of the unregenerate nature. The heart of stone is not exchanged for a heart of flesh. Few are willing to fall upon the Rock and be broken."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 218.

"Happiness that is sought from selfish motives, outside of the path of duty, is ill-balanced, fitful, and transitory; it passes away, and the soul is filled with loneliness and sorrow; but there is joy and satisfaction in the service of God; the Christian is not left to walk in uncertain paths; he is not left to vain regrets and disap-

pointments. If we do not have the pleasures of this life we may still be joyful in looking to the life beyond.

"But even here Christians may have the joy of communion with Christ; they may have the light of His love, the perpetual comfort of His presence. Every step in life may bring us closer to Jesus, may give us a deeper experience of His love, and may bring us one step nearer to the blessed home of peace. Then let us not cast away our confidence, but have firm assurance, firmer than ever before. 'Hitherto hath the Lord helped us,' and He will help us to the end. 1 Samuel 7:12."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 124, 125.

Young People's Department

Coming Events in 1998

January 14–18	North Brazilian Union Youth Congress: Fortaleza, Ceará, Brazil
Jan. 30–Feb. 1	South Brazilian Union Youth Congress: São Paulo, SP, Brazil
Feb. 9–15	Peruvian Union Youth Congress: Arequipa, Perú
March 4–8	Ecuadorian Field Youth Congress: Quito, Ecuador
March 11–15	Venezuelan Field Youth Congress: Venezuela
March 31–April 5	Colombian Field Youth Congress: Bogotá, Colombia
April 7–12	Honduran Field Youth Congress: La Ceiba, Honduras
April 11–19	Mexican Field Youth Congress: Mexico City, Mexico
August 8–18	World Youth Congress: Portugal

***Make your plans now to attend wherever you can!
You'll be glad you did!***

PHOTO NEWS . . .



Young people in France



Bulgarian group at Hungarian youth congress, 1997

PHOTO NEWS CONTINUED



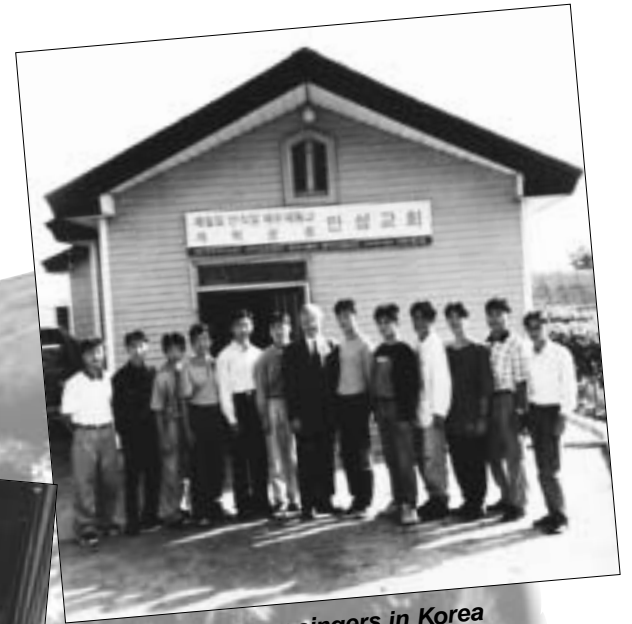
1997 Youth congress in Hungary



Discussion—workshop in the Philippines



Young people in Russia



Young singers in Korea



Young people in the Philippines

Show Me . . .

by Lora E. Clement (Adapted)

A godly minister was once traveling in Scotland, and stopped off at a small country inn. When evening came, the landlord asked him to conduct family worship. He consented on the condition that the servants of the household also attend. When it seemed that all had assembled, the minister asked:

"Is everyone here?"

"Yes," answered the landlord.

"Not one missing?" pressed the minister.

"Oh, well," admitted the landlord, "there is a poor girl who does the dirty work of the kitchen. But she is not fit to come in with the others."

"Call her," directed the minister. "I will not proceed until she comes."

And at his insistence the landlord yielded. Her neglected, hopeless appearance touched the minister's heart, and before he left the next morning, he called upon her and said:

"I wish to teach you a prayer, and I want you to pray it until I come back again. The prayer is this: 'Lord, show me myself.'"

Three days later he registered once again at the little inn, and inquired of the landlord:

"How is that poor girl?"

"She is spoiled," he answered. "She is of no use whatsoever. She

can do no more work. She weeps all the time. She mopes and is melancholy. I do not know what is the matter with her."

The minister knew, and he asked to see her. When the landlord had brought her in, the man of God said:

"Have you been praying, 'Lord, show me myself'?"

"Oh, sir, yes," she sobbed in distress, "and I am so wicked I can do nothing but weep over my sins."

"Now let me teach you another prayer. It is this: 'Lord, show me Thyself.'"

Years passed. The minister was preaching in Glasgow. As the service closed one evening, a neat, attractive woman whose face fairly shone with joy, came up to him and asked:

"Do you remember me?"

"No," he answered, "I do not."

"Do you remember teaching a poor scrub girl in a hotel to pray, 'Lord show me myself'?"

"Yes, I remember that well."

"I am that girl. You remember how I prayed that prayer and got such a view of myself that I was overwhelmed with grief and despair? Then you came back and taught me another prayer: 'Lord, show me Thyself,' and He really showed me Himself. All the grief and despair went out of my heart, and I trusted

Him, and found in Him a Saviour, and He made me what I am today."

"Lord show me myself—not somebody else; just me—the very innermost inside of me!"

I wonder how many of us have the courage to pray such a prayer, and the grace to look at ourselves honestly, and without apology, when the prayer is answered.

"The heart," Jeremiah tells us, "is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked," so the sight we may expect to see will not be a pretty one. But also, out of this same come "the issues of life," so its contents must be important. Let's have a look!

Do I keep the golden rule?

Am I honest, absolutely honest, with my fellows? Do I pay my bills promptly, as I wish others to do when I am the creditor instead of the debtor? Or do I serenely go my way with an "I don't care" shrug, owing the local merchants? Am I an honest debtor?

If I have asked the loan of money—even ever so small an amount—do I just conveniently "forget" about it? Or if it is "things" I borrow, do I return them without undue delay, and in as good condition as I received them from their owner? Am I an honest borrower?

Do I gossip, backbite, and slander? Do I "talk about" people? Or do I keep still when others have momentarily obscured all their good? Do I help Mrs. Rumor, "the biggest liar in the world," to spread abroad her tales of imagination? Do I speak the truth—and nothing but the truth? And do I remember that often the kindest, best, most considerate thing to say is nothing—and then repeat it? Am I charitable with the mistakes of others, remembering that it is always my privilege to believe that they have done their honest best? Do I really treat my fellows always and under

all circumstances as I would like them to treat me?

And am I honest with God? By purchase I am His. Do I act like it? Does He have all there is of me, or do I keep more or less of myself for me? Am I willing to let His will be my will? His way my way? Or am I so "broad-minded" that I indulge in things of which He has expressly commanded "Thou shalt not"? He asks that I return to Him a tenth of the income He gives me; but money is—well—money! Do I pay an honest tithe? Do I always? Am I really truly honest with my God?

No, "myself" looks anything but good!

"Lord, show me Thyself—Thy real self." Discouraging and heart-breaking as the inlook is, what a privilege to turn to the uplook. "I've tried in vain a thousand ways," sings the poet, "my fears to quell, my hopes to raise! But what I need, the Bible says, is ever only Jesus." He is the "chiefest among ten thousand," the one "altogether lovely," my Friend, my Redeemer, my Father. He is the forgiver of all sin, the cleanser of all hearts. I do not have to rid myself of sin—I am helpless within its powerful grasp. I do not have to save myself—indeed I cannot. All I can do is to accept Him, let Him come into my heart and have absolutely all there is of me. He is perfect, and in Him, I, too, may live the perfect life. Then in place of tears and grief and despair, great joy and the peace which passeth understanding will be mine.

"Lord, show me myself!" Have you courage to pray this prayer—now—today? And having seen, don't be disheartened. Pray again—this time,

"Lord, show me Thyself!" And you will find Him a wonderful Saviour!

The Conversion of a Young Girl

Editorial comment: Have you ever wondered what happens when a person truly gives his whole heart to the Lord—after surrendering even that which he had thought it most difficult to give up? Let us read about one girl's experience:

A View of the Father's Love

Faith now took possession of my heart. I felt an inexpressible love for God, and had the witness of His Spirit that my sins were pardoned. My views of the Father were changed. I now looked upon Him as a kind and tender parent, rather than a stern tyrant compelling men to a blind obedience. My heart went out toward Him in a deep and fervent love. Obedience to His will seemed a joy; it was a pleasure to be in His service. No shadow clouded the light that revealed to me the perfect will of God. I felt the assurance of an indwelling Saviour, and realized the truth of what Christ had said: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

My peace and happiness were in such marked contrast with my former gloom and anguish that it seemed to me as if I had been res-

cued from hell and transported to heaven. I could even praise God for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity. Naturally proud and ambitious, I might not have been inclined to give my heart to Jesus had it not been for the sore affliction that had cut me off, in a manner, from the triumphs and vanities of the world.

For six months not a shadow clouded my mind, nor did I neglect one known duty. My whole endeavor was to do the will of God, and keep Jesus and heaven continually in mind. I was surprised and enraptured with the clear views now presented to me of the atonement and the work of Christ. I will not attempt to further explain the exercises of my mind; suffice it to say that old things had passed away, all things had become new. There was not a cloud to mar my perfect bliss. I longed to tell the story of Jesus' love, but felt no disposition to engage in common conversation with any one. My heart was so filled with love to God and the peace that passeth understanding, that I loved to meditate and pray.

Bearing Testimony

The night after receiving so great a blessing, I attended the

advent meeting. When the time came for the followers of Christ to speak in His favor, I could not remain silent, but rose and related my experience. Not a thought had entered my mind of what I should say; but the simple story of Jesus' love to me fell from my lips with perfect freedom, and my heart was so happy to be liberated from its bondage of dark despair, that I lost sight of the people about me, and seemed to be alone with God. I found no difficulty in expressing my peace and happiness, except for the tears of gratitude that choked my utterance.

Elder Stockman was present. He had recently seen me in deep despair, and as he now saw my captivity turned, he wept aloud, rejoicing with me, and praising God for this proof of His tender mercy and loving kindness.

Not long after receiving this great blessing, I attended a conference meeting at the Christian church, where Elder Brown was pas-

tor. I was invited to relate my experience, and felt not only great freedom of expression, but happiness, in telling my simple story of the love of Jesus and the joy of being accepted of God. As I spoke, with subdued heart and tearful eyes, my soul seemed drawn toward heaven in thanksgiving. The melting power of the Lord came upon the assembled people. Many were weeping and others praising God.

Sinners were invited to arise for prayers, and many responded to the call. My heart was so thankful to God for the blessing He had given me, that I longed to have others participate in this sacred joy. My mind was deeply interested for those who might be suffering under a sense of the Lord's displeasure and the burden of sin. While relating my experience, I felt that no one could resist the evidence of God's pardoning love that had wrought so wonderful a change in me. The reality of true



conversion seemed so plain to me that I felt like helping my young friends into the light, and at every opportunity exerted my influence toward this end.

Laboring for Young Friends

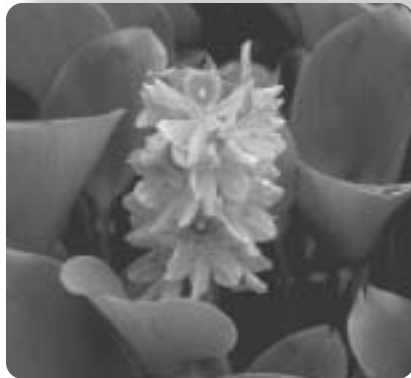
I arranged meetings with my young friends, some of whom were considerably older than myself, and a few were married persons. A number of them were vain and thoughtless; my experience sounded to them like an idle tale, and they did not heed my entreaties. But I determined that my efforts should never cease till these dear souls, for whom I had so great an interest, yielded to God. Several entire nights were spent by me in earnest prayer for those whom I had sought out and brought together for the purpose of laboring and praying with them.

Some of these had met with us from curiosity to hear what I had to say; others thought me beside myself to be so persistent in my efforts, especially when they manifested no concern on their own part. But at every one of our little meetings I continued to exhort and pray for each one separately, until every one had yielded to Jesus, acknowledging the merits of His pardoning love. Every one was converted to God.

Night after night in my dreams I seemed to be laboring for the salvation of souls. At such times special cases were presented to my mind; these I afterward sought out and prayed with. In every instance but one these persons yielded themselves to the Lord. Some of our more formal brethren feared that I was too zealous for the conversion of souls;

but time seemed to me so short that it behooved all who had a hope of a blessed immortality and looked for the soon coming of Christ, to labor without ceasing for those who were still in their sins and standing on the awful brink of ruin.

Though I was very young, the plan of salvation was so clear to my mind, and my personal experience had been so marked, that, upon considering the matter, I knew it was my duty to continue my efforts for the salvation of precious souls, and to pray and confess Christ at every opportunity. My entire being was offered to the service of my Master. Let come what would, I determined to please God, and live as one who expected the Saviour to come and reward the faithful. I felt like a little child coming to God as to my father, and asking Him what He would have me to do. Then as my duty was made plain to me, it was my greatest happiness to perform it. Peculiar trials sometimes beset me. Those older in experience than myself endeavored to hold me back and cool the ardor of my faith; but with the smiles of Jesus brightening my life, and the love of God in my heart, I went on my way with a joyful spirit.—*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, pp. 39–42 [1915 edition].



Youth Messenger, January–March 1998

THE ADVENTURES OF DANIEL

Part 4

by Tobias L. Stockler — Ontario, Canada

Had, all at once. Every one of us is righteous and evil whether we like it or not, whether we know it or not. That means me. That means you. What is the difference between a good guy and a bad guy? It depends. You can't lump all "bad" people together any more than you can lump all "good" people together. Well, suppose we mean Christian by good, and non-Christian (idolaters, pagans, heathens, atheists, agnostics, I-don't-knows, and whatever else—it is a big group, and not all of them think the same) by bad, what is the differences then? It still depends. David and Moses both believed in Christ. They were both murderers, too. Some non-Christians have behaved much more civilly. What is the difference, then?

First, what do we mean by good and bad? Let's start with bad. By bad I mean every act that is truly harmful. Hatred of people is harmful, physiologically to ourselves, and psychologically at least, to others. By good, I mean anything that is truly beneficial.

Every one of us is born acting good and bad, unintentionally. We all begin life benefiting and harming ourselves and others. Where we go from there is up to us. We choose to become intentionally good or bad. That is the difference between true

The first are becoming intentionally beneficial—always, in any circumstances. The second are becoming intentionally malicious in their actual motives. The rest simply haven't completely made up their mind between the two yet. All persons will make up their mind eventually. In theological terms we call it the close of probation.

Well, Nebuchadnezzar was a run-of-the-mill human. Yes, he was rich and powerful. But under the surface he had to fight with the same pride and egotism you and I struggle with (although, I admit, he had more to be egotistical about!). And he had the same sense of right that lies somewhere in our grey matter. In fact, he had a keen sense of liberty and justice. Thus, history records him as a wise and kind but firm ruler. God used him to set many injustices aright, some because of his sense of justice, and some because of his ambition.

Nebuchadnezzar subdued Tyre after a long and famous struggle. Egypt had been a little easier project a few years before (just before he succeeded his father, Nabopolassar, to the throne). As he added nation after nation to the Babylonian realm, he increased his fame as the great-est ruler of the age.

"It is not surprising that the successful monarch, so ambitious and so proud-spirited, should be tempted

to turn aside from the path of humility, which alone leads to true greatness. In the intervals between his wars of conquest he gave much thought to the strengthening and beautifying of his capital, until at length the city of Babylon became the chief glory of his kingdom, 'the golden city,' 'the praise of the whole earth.' His passion as a builder, and his signal success in making Babylon one of the wonders of the world, ministered to his pride, until he was in grave danger of spoiling his record as a wise ruler whom God would continue to use as an instrument for the carrying out of the divine purpose."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 515.

Twice God appealed to the better side of Nebuchadnezzar's heart. The first time, He prevented anyone but Himself through Daniel to answer the king's queries about the future of his kingdom. And the second time, when Nebuchadnezzar rebelled against the idea of God superseding him as monarch of the civilized world, He turned his rebellion into wasted time and material. All the officials of his kingdom marveled at and listened to three of his subjects, completely ignoring Nebuchadnezzar's great national symbol and idol towering over their heads.

But Nebuchadnezzar was all too human. At first he was impressed with God. Later, when the newness wore off, he returned to his old ways with even more zeal than before. So the third time God tried to turn this proud heart into an intentionally good one, just as he always tries to draw every heart to the better side of life.

That night Nebuchadnezzar dreams. He sees a very large tree. The tree is visible from a long way away. It towers above everything else, demanding your attention. (Having stood at the base of the world largest living thing—a tree named



General Sherman—I think God knows well what kind of symbol to use for something big and important.) This tree is as healthy as it is large. And it is filled with fruit. I suppose the squirrels love to play chase among its branches. Sparrows fly from its branches to hop around and peck at the ground with endless patience, and then return to the safety of its branches. Swallows dart here and there above it, catching insects so invisible to us down below. Rabbits bite, blade by blade, the green grass that surrounds that mighty trunk. A little bit further, a few cows chew their cud in the cool shade. Deer feed on the lowest leaves, at dusk, and wolves howl at any moonbeams that perseveringly break through the shadows of its branches. This tree is the "mall" of this natural world.

Then comes the Divine command to cut the tree down, but to leave the roots. We might liken it to closing down a shopping mall. Its doors and windows are boarded up. But rather than tear the building down, we turn it into a barn. Then came the words that should have explained the dream to Nebuchadnezzar: "Let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the holy ones: to the intent that the living may know that the most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will, and setteth up over it the basest of men" (Daniel 4:16,17).

When the "wise," the scholars and the university men couldn't explain the dream, Nebuchadnezzar knew just where to turn—to Daniel. Daniel immediately understood the dream. Would you have understood it so quickly and accurately? And in spite of the risk, he accurately interpreted this dream, appealing to the king to improve his choices before it was too late. At first Nebuchadnezzar did. But over the next year he lost this impression from the Holy Spirit also. And as he did he became oppressive to his subjects. One year later, the "tree" was cut down. Nebuchadnezzar lost his intelligence. Instead of being likened to a tree, he became like one of the cows sitting in the shade of the tree. Seven years he was an "animal." You can imagine what you would think if this happened to the President or Prime Minister of your country!

When his years of grazing were over, his intelligence returned. Would you have trusted him then? Babylon did. And what was Nebuchadnezzar's response to this humiliation? Nebuchadnezzar praises God. I know more than one young person who thinks or recently thought that the best reaction to making a fool of yourself is suicide. Nebuchadnezzar thought the best reaction was to thank God.

"At the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my rea-

son returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase" (Daniel 4:34-37).

Have you thanked God for letting you make a fool of yourself recently? I fear that the person who commits suicide, commits it twice. Once in this life, to a temporal consciousness "sleep." And by virtue of that, once again that person commits suicide of his eternal life into eternal death. Nebuchadnezzar and I will, by the grace of God, be thanking God together in a few more years. Thanking God that He made a "fool" of Himself for us, to save those of us, who in making fools of ourselves, found Him. I would rather work side by side with Nebuchadnezzar, and talk with him any day than face double suicide.

What about you? God has tried to turn you from a house of good and bad divided against yourself into a temple of marble and gold, that He may be close friends with you. I know, because that is His "lifework" right now. And someday you will discover Him, if you haven't already. It may be sometime when you make a great fool of yourself, or it may not be. I don't know. But I do know this: I pray that when Nebuchadnezzar and I gather around in the Universe's capital to give our thanks, face to face, to that great Lover and Saviour of fools, you will be there to join us in the most joyous celebration this entire Universe has ever experienced. And I pray that you learn to thank God here, soon, for only the thankful have the benefit of eternity. ♣



by Nathan Tyler — Tennessee, U.S.A.

A hysterical woman ran toward us, crying out something indistinct. Her screams were drowned by the roaring of flames and the shattering of glass as windows exploded. Just minutes before she had been preparing breakfast in the kitchen, while a visiting relative was lighting a fire in the living room heater. After several failed attempts, the guest had decided to use gasoline to ignite the material. You can guess what happened next.

It had been on our way to work that we noticed that giant plume of oily black smoke. Rounding a bend, we gazed horrified at the scene. The foul smell of burning asphalt hung in the air. As we rushed to see what we could do to help, the poor lady came up to us crying and trying to tell us that her keys were still in the house. She could not move her car which was parked dangerously close to the inferno. After trying to push it away, we realized that we would not be able to move it.

From what the lady said, I understood that there was someone trapped inside. I circled the now completely burning house, trying to find a window or doorway that was not pouring smoke or flame. There was none. Then Dad noticed that electric wires suspended over the home were starting to melt and fray, and he called for me to come back to where he was.

Retracing my steps, I wished that somehow we could do something. But I finally realized there was nothing we could do. For a few moments we stood frozen by the horror of the impressive spectacle, then slowly turned to leave as sirens wailed in the distance.

That cruel day I became acutely aware of the shortness and uncertainty of life. And it made me think. What if my own home had been destroyed that morning? If my family had been so suddenly displaced? Would I have been prepared to meet my Lord had the fire claimed me as its victim?

Then another thought more awesome came to mind. We are living in the time of judgment. Our Lord Jesus, the High Priest, is looking over the lives of everyone that professes to follow Him. Another fire, much hotter, will be the end of those who fail to accept Jesus' love, and follow their own way instead.

"Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1 Corinthians 3:13).

Friend, could He be looking at your name just now? It is a solemn thought. Do not think that you have an indefinite period of time in which to prepare for the Judgment. Today, you may make your final decision.

Why today, you ask? I read once a story about a young man who grew up in a Christian home. He knew the Bible stories, he heard the minister preaching about salvation, but he decided that he wouldn't make a total surrender just yet. I can't give up everything yet, he reasoned. There are things I want to do.

This young man had a particular fascination with cars, especially fast

ones. He had lots of fun driving at high speed to impress his friends. One evening he invited a young woman to accompany him. He brought some alcoholic drinks along, too. They were having a thrilling ride, when all of a sudden, a sharp curve appeared ahead. They were going far too fast. Worse, a big truck and trailer were slowly rounding that curve. The truck driver tried to avoid them, but they plunged ahead—right into the side of the trailer. Both the young man and his companion were killed instantly. Thus their lives were ended. No more opportunity to choose God's way. What had been the fruit of their effort?

And what about you and me? We do not have the liberty to do what we please, and then come to the Lord at a convenient time. This moment, every moment, is a decision time. What you do today might set off a chain of events that would ruin your life and your soul.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them"(Ecclesiastes 12:1).

Oh, friend, will you make the decision with me? Seeking the Lord now is important. Do not put it off for some time when you are older. Youth is the best time of your life. There is no better time to go all-out for God. Do not think that you can play with



Satan's amusements for a while, and give your heart to the Lord later.

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8).

I challenge you to renew your commitment to Jesus. And if you have not yet given Him your heart, do it today. It will be the beginning of a brand new experience.

Have courage, young brothers and sisters, Jesus is coming. Very soon now, we are going to see His face. It is my hope and prayer that we will all be waiting for Him then. ❧

The Secret

*I met God in the morning,
When my day was at its best;
And His presence came like sunrise
With a glory in my breast.*

*All day long the Presence lingered,
All day long He stayed with me;
And we sailed in perfect calmness
O'er a very troubled sea.*

*Other ships were blown and battered,
Other ships were sore distressed;
But the winds that seemed to drive them,
Brought to us both peace and rest.*

*Then I thought of other mornings,
With a keen remorse of mind,
When I, too, had loosed the moorings
With the Presence left behind.*

*So I think I know the secret
Learned from many a troubled way;
You must seek Him in the morning
If you want Him through the day.*

— *Cushman*

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