



The Reformation Herald

2002 Week of Prayer

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Week of Prayer

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Waiting and Watching



The Reformation Herald

GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT

2002 WEEK OF PRAYER

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Waiting and Watching

By the tender mercies of our heavenly Father we have come to the end of another year, and once more we have the privilege of enjoying the week of prayer.

With thankful hearts we praise God for the many blessings bestowed upon His people during this year, 2002. In spite of the calamities that are taking place, we, who are still among the living, are indebted to our Lord for life, health, strength, and for preserving us in His love, grace, and truth.

The general title for this week of prayer is: **Waiting and Watching**. If there ever was a time when this should be a reality in our lives, it is now. Various brethren have contributed with thoughts, and their messages will be read during this week. We pray that the Lord may abundantly bless each reader, and that the messages may have a lasting effect in our heart.

The **Sabbath of December 14** is suggested to be a special day of **fasting and prayer**. Those who are able and willing are invited to unite with God's people in this time of supplication.

On **Sunday, December 15**, an **offering will be collected** to be used for the sustenance of the work of reformation, especially in the foreign missions. Please, make a special sacrifice to bring to the Lord a generous offering. A reward is promised and the fulfilment is certain.

May the Lord bless every one who partakes in this blessed week of prayer.

The General Conference Executive Committee

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"The age in which we live calls for
reformatory action."

—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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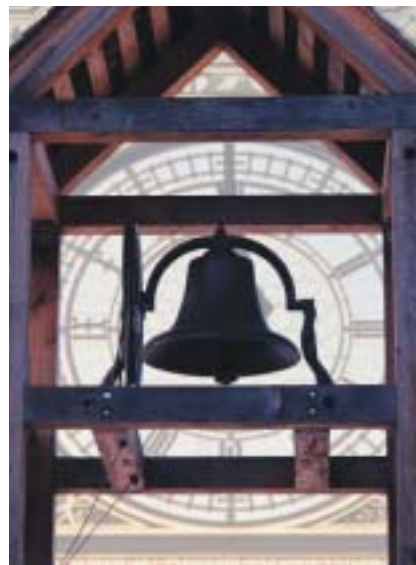
A Solemn Hour

The days in which we live are unpredictable and uncertain, and one never knows what will come next upon the world. Since September 11, 2001, the whole world has been in a state of confusion, fear, concern, and terrible catastrophe. The nations of the world are angry, and ready for retaliation, war, and total destruction. The Spirit of Prophecy describes this condition in the following words:

“The agencies of evil are combining their forces and consolidating. They are strengthening for the last great crisis. Great changes are soon to take place in our world, and the final movements will be rapid ones.”¹

“I was shown the inhabitants of the earth in the utmost confusion. War, bloodshed, privation, want, famine, and pestilence were abroad in the land. As these things surrounded God’s people, they began to press together, and to cast aside their little difficulties. Self-dignity no longer controlled them; deep humility took its place. Suffering, perplexity, and privation caused reason to resume its throne, and the passionate and unreasonable man became sane, and acted with discretion and wisdom.”²

“We are standing on the verge of the eternal world. We have no time to lose. It is high time to tell the people that Christ is coming. Let us warn them, visiting them at their homes, and talking and praying with them personally. By such efforts we shall win souls to Christ. If we come to God in faith, He will give us power and grace for every duty.”³



“A world is to be warned. Watch, wait, pray, work, and let nothing be done through strife and vainglory. Let nothing be done to increase prejudice, but everything possible to make prejudice less, by letting in light, the bright rays of the Sun of Righteousness amid the moral darkness. There is a great work to be done yet, and every effort

possible must be made to reveal Christ as the sin-pardoning Saviour, Christ as the sin-bearer, Christ as the bright and morning star, and the Lord will give us favor before the world until our work is done.”⁴

“We are in the investigative judgment; and the work for the time is solemn heart-searching. The duty devolves upon every one to consider, to watch, and to pray. You are not bidden by the Lord to examine your neighbor’s heart. Let your investigative powers be put to work to discover what evil is lurking in your own heart, what defects are in your character; what work needs to be done in your own home.”⁵

“There are three watchwords in the Christian life, which must be heeded if we would not have Satan steal a march upon us; namely, Watch, pray, work. Prayer and watching thereunto are necessary for advancement in the divine life. Never was there a time in your history more important than the present.”⁶

References:

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 11.
- ² *Ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 268.
- ³ *The Review and Herald*, November 19, 1914.
- ⁴ *Evangelism*, p. 65.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, December 29, 1896.
- ⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 283.

The Waiting Time

E. G. WHITE

We have been looking with joyful expectation for the soon coming of our Lord in the clouds of heaven. We have not dared to be among the number who said, even in their hearts, "My Lord delayeth His coming;" for upon such a fearful woe is pronounced. Enoch walked with God, and held communion with Him, and God instructed His servant in regard to the second advent of our Lord. Says the inspired word, "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him." The doctrine of Christ's coming was made known at this early date, to the man who walked with God in continual communion. The godly character of this prophet is to represent the

state of holiness to which the people of God must attain, who expect to be translated to heaven.

The doctrine of the coming of Jesus was to have a marked effect and influence upon the lives and characters of men, and one of the great teachers, one of the purest examples among men, proclaimed it to the inhabitants of the old world, prior to the Flood, and prior to his own translation to heaven. This great event—the advent of our Lord in all the glory of heaven—must be brought to the attention of men, and all should live with reference to this—the day of God that is soon to dawn upon us. The expectation of Christ's coming was to make men fear the Lord, and fear His judgments upon the transgressors of His law. It was to awaken them to a realization of the great sin of rejecting the offers of His mercy.

In the days of the apostle Paul, the Thessalonian brethren were laboring under the erroneous impression that the Lord would return in their day, and Paul wrote to correct this false impression, stating what events must transpire

before the advent could take place. He declared: "Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshiped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God." The man of sin was to arise, and do his work of exaltation and blasphemy, before the brethren could look for the coming of Christ. That great event was to be preceded by a falling away. There would be revealed a form of Antichrist, and the leaven of apostasy was to work with increasing power to the end of time. We are not to be surprised beyond measure to see the widespread declension of faith and piety. I have been bearing my testimony for the last forty years, that there would be those who would fall away from the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord to walk in. God has been sending warnings, reproofs, and encouragements to His people. He has warned them that

some would depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits.

From the beginning, it has been the special doctrine of the adversary of God and man, that the law of God was faulty and objectionable. He has ever represented the royal law of liberty, as oppressive and unendurable. He has denoted it “a yoke of bondage.” He has declared that it was impossible for man to keep the precepts of Jehovah. This has been, and still is, the work of Satan. This is the seductive doctrine that devils are seeking to spread throughout the world. “No law” is the cry of the enemy of God. Shall we go over to the side of the great rebel? If we do, it will be our ruin. Shall we make void the law of God, because Satan tells us that we should be more free, and happier, if we would do so? Were Adam and Eve happier, and did they walk in more liberty, when they received and acted upon these suggestions of the evil one?

Shall we say we have been deceived in regard to the doctrine of Christ’s near coming? Shall we declare that all our talking of His appearing has been in vain? Shall we say that all our work to make ready a people, prepared for His coming, has been for nought?—Never. We are not to become impatient and fretful because time still lingers. We are to wait patiently for the work of God to be accomplished. “But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put My law in

their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people.” “Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for He is faithful that promised; and let us consider one another to provoke”—unto doubts and unbelief, and apostasy?—No, but “unto love and good works; not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”

We must have a knowledge of the Scriptures, that we may trace down the lines of prophecy, and understand the specifications given by the prophets, and by Christ and the apostles; that we may not be ignorant; but be able to see that the day is approaching, so that with increased zeal and effort, we may exhort one another to faithfulness, piety, and holiness. “For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.” Here is a most solemn statement, and one which should often be presented to souls, to show them the danger of entering into sin after they have received a knowledge of the truth of God. We would warn men and women off this ground. All would do well to remember, when tempted to leave the straight path of right, that those who, having received a knowledge of the truth, apostatize, “sin willfully,” transgress the law of God (“for sin is the transgression of the law”)—for such there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sin. “Cast not away

therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”

Questioners, doubters, and apostates say to those who have been looking for the appearing of their Lord, “You are false prophets.” “You have been telling us for years that it was but a little time until the day of God would break; and it is evident that Christ will not come for many, many more years.” Are you not afraid to make such statements? Has not Christ described you in the person of the unfaithful servant who said, “My Lord delayeth His coming,” and who began to eat and to drink with the drunken, and to smite his fellow servants? The inspired word declares, “Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” “Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.”

Christ spoke repeatedly of His second coming to the earth. At one time He said, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” More than eighteen hundred years

have passed since He, who spake as never man spake, uttered these words. He who could utter nothing but truth, made this assertion, which implied that the hour was at hand; but the dead are still in their graves. The Lifegiver's voice has not yet called the sleeping saints from their gloomy prisons, but we have not lost faith, because the predicted hour has not yet arrived. We work on, trusting, and believing, and waiting, not taking one step backward; but obeying the orders of the Captain of our salvation, whose command to His people is, "Go forward."

The hour will come; it is not far distant, and some of us who now believe will be alive upon the earth, and shall see the prediction verified, and hear the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God echo from mountain and plain and sea to the uttermost parts of the earth. All creation will hear that voice, and those who have lived and died in Jesus will respond to the call of the Prince of life. It will be heard in the dungeons of men, in the caverns of the deep, in the rocks and caves of the earth, only to be obeyed. It is the same voice that said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest"—the same voice which said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." All those who have obeyed that voice when it said, "If any man will come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me," will hear the "Well done, thou good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." To them, that

voice will mean—rest, peace, and everlasting life. They will recognize it as the voice of One who has been touched with the feeling of their infirmities.

Shall any one become weary now? Shall any one say, "The city is a great way off"? Shall we give up our faith, and draw back unto perdition, when we are nearing the eternal world?—No; no. God lives and reigns. "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions." Give up our faith? lose our confidence? become impatient?—No; no. We will not think of such a thing. "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put Him to an open shame. For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God; but that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned."

The Christian is represented by the figure of the earth, which drinks in the rain that comes upon it, and brings forth fruit to the one who dresses and cares for it. The follower of Christ is to gather sap and nourishment from the living

Vine. He is to produce fruit to the glory of God. The Lord requires that every plant in His garden should be thrifty, and bear fruit in abundance—some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold. We are not to be satisfied with momentary flashes of light; but we are constantly to seek for the illumination of the Spirit of God. It is our privilege to study the word of truth, and to obey it. We are not safe unless we are often found before God, offering up, in faith, fervent and effectual prayers. We must draw water from the wells of salvation. We may raise the soul from its common earthliness into a heavenly atmosphere which will purify, elevate, and refine it for the paradise of God. Those who keep the commandments of God, have a right to appropriate the rich promises that He has given.

Well may the children of God be filled with hope and courage, with joy and rapture, as they contemplate the things which God has prepared for them that love Him. "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming, for ye are our glory and joy?" "For the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air; and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another

with these words.” “But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you. For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. 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. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief. Ye are the children of the light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness. Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober. For they that sleep sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night. But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for a helmet the hope of salvation.” “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Was Christ a false prophet when He uttered these words? More than eighteen hundred years have passed since John heard this great truth, and the Lord has not yet come to reign. But shall we give up looking for His appearance? Shall we say, “My Lord delayeth His coming”? See how the specifications of the prophecies have been and are fulfilling. Let us lift up our heads and rejoice; for our redemption draweth nigh. It is nearer than when we first believed. Shall we not wait patiently, filled

with courage and faith? Shall we not make ready a people to stand in the day of final reckoning and judgment? ¹

Many say, “If I knew Jesus would come in five years, I would make it my first business to win souls to Christ; for this would be the all important consideration.” And these very persons may not live two years, or even one. We should first seek God, and His holiness. In His wise providence we are incapable of looking into the future, which often causes us disquietude and unhappiness. But one of the greatest evidences we have of the loving-kindness of God is His concealment of the events of the morrow. Our ignorance of tomorrow makes us more vigilant and earnest today. We cannot see what is before us. Our best-laid plans sometimes seem to be unwise and faulty. We think, “If we only knew the future!” but God would have His children trust in Him, and be ready to go where He shall lead them. We know not the precise time when our Lord shall be revealed in the clouds of heaven, but He has told us that our only safety is in a constant readiness—a position of watching and waiting. Whether we have one year before us, or five, or ten, we are to be faithful to our trust today. We are to perform each day’s duties as faithfully as though that day were to be our last. . . .

We have only a little while to urge the warfare; then Christ will come, and this scene of rebellion

will close. Then our last efforts will have been made to work with Christ and advance His kingdom. Some who have stood in the forefront of the battle, zealously resisting incoming evil, fall at the post of duty; others gaze sorrowfully at the fallen heroes, but have no time to cease work. They must close up the ranks, seize the banner from the hand palsied by death, and with renewed energy vindicate the truth and the honor of Christ. As never before, resistance must be made against sin—against the powers of darkness. The time demands energetic and determined activity on the part of those who believe present truth. They should teach the truth by both precept and example. If the time seems long to wait for our Deliverer to come, if, bowed by affliction and worn with toil, we feel impatient for our commission to close, and to receive an honorable release from the warfare, let us remember—and let the remembrance check every murmur—that God leaves us on earth to encounter storms and conflicts, to perfect Christian character, to become better acquainted with God our Father and Christ our elder Brother, and to do work for the Master in winning many souls to Christ, that with glad heart we may hear the words: “Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.” ²

References:

¹ *The Review and Herald*, July 31, 1888.

² *Ibid.*, October 25, 1881.

The Cares of This Life

ANATOLI BOGATOV — UKRAINE

Take no thought

Jesus, instructing the hungry people and further introducing Himself to His disciples, said, “Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things” (Matthew 6:31, 32). What a precious promise! Every believing Christian can be sure that he or she is not an orphan in this raging, turbulent world. We have a loving and compassionate Father that knows His children’s every need. This is a great source of happiness—to find a loving Father through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Christ is still calling today. Amid the cares of this life He tells us, “Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?” (Matthew 6:26). Here Jesus explains that the Father cares for us and we can do nothing without Him, even in this temporal life. The Lord further assures that He knows every-

thing about us, confirming that “the very hairs of your head are all numbered” (Matthew 10:30). He bids us reassuringly to trust Him. As we read the history when Christ looked upon His estranged people with compassion and tears in His eyes, His declaration resounds, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:37). The merciful Lord has not changed His tender regard toward us, His people, from then until now. He is still inviting us to come under His wings. And when we do not wish to respond to this invitation for His protection, He is saddened. Oh, how great and inexhaustible is the love of God for us sinners!

Actively seeking the kingdom of God

Jesus urges us to put all our cares and burdens at His feet. From the same lips of the great Teacher, our Lord Jesus Christ, we also hear, “Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). God

calls us to seek His kingdom. A person who is looking for something is not idle—he or she is active. We are to seek the kingdom of God that has been lost by mankind, and this kingdom cannot come to us of its own. We must seek it. But how can we find the kingdom of God in this sinful world? Turning to the Scriptures, which are as a light shining in a dark place, we read, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2).

We read here that the kingdom of heaven—or of God—is at hand, or has drawn near through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is very close to us. Jesus says, “Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me” (Revelation 3:20). We do not need to make a long pilgrimage to look for Christ. He has come to us Himself and is knocking at the door of each of our sinful hearts with an invitation to come with Him to His heavenly kingdom. What will be your response—my response? If I don’t let Him in, He will go away, and I will be lost.

Let us carefully consider the Lord's instructions. Jesus states clearly that we cannot obtain the kingdom of God by our own strength. "Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). To enter into the kingdom of Christ we must cooperate with the Master's will and bear the citizenship of that better land. For this, we need Christ dwelling in our hearts, we must abide in Him moment by moment. Without the exercise of care, labor and earnest struggle, we will not obtain the traits of Christ's character. By "giving all diligence" (2 Peter 1:5), the apostle Peter explains that we cannot be partakers of the divine nature if we have a slothful, careless experience void of diligent effort.

The Spirit of Prophecy says:

"Some, I saw, did not participate in this work of agonizing and pleading. They seemed indifferent and careless. They were not resisting the darkness around them, and it shut them in like a thick cloud. The angels of God left these and went to the aid of the earnest, praying ones. I saw angels of God hasten to the assistance of all who were struggling with all their power to resist the evil angels and trying to help themselves by calling upon God with perseverance. But His angels left those who made no effort to help themselves, and I lost sight of them." ¹

Joseph, Daniel, and Esther— what did they care for?

Can we literally understand the words of Christ: "Take no thought," to mean, "Do not care"?

Circumstances in our life often change. But we need to be loyal to God all the time. If we keep His commandments only when it is convenient to us or under favorable circumstances, then we cannot count on eternal life. Believers living today in many countries in the world enjoy freedom of religion, but does this mean we can live a careless life? Let us remember the experience of Christ's disciples. "Tarry ye here, and watch with me" (Matthew 26:38). The disciples could not even imagine how their faith was to be severely tested that night. The same is with us. The Lord is calling us today, in this favorable time, to watch with Him. We, as the people of God, chosen by His mercy, should consider deeply whether we are true, wholehearted Christians—and whether we can stand in the time of temptation and trial. When severely tempted, will we be able to say as Joseph did: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

"This temptation, so sudden, so strong, so seductive—how should it be met? Joseph knew well what would be the consequence of resistance. On the one hand were concealment, favor, and rewards; on the other, disgrace, imprisonment, perhaps death. His whole future life depended upon the decision of the moment. Would principle triumph? Would Joseph still be true to God? With inexpressible anxiety, angels looked upon the scene.

"Joseph's answer reveals the power of religious principle. He would not betray the confidence of

his master on earth, and, whatever the consequences, he would be true to his Master in heaven." ²

Will we be able to do as Daniel did? "Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank: therefore he requested of the prince of the eunuchs that he might not defile himself" (Daniel 1:8). Daniel, being a captive in Babylon, was anxious that the requirements of the king of Babylon, to which he was exposed, might not separate him from God. He thought over this matter and came to the conclusion that it was time to act. Young Daniel approached Melzar with the request to give him food designed by God Himself for men: "Let them give us pulse to eat, and water to drink" (Daniel 1:12). Daniel and his companions were full of anxiety. Those days were not carefree or indifferent. They were days of struggle and anguish, but the results were obvious. The Word of God says of Daniel that he was a man greatly beloved. Daniel 10:11. He was a man of victory. He had a heavenly citizenship, and he did not obtain it by careless living.

Let us see the life of Esther. What a test befell her! This God-fearing woman did not spend her days in ease, although her royal position could certainly have been conducive to that. When the crisis came, she might have stood back in passive resignation and done nothing for the salvation of her people—the people of God, when they were exposed to great danger.

Mordecai confirmed to her, however, “For if thou altogether holdest thy peace at this time, then shall there enlargement and deliverance arise to the Jews from another place; but thou and thy father’s house shall be destroyed: and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

The heart of Esther was touched to do her utmost to save the people of Israel, and after a short consideration she made her decision: “Then Esther bade them return Mordecai this answer, Go, gather together all the Jews that are present in Shushan, and fast ye for me, and neither eat nor drink three days, night or day: I also and my maidens will fast likewise; and so will I go in unto the king, which is not according to the law: and if I perish, I perish” (Esther 4:15, 16). She determined to enter the king’s chamber, which could have cost her life. But after days of fasting and praying she came boldly before the king with the thought: “If I perish, I perish.” Once again, we see how much the life of a true child of God is far from being idle and careless.

In these three cases, as in so many other biblical examples, true believers showed self-sacrificing efforts in behalf of the cause of God. They had the fear of God that in due time they were to stand before Him in judgment, and that the Omnipotent Judge would ask them about every act committed in their life. Everyone will give an account of how he or she has fulfilled each duty.

The lives of the heroes of the Bible were not free from cares and anxiety. Studying their lives we see that they were seeking “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). We can only be astonished by their self-sacrifice and loyalty to the cause of God, and by their wisdom and courage. The apostle Paul writes, “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). To be called a Christian merely in name means nothing.

New Testament examples

Here we find some poor, simple, lowly women. They were not queens, but their God-fearing lives made them worthy to be mentioned on the sacred pages. One woman’s act in particular sets an example for us: “There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat” (Matthew 26:7).

This woman was drawn by the love of Christ. She was not careless or indifferent to the work of God and to the Lord Jesus Himself. She was burdened with the question: What shall I render unto the Lord for His love? In her meager life she found what to bring unto the Lord. Christ was deeply moved by her act, and He highly esteems similar deeds today.

Another bright example—the life of Dorcas. How was she serving her Lord? Was she preaching elo-

quent sermons, or was she rather spending her time helping the needy in her meekness? “All the widows stood by [Peter] weeping, and shewing the coats and garments which Dorcas made, while she was with them” (Acts 9:39). The widows were not just telling Peter about her good works, they actually showed the items she had made, testifying of her kindness and care for others. Let us take this into serious consideration: What will people say about us? What testimony will we receive at the judgment? What have we done for the Lord? Dear friends, a careless life is not a Christlike life.

Does the gospel teach a care-free life at home and church?

As we seek to let the light of Christ shine in our lives, our family life will reflect the bright beams of heavenly glory. Jesus through the apostle Paul gives straight instruction to those who genuinely desire to bring the message of salvation to others, “One that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (for if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?)” (1 Timothy 3:4, 5).

Even the blessings to be found within the family circle come as a direct result of the care exercised among family members. In order to be prosperous, each member of the family needs to show care and diligence. “Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work” (Exodus 20:9). It is written for the head of the family: “In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread” (Genesis 3:19). And

about his helper, the wife, it is written: “She is like the merchants’ ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens” (Proverbs 31:14, 15). Thus teaches the Word of God.

Paul says: “Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needeth” (Ephesians 4:28). Here it says plainly that without the exercise of care we will not be able to make a living and help those who need it. Some wrongly assume that the words of Jesus—“Take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”—mean we do not need to put forth diligence to have all that is necessary for our life, that everything shall be somehow provided by a divine miracle. This is a great deception.

“Thou hast blessed the work of his hands” (Job 1:10)—that is, the **work** of the hands, and not his or her idleness. “Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain” (Psalm 127:1). Therefore we should labor and build the house, and the Lord will help us. But if we do not build and do not labor, the Lord will not do the work for us either.

The apostle Paul says clearly that family happiness requires care and attention. The same is true in the church family. The one who can-

not care for his own family and provide for it will not be able to care for a new church and minister unto it. The Word of God declares, “If any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel” (1 Timothy 5:8). Care for one’s family is a gospel requirement. It does not teach us anything unwise—rather it helps us to have a sound conception about life. To love your wife, husband, children, to honor your parents and care for them—these are God’s requirements. “And that ye study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you; that ye may walk honestly toward them that are without, and that ye may have lack of nothing” (1 Thessalonians 4:11, 12).

A clear distinction

In Luke chapter 21, Jesus prophesied of the condition of things in the last days just before His return, explaining that “there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken.” He follows with a specific warning to “**take heed** to yourselves, **lest** at any time **your hearts be overcharged with** surfeiting, and drunkenness, and **cares of this life**, and so that day come upon you unawares” (Verses 25, 26, 34 emphasis supplied). To what

“cares” is He here referring? He distinctly calls them the **cares “of this life”**—in direct contrast to **those cares pertaining to eternity**. The apostle Paul describes, “For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal” (2 Corinthians 4:17, 18). **By focusing on things eternal—caring for those matters which are of everlasting value—we comply with our Lord’s instruction**. Yes, we will have troubles, but though “we are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:8–11).

“Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all” (Psalm 34:19).

Christian life includes cares, perplexities, and anxieties, but with our Lord we can cope with them all and look forward to a bright future, even eternal life. Amen.

References:

¹ *Early Writings*, p. 270.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 217.

Honesty and Integrity

M. STOYKO — AUSTRALIA

When Adam and Eve came forth from the hand of the Creator they were perfect in every detail. God ordained that man should possess the pure, noble character qualities of his Maker. These character traits were divine—for man was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, 27). He was created a free moral agent. Man could have been created as a robot; but in God's great love and mercy, this crowning act of His handiwork was endowed with the power of choice.

“To man, as being endowed with reasoning powers and conscience, God's moral law is given to control his actions. Man is not compelled to obey. He may defy God's law, as did Adam, and take the fearful consequences; or by living in harmony with that law he may reap the rewards of obedience.”¹

Honesty

Strict honesty is required in every transaction of life. “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful” (1 Corinthians 4:2). Honesty is a very rare

jewel which is within the reach of all. In order to possess it we must come to Christ and learn of Him. Without Him we are unable to attain honesty in thought and action.

Honesty to be practiced and taught

It is often said that we must practice what we preach. Our lives are a constant example to those around us, for good or for evil. Our influence is a responsibility from which we cannot be freed. One of the greatest witnesses to a sinful world is the noble life of God's children. God is dishonored by falsehood and dishonesty, which give others a reason to question Him and His Word.

God wants His children to be strictly honest. Our love for God should be the motive for obedience. Every day our actions and words are being recorded, and one day we will have to render an account to the great Judge of all mankind. God knows all our thoughts; we cannot cover a single act of injustice from Him. By our thoughts, words and actions we will be justified or condemned.

The foremost responsibility of instilling honesty in a child rests with the parents. The Lord will ask all parents, “where is the flock that was given thee, thy beautiful flock?” (Jeremiah 13:20). Therefore it is imperative that parents train their children in right lines. We should realize the power of the parents' example. The servant of the Lord writes:

“It is essential that honesty be practiced in all the details of the mother's life, and it is important in the training of children to teach the youthful girls as well as boys never to prevaricate or to deceive in the least.”²

We cannot teach children lessons of honesty and integrity when we ourselves have not surrendered our lives to God and are not learning from Him daily. Therefore the importance of our connection with Christ cannot be underestimated.

Formation of character

Actions repeated form habits, which in turn form character. Little acts of honesty and integrity repeated will become habits. These correct habits will form a beautiful charac-

ter, and our character will decide our destiny for time and eternity.

Since our character is the only thing we are able to take to heaven, we must realize the importance that should be given to its proper development from infancy. Children should be taught to love, obey, and fear God from babyhood. It is in their early years that their characters are being formed and what they learn in the first few years of their life will be hard to efface. The Bible says: "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

Honesty toward God and man

"Those who realize their dependence upon God will feel that they must be honest with their fellow men, and, above all, they must be honest with God, from whom come all the blessings of life. The evasion of the positive commands of God concerning tithes and offerings is registered in the books of heaven as robbery toward Him."³

Let us consider the words of God: "For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole

nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightful-land, saith the Lord of hosts" (Malachi 3:6-12).

With the psalmist, we can ask the question, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12). How can we show our gratitude for what the Lord has done? Every morning the sun rises to gladden another day. Our tables are filled with the bounties of the earth. We appreciate the constant blessing of health and strength. All heaven is poured out for our salvation. Who can place a value on these blessings? Shall we leave these mercies unacknowledged? No. Let us say with David, "I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people" (Psalm 116:14).

How often we grudgingly pay our meager portion and think that we have done our duty. God has paid the price for all, and if we would be honest, we would recognize that we must give our all for use in His service.

"Let us each bring our souls to task. Let us see if we have brought

all our offerings to God. I would do this for myself as an individual. It may be that I have been remiss during the past year. I know not when or where, but to make sure that I have done my whole duty, I will at the first of the year bring an offering to God to be appropriated as may seem best, to some one of the branches of His work. If any of you, my brethren and sisters, are convicted that you have failed to render to God the things that are His; if you have not kindly considered the wants of the poor; or if you have withheld from any man his due, I entreat you to repent before the Lord, and to restore fourfold. Strict honesty toward God and men will alone meet the divine requirements. Remember that if you have defrauded a neighbor in trade, or in any manner deprived him of his own, or if you have robbed God in tithes and offerings, it is all registered in the books of Heaven."⁴

Honesty in time and money

Time is a gift from God. Every moment belongs to Him and we are required to use it to the very best of our ability. God is glorified when we use this precious talent faithfully, to bless the needy and share the truth with others. "Of no talent He has given will He require a more strict account than of our time."⁵

Time wasted is time lost. We cannot change the past, we cannot recall a single moment. The past is history; we can only ask for God's forgiveness if we have robbed Him by wasting time and neglecting

duties. God has given us today to work for Him. By His grace we can do right from this point onward and thus redeem the past.

God needs men, men who will stand for the right. His work is great and each has a place to fill. “Men are wanted whose sense of justice, even in the smallest matters, will not allow them to make an entry of their time that is not minute and correct—men who will realize that they are handling means that belong to God, and who would not unjustly appropriate one cent to their own use; men who will be just as faithful and exact, careful and diligent, in their labor, in the absence of their employer as in his presence, proving by their faithfulness that they are not merely men pleasers, eyeservants, but are conscientious, faithful, true workmen, doing right, not for human praise, but because they love and choose the right from a high sense of their obligation to God.”⁶

Integrity

Integrity is firmness of principle, steadfastness, and being unmovable in one’s decision for the right. It is a commodity very much needed in a world where much is promised and little gained. “All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not” (Matthew 23:3).

“True character is not shaped from without, and put on; it radiates from within. If we wish to direct others in the path of right-

eousness, the principles of righteousness must be enshrined in our own hearts. Our profession of faith may proclaim the theory of religion, but it is our practical piety that holds forth the word of truth. The consistent life, the holy conversation, the unswerving integrity, the active, benevolent spirit, the godly example—these are the mediums through which light is conveyed to the world.”⁷

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.

“But such a character is not the result of accident; it is not due to special favors or endowments of Providence. A noble character is the result of self-discipline, of the subjection of the lower to the higher nature—the surrender of self for the service of love to God and man.”⁸

Lives of great men

The Bible presents many examples of integrity. This quality is seen in the lives of men that stood for the right in face of danger and even death; men whose lives were a great blessing to their fellow men and who stood as representatives of God. Some of the most striking examples are Joseph, Moses, Elisha, Daniel, and Paul—the greatest statesmen and leaders of their time.

It was in their youth that Joseph and Daniel were separated from their homes and taken as captives to heathen lands. Joseph was especially subject to temptation and a change in fortune. He had been brought up, protected and loved in his father’s house. He was favored above all his other brothers. Then he was taken as a slave to serve in Potiphar’s house, where by faithful work he gained the respect and confidence of his master.

After refusing to yield to sin, he was unjustly imprisoned without hope of release. Then at the time of national crisis, he was called to assist with the leadership of the nation of Egypt—the greatest kingdom at that time. What enabled him to preserve his integrity in these trying situations?

“In his childhood, Joseph had been taught the love and fear of God. Often in his father’s tent, under the Syrian stars, he had been told the story of the night vision at Bethel, of the ladder from heaven to earth, and the descending and ascending angels, and of Him who from the throne above revealed Himself to Jacob. He had been told the story of the conflict beside the Jabbok, when, renouncing cherished sins, Jacob stood conqueror, and received the title of a prince with God.

“A shepherd boy, tending his father’s flocks, Joseph’s pure and simple life had favored the development of both physical and mental power. By communion with God through nature and the study of the great truths handed down as a

“And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads. . . . And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God”

(Revelation 14:1, 5).

sacred trust from father to son, he had gained strength of mind and firmness of principle.

“In the crisis of his life, when making that terrible journey from his childhood home in Canaan to the bondage which awaited him in Egypt, looking for the last time on the hills that hid the tents of his kindred, Joseph remembered his father’s God. He remembered the lessons of his childhood, and his soul thrilled with the resolve to prove himself true—ever to act as became a subject of the King of heaven.

“In the bitter life of a stranger and a slave, amidst the sights and sounds of vice and the allurements of heathen worship, a worship surrounded with all the attractions of wealth and culture and the pomp of royalty, Joseph was steadfast. He had learned the lesson of obedience to duty. Faithfulness in every station, from the most lowly to the most exalted, trained every power for highest service.”⁹

Joseph’s experience can be ours. When we are placed in temptation,

let us look to God and choose to be faithful no matter what the cost may be. Even if honesty and integrity should cost us our life, let us stand firm.

The light of the world

Honesty and integrity of character are reflected in the countenance. That which is in the heart will shine forth in the life. If our countenance is to reflect the beauty of the character of Christ, our focus must be on Him.

“But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord” (2 Corinthians 3:18). By contemplating the qualities of Christ’s character and studying His life, the same virtues will be developed in our own.

“Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men” (2 Corinthians 3:2).

What can men read as they observe our lives? Have our words

always been truthful? Have we been honest in all our dealings? Have we stood firm as a rock where principles are concerned? Have we been guided by God’s word even in the minutest details of our lives?

“Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart” (Psalm 15:1, 2).

“Will you prepare the way of the Lord by bearing a decided message for Him, not only in words, but by a godly example? The Lord’s coming is very near. Those who know the truth should practice the truth, letting the light shine forth in precept and example.”¹⁰

Those that are to stand upon Mount Zion will be faultless. No guile will be found in their mouths. The Father’s name will be written in their foreheads. They will fully reflect the character of their Creator. May the Lord help each one of us to be among this blessed company that will follow the Lamb and dwell among the holy and undefiled forever!

References:

- ¹ *The Signs of the Times*, January 23, 1879.
- ² *Child Guidance*, p. 152.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ *The Review and Herald*, January 3, 1882.
- ⁵ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 342.
- ⁶ *Child Guidance*, p. 153.
- ⁷ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 307.
- ⁸ *Education*, p. 57.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 52, 53.
- ¹⁰ *The Review and Herald*, October 5, 1911.

“When Shall These Things Be?”

L. TUDOROIU — CANADA

Science fiction no longer

On Sunday, October 30, 1938, at 8:00 p.m., Eastern Standard Time, Orson Wells announced on national radio that planet Earth had been invaded by men from Mars. It was actually only a drama, but it was taken seriously. Within minutes people all over North America were praying, crying, and fleeing to escape death at the hands of Martians. Telephone lines were jammed as people telephoned farewells or warnings to their friends and loved ones. Churches were filled to capacity with those who rushed to “end-of-the-world” prayer meetings. In a western city a woman ran into a church screaming, “New York is destroyed! This is the end! You might as well go home to die. I just heard it over the radio.”

A countless number of suicides were seen, and droves of people were running about hopelessly, aimlessly. It is tragic to consider such a generation of men without an understanding of the real value of life.

More than 63 years have passed, and recently the world witnessed the actual reality of seeing

New York almost paralyzed with terror as two of its tallest buildings toppled to dust. Shocking! The television and news commentators were speechless—they simply could not believe what their own eyes were beholding. Some cried out to One whom by many had long been forgotten—God.

America was under attack. How could it be? Was a huge “empire” to fall suddenly? This time the situation was real, not just a drama.

“In this time of prevailing iniquity we may know that the last great crisis is at hand.”¹

The power of the Word

One day, an angel of God spoke to Daniel, saying:

“But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased” (Daniel 12:4).

Have you ever wondered why for nearly 6,000 years the fastest speed attained by men was the speed of a good horse? As little as 100 years ago, some scientists claimed that to exceed 15 m.p.h. would be

dangerous because it would take away men’s breath. But the world was suddenly changed. We now live in an era of speeds of which our grandparents never even dreamed.

Yes, this is a sign that shows we are living in the time mentioned by Daniel the prophet—the end of time. It is interesting to ponder the thoughts of various people who have had a broad view about this time.

An amazing statement was made on April 7, 1869, by the French chemist, Pierre Berthelot:

“I forecast that in one hundred years of physical and chemical science man will know what the atom is. . . . It is our belief that when science reaches this stage . . . God will come down to the earth with His big ring of keys and will say to humanity, ‘Gentlemen, it’s closing time.’ ”

What gave power to the sermons of Jesus were His simple words: “Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel” (Mark 1:14, 15).

To many there may have seemed no apparent basis on which to believe that any special time was being fulfilled. John was in prison, Herod was more than satisfied, the nation of Israel was blind in vice and sin, yet still the Lord had power to say, “The time is fulfilled, . . . the kingdom of God is at hand.” Keen spiritual eyesight is clearly needed in order to make such a statement. This was the debut of His ministry. He noted the fulfilling of prophecy. He knew that His time had to come to die for a world without any other hope of deliverance.

Christ came to the earth with neither force of arms nor money, but in meekness and humility He created an immortal church, a church that no power would be able to destroy—neither through fire, torture, or temporal death. “And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?” (Matthew 24:3). As far as we can see, this question once again stirs the society in which we live, because people do not like to live in uncertainty—with their “hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:26). They want to know more about what is soon to take place.

Face to face with history

Let us consider for a moment the testimony of the prophet Daniel:

“In the first year of [Darius’] reign I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that he would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:2, 3).

In his earnest prayer Daniel recognized that the time of bondage for the Jewish nation was a direct result of their transgression of God’s law. As a youth he had been brought to Babylon, and he remembered all the experiences he had made with God during the captivity. Now, as an old man, he asks forgiveness for his own sins as well as those of his nation. What a beautiful testimony as to the loyalty and devotion of this faithful man. What a wonderful example of altruism and sacrifice for all those whom God brought with him to Babylon. Oh, if the people of God today would search the Bible with the same spirit that Daniel had, if men and women would humble themselves as this beloved brother did, what a miracle might happen with us! Perhaps the Spirit of God would give us a mouth like his to speak of the solemnity of our time—perhaps with words like these: “The time is fulfilled”—that would move the earnest souls of this world to repentance.

Our time in prophecy

“When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spo-

ken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, . . . then . . .” (Matthew 24:15, 16).

Do these words resound in our minds more than ever before? Is this the sign that our time is fulfilled and we need to cover our faces as did Daniel? Is this statement the powerful sign proving we are in the perilous “Antichrist Era”? Is this statement going to prefigure our deliverance? Do we feel that it is our privilege and opportunity—as the most degraded generation that has ever existed on planet Earth, but transformed through the marvelous grace of God—to reflect before all the universe that God is right and Satan is wrong?

Is this the mission of the last generation? Are we afraid to say “no” when six billion people will say “yes”?

This is our time to reveal before the world what the “Antichrist Era” means. All the prophetic events point to a time when the entire world is to be gathered together for the final battle, when the “few” will fill up the world with “their teaching,” and then another christ—a false christ—will be revealed, and Satan, the old enemy of God, will exercise his power to destroy the last seed of good on the face of the earth. “Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shew-

ing himself that he is God” (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

Let us take a look at what the Spirit of Prophecy says about this issue:

“By the decree enforcing the institution of the papacy in violation of the law of God, our nation will disconnect herself fully from righteousness. When Protestantism shall stretch her hand across the gulf to grasp the hand of the Roman power, when she shall reach over the abyss to clasp hands with spiritualism, when, under the influence of this threefold union, our country shall repudiate every principle of its Constitution as a Protestant and republican government, and shall make provision for the propagation of papal falsehoods and delusions, then we may know that the time has come for the marvelous working of Satan and that the end is near.”²

Mistakes come easily

In recent years, prominent voices from among the political arena of nominal Protestantism are showing themselves to be well on the way to expressing more and more openly the notion of repudiating the United States Constitution supposedly as a way to save the nation (and eventually the whole world). How reminiscent this is of Caiaphas’ comment in the time of Jesus, “Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said, What do we? for this man doeth many miracles. If we let him thus alone, all men will believe on him: and the Romans

shall come and take away both our place and nation. And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation” (John 11:47–51). On that occasion, government policy was to be altered to allow for Christ’s pure, wholesome life of goodness and truth to be sacrificed in favor of preserving a group of corrupt religious hypocrites. Very soon, will not a similar scene take place before our own eyes? Outspoken religious leaders of the professedly Protestant world today are surely echoing the sentiments of Caiaphas, with similar notions of converting the world through oppressive legislative means.

The voice of Rome

Now beyond the “gulf” is another voice which is even more powerful than ever before—the voice of Rome. It is a voice speaking the same “great words against the most High” (Daniel 7:25) that it has spoken throughout history, a voice as shamelessly boastful as it ever was. When the U.S. Constitution was first established, the reaction of the pope was very aggressive:

“Pope Pius IX, in his Encyclical Letter of August 15, 1854, said: “The absurd and erroneous doctrines or ravings in

defense of liberty of conscience are a most pestilential error—a pest, of all others, most to be dreaded in a state.” ’ ’³

This papal aversion to freedom of conscience has been reconfirmed in recent years in the book, *The Keys of This Blood*, as Roman Catholic author Malachi Martin, a staunch defender of papal ideals and purposes, speaks out against what he calls “Minimalists”—conscientiously steadfast religious minorities.

Yet, by God’s grace, the U.S. Constitution still guarantees all people the right to choose. But most importantly, God Himself assures man of this right, as He declares in the Bible, “I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that 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).

The Spirit of Prophecy warns:

“Those who are making an effort to change the Constitution and secure a law enforcing Sunday observance little realize what will be the result. A crisis is just upon us.”⁴

Jesus knew!

All these things are happening under the eyes of Jesus. He knew about the abomination of desolation, the son of perdition, the man of sin, the *alter christos*—“another christ.” He knew about the abomination of Israel, that they would reject Jesus not as a man, but as God. They did acknowledge Him as a Master Teacher or Rabbi and were

inclined to receive Him as a prophet, but when He claimed to be the Son of God this was enough for them to kill Him as a blasphemer. When they accepted Barabbas the symbol of antichrist instead of the Son of salvation, that supposedly wasn't blasphemy. Their declaration, "We have no king but Caesar" seemed to follow them through all the centuries like a shadow on their conscience. As Martin Luther said: "It is not safe, and it is dangerous to work against conscience." They knew that Jesus was the Son of God, yet they worked against the appeals of the Holy Spirit, until they were finally enveloped in total darkness.

The most powerful statement that Jesus made regarding the antichrist and the signs of our time is found in John 5:43: "I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."

In essence He was saying, "If I will come as the Son of God you will not receive me, but if another will come as the Son of God (who in fact is the son of perdition) you will receive him as the Son of God." Let us see how amazingly the prophecy has been and continues to be fulfilled in ever increasing measure:

"Thou art the Shepherd, Thou art the Physician, Thou art the Director, Thou art the Husbandman; and finally, Thou art another God on the Earth"—The Oration of Christopher Marcellus (R.C.) in the 4th session of the 5th Lateran Council, 1512 (and addresses to the Pope); History of the

Councils, Labbe and Conssort, vol. 24, col. 109.

"We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty"—Encyclical Letter, June 29, 1894, the great Encyclical of Leo XIII, p. 304.

In his book, *The Keys of This Blood*, p. 143, Roman Catholic author Malachi Martin states,

"If tomorrow or next week by a sudden miracle, one world government were established, the Church would not have to undergo any essential structural change in order to retain its dominant position and further its global aim."

Indeed, it is becoming just as John the Beloved foresaw in Revelation 13:3, 4, "And I saw one of his heads as it were wounded to death; and his deadly wound was healed: and all the world wondered after the beast. And they worshipped the dragon which gave power unto the beast: and they worshipped the beast, saying, Who is like unto the beast? who is able to make war with him?"

There's no more time

On October 8, 1871, D. L. Moody opened a one-week series of meetings in Chicago, drawing one of the largest crowds in the city's history. His subject was *What then shall we do with Jesus?* On that night Moody gave to the audience one week to decide what they would do with Jesus. That very night most of Chicago was destroyed by fire. Hundreds of people died. Moody did not get to hold another meeting in that place until 23 years later, on the anniversary of

that great fire. As he looked over his audience that night, he said:

"Twenty-three years ago I made the greatest mistake I have ever committed. I gave an audience a week to decide what to do with Jesus. I have looked over this congregation and I do not see a single soul to whom I preached that night. I shall never meet those people again until they rise up against me in the judgment. . . . If you haven't made that decision, don't wait one more day, or even an hour."

"We then, as workers together with him, beseech you also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain. (For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee: behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation)" (2 Corinthians 6:1, 2).

So, my dear friends, if today this same Jesus is gently knocking at the door of your heart, do not say "We have no other friend but Caesar." Do not take this great risk. We are almost at the point when our Saviour is going to come to recognize His people, and we will have to be ready to withstand the beast in the power of the Holy Spirit. Let the church of God say:

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Revelation 22:14).

References:

- ¹ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 178.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 451.
- ³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 564.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 753.

Watch, Pray, and Work

H. WOYWOD — GERMANY

Jesus often spent time alone in Gethsemane in order to obtain rest and find new strength in prayer. One night, however, everything was different. His heart was troubled and He felt as if He were being excluded from the presence of His Father.

Leaving some of His disciples near the garden, He besought Peter, James, and John to pray for themselves and for Him. These three were close friends and had been witnesses of Christ's glory on the Mount of Transfiguration. They had seen how Jesus spoke with Moses and Elijah, and they had heard the voice of God coming from heaven. Christ desired the assurance that they were close to Him now, and He said: "Tarry ye here, and watch with Me."

On this night everything was at stake. The tempter had come for his last terrible strike. Everything depended on the outcome of this struggle. And in this very hour Jesus returned to the place where He had left His friends, only to find them sleeping.

How much encouragement would it have been for Christ had

He found them praying, but they had not heeded His repeated request, "Watch and pray."

The sleeping disciples awakened when they recognized the voice of Jesus. Christ said to Peter: "Simon, sleepest thou?" "Couldst not thou watch one hour?" "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation." The terrible moment had come, the hour that would decide the fate of the world, but the disciples were asleep. Jesus had often given the warning: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation" (Matthew 26:41). Those words are a warning for all who wish to stand faithful and strong in the faith. Nobody is safe for one day or even one hour without prayer. Only watching and praying can give us safety.

"A man cannot be a happy Christian unless he is a watchful Christian. He who overcomes must watch; for, with worldly entanglements, error, and superstition, Satan strives to win Christ's followers from Him. It is not enough that we avoid glaring dangers and perilous, inconsistent moves."¹

"There may be supposable things that appear as good things,

and yet they need to be carefully considered with much prayer, for they are specious devices of the enemy to lead souls in a path which lies so close to the path of truth that it will be scarcely distinguishable from the path which leads to holiness and heaven. But the eye of faith may discern that it is diverging from the right path, though almost imperceptibly. At first it may be thought positively right, but after a while it is seen to be widely divergent from the path of safety, from the path which leads to holiness and heaven."²

"It was in sleeping when Jesus bade him watch and pray that Peter had prepared the way for his great sin. All the disciples, by sleeping in that critical hour, sustained a great loss. Christ knew the fiery ordeal through which they were to pass. He knew how Satan would work to paralyze their senses that they might be unready for the trial. Therefore it was that He gave them warning. Had those hours in the garden been spent in watching and prayer, Peter would not have been left to depend upon his own feeble strength. He would not have denied his Lord. Had the disciples watched

with Christ in His agony, they would have been prepared to behold His suffering upon the cross. They would have understood in some degree the nature of His overpowering anguish. They would have been able to recall His words that foretold His sufferings, His death, and His resurrection. Amid the gloom of the most trying hour, some rays of hope would have lighted up the darkness and sustained their faith.”³

It is very important to watch and to pray. We have to take time to consider deeply what are our real motives and actions. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that Jesus Christ is in you, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

The power of constant prayer

The Bible gives us many examples of people who prayed earnestly and constantly. When Elijah prayed, he held on to the promises of heaven and stayed in prayer until his prayers were answered. He did not wait to receive proof that God had heard him but he was nonetheless ready to risk everything at the smallest sign of divine favor. Everything that he was able to do with God’s help any one of us can do in the service of the Lord.

Jacob was victorious in the night of his struggle with the Angel because he possessed perseverance and determination. His experience in overcoming is to be ours. “The greatest victories to the church of Christ or to the individual Christian

are not those that are gained by talent or education, by wealth or the favor of men. They are those victories that are gained in the audience chamber with God, when earnest, agonizing faith lays hold upon the mighty arm of power.”⁴

The early church

The Christians of the New Testament were praying Christians. The first church received the baptism of the Holy Spirit during a prayer meeting on Pentecost. We also read in the epistles that the disciples were constantly seeking communion with God in prayer while they were spreading the message of Jesus over the whole world. See Acts 2:42.

Prayer belongs at the core of our church services. Surely, we all know that. But does it really have the vital role that it should have in our worship? Or has prayer been reduced to a dry form that we use to open and close services?

Powerful prayer

Jesus drew strength from prayer in beseeching God in behalf of His disciples. He took each one separately and prayed for him to the Father. He has already interceded for you too, in saying “I prayed for you.”

Jesus has showed us in His life how He prayed. He prayed in the wilderness when the devil tempted Him and fought for His soul. He prayed in the night before He called His disciples. He prayed the whole night before healing the demon-possessed son of a man and before performing His crowning

miracle—the raising of Lazarus. He did not want to do anything without praying first.

Today, it seems as if many brethren and sisters think they are too busy to be able to take sufficient time for prayer. But prayer was a constant source of strength for Jesus. “In the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed” (Mark 1:35).

Praying for others

When we pray for others Jesus shows us first that we need to bind ourselves closer to Him. Through interceding for our fellow men we become more conscious of our own sins—sins that Jesus would like to remove from our lives. Then we can admit: “O Lord, I have never seen myself like that. If I really am like that and if my bitterness, my envy and my pride are standing between You and me, O Lord, then take everything away so that I can become a new person and You can draw me towards You.”

Why is it necessary to pray for other people? Does not God already want them to be won? Does He not do everything that is in His power, even if we do not ask Him for it? Certainly He does, but prayer not only increases our love for those for whom we pray and their love for us, it also increases our faith and gives us a higher experience with God. We cannot understand in detail what prayer can do, but this should not discourage us. We also do not understand everything about electricity but this does not keep us

from using the advantages of electrical light, heating, and power.

Joint prayer

Besides interceding in behalf of individuals, we need to heed Jesus' counsel in Matthew 18:19, 20: "If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

Ellen White suggests: "Why do not two or three meet together and plead with God for the salvation of some special one, and then for still another?"⁵

Small prayer groups are the foundation for the church's successful prayer in behalf of other people. Conversions do not just happen but take place in a supernatural way. Maybe a salesperson can talk someone into buying a new car. A real estate agent can awaken interest in a new house. These salespeople can be successful through certain methods. But only God can convert a soul. Prayer is part of evangelism for our neighbors.

If we take a quick look at the prayer meeting in Acts 4:24-31, we see a detailed presentation of what took place in the days of the early church. Peter and John had been taken captive and put in jail because they had been preaching the truth. The Jewish council had commanded them never to speak or preach in the name of Jesus again. After they were released they returned to the believers and told them about the threats

that had been pronounced against them. What was the reaction? When the believers heard that, they sought communion with God so that "they lifted up their voice to God with one accord" (Acts 4:24).

They began their prayer by acknowledging the power of God who created everything. And what was the result of their prayers? In verse 31 it says: "they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness."

The same God has the same goal and the same desire today, that the ends of the earth may hear the good message of Jesus. When we as the church of God line up our prayers with the heartbeat of God and ask Him to give us determination in order to be able to realize His goals, then we, too, will experience His power working in the church of Jesus Christ.

Three important things in Christian life

If we do not wish Satan to defeat us, then it is essential to: watch, pray, and work.

Prayer and watchfulness are necessary to be able to grow in godliness. Never in your life was that time more important than it is now. You can only feel safe if you are constantly watching, praying, and working. These three characteristics alone can protect you from the snares of Satan. Now we must watch and pray as never before and refuse to become careless and indifferent. All who profess Christ must watch and pray in order to guard the door to their heart.

Make Jesus your friend

We should come to Jesus and tell Him all our needs and sorrows. We can bring our little cares and problems before Him as well as our greater difficulties. We should bring before the Lord in prayer whatever worries or concerns that cause us trouble. When you feel that you need the Lord's presence everywhere and at every step, then even Satan will be limited in his opportunities to annoy you with his temptations. He has only one desire and tries hard to keep you and your thoughts away from your best and most understanding Friend.

Working

What power shook the world during the reformation of Dr. Martin Luther? It was the power of prayer. The servants of God put their feet in holy silence on the Rock of promise. During the trial at Augsburg, Luther never failed to dedicate daily three hours to prayer—particularly at a time of the day most conducive to studying.

"In the privacy of his chamber he was heard to pour out his soul before God in words 'full of adoration, fear, and hope, as when one speaks to a friend.' 'I know that Thou art our Father and our God,' he said, 'and that Thou wilt scatter the persecutors of Thy children; for Thou art Thyself endangered with us. All this matter is Thine, and it is only by Thy constraint that we have put our hands to it. Defend us, then, O Father!'"⁶

Luther's motto was: "Pray and work." He was aware of his con-

stant dependence on divine help and did not fail to come close to God in prayer and in deep humility every day.

Whoever is filled with the love of Christ cannot stay idle. Every day brings us closer to the end. People with whom we come in contact every day need our help. Maybe they are in such an emotional state that one word impressed by the Holy Spirit at the right time will reach its goal. Tomorrow some of these people may already be where perhaps we can never be able to reach them again. What efforts are we making to win them for Christ?

Everybody who loves God with all his or her heart must know that we can only work now while it is day. Jesus says: “the night cometh, when no man can work” (John 9:4).

He also makes it clear and understandable that we must await His coming not in idleness, but in diligent work.

“And ye shall be witnesses unto me” (Acts 1:8). If we love Jesus, we will love to live for Him, to bring our thanksgiving offering, and to work for Him. This work will not be hard; we will long to suffer pain, trouble, and sacrifice, and we will understand His desire to bring salvation to all mankind.

Use all opportunities

The Lord has given us much understanding, but we do not keep up pace with His providences. Jesus and His angels are working ceaselessly. This work is advancing but unfortunately we often stop, and the work entrusted to us comes to a

standstill. If we truly followed God’s providence more closely we would immediately step on each way that opens before us and use every advantage that we have.

The light must reach the world so that it can spread. Jesus says: “Ye are the light of the world.”

Unfortunately, sluggishness and unbelief have crept in among us. They keep us from fulfilling the God-given work of saving souls. But God needs men, women, young people, and children who will sow upon all waters and use all opportunities they have. See Ecclesiastes 11:4, 6.

Those who have no courage, who are afraid and hesitant to go forward—who want to see clearly every step of the way in advance, at this time they will be of no value in spreading the truth.

“If we but realized how earnestly Jesus worked to sow the world with gospel seed, we, living at the very close of probation, would labor untiringly to give the bread of life to perishing souls. Why are we so cold and indifferent? Why are our hearts so unimpressible? Why are we so unwilling to give ourselves to the work to which Christ consecrated His life? Something must be done to cure the terrible indifference that has taken hold upon us. Let us bow our heads in humiliation as we see how much less we have done than we might have done to sow the seeds of truth.”⁷

The threefold angel’s message is the message for our day that has to be spread clearly everywhere. Everyone who believes in it has to start working—all, no matter if

young or old, should have part in it and, as Jesus declared, “ye shall be witnesses unto me.”⁸

“Brethren, go out with your Bibles, visit the people at their fire-sides, read the word of God to the family, and as many more as will come in. Go with a contrite heart and an abiding trust in God’s grace and mercy, and do what you can.”⁸

Why don’t you kneel down today—since you know that God wants to use you as a messenger to reach people, and dedicate yourself again to Jesus? Why not ask for His Spirit to fully take possession of you? Why not ask God to open your eyes to see the lost souls around you—that their salvation will become more important to you?

Dear brothers and sisters, dear friends, may God’s Spirit work on our hearts now and may we pray as the first church did. Let us ask for constant watchfulness so that a final remnant may be found faithful and the work of salvation can be finished. Jesus our Saviour will come in the clouds of heaven to take His children home. With inexpressible love Jesus welcomes His faithful ones. . . . It is joy beyond description for the Saviour to have all those with Him in the kingdom of glory, saved—eternally saved through His great suffering and sacrifice. Amen!

References:

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 100.
- ² *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 229.
- ³ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 713, 714.
- ⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 203.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 21.
- ⁶ *The Great Controversy*, p. 210.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 46, 47.
- ⁸ *The Review and Herald*, November 13, 1883.

Showers of Blessings

EDSON MEIRELES — PORTUGAL

In the beginning of creation there was no rain. “For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth, and there was not a man to till the ground. But there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground” (Genesis 2:5, 6). When, because of man’s sin, God sent the Flood, its waters brought not merely destruction, but also purification. (See 1 Peter 3:20, 21.)

When the Israelites were established in the Promised Land, and the people began to cultivate the ground and plant their crops, God promised, “I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit” (Leviticus 26:4). This promise was fulfilled and lasted for many centuries. Those who were counting on the results of their farming were never disappointed in their efforts. They sowed the seed and waited for the rain to fall in its season, the first rain and the last rain. These two rains were known as the former rain and the latter rain. “Be glad then, ye children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God: for

he hath given you the former rain moderately, and he will cause to come down for you the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain in the first month” (Joel 2:23).

“In the East the former rain falls at the sowing time. It is necessary in order that the seed may germinate. Under the influence of the fertilizing showers, the tender shoot springs up. The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain, and prepares it for the sickle.”¹

The spiritual symbolism of rain

“Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the Lord: his going forth is prepared as the morning; and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth” (Hosea 6:3).

“The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. As the dew and the rain are given first to cause the seed to germinate, and then to ripen the harvest, so the Holy Spirit is given to carry forward, from one stage to another, the process of spiritual growth. The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God’s grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy

Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ.”²

No other element of nature but rain could represent better the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts. After a long time of drought the earth becomes completely parched, vegetation withers, the leaves turn sallow and dry, the air becomes dense. Sadness and gloom take possession of those who live in the field, and many give up tilling the soil. Under such circumstances no seed is able to sprout, grow, and produce fruit, no matter how good the seed might be. The fields lose their natural beauty, and nature itself is stifled. But when the desired rain comes, the environment which was previously unproductive becomes green, beautiful, exuberant, and full of life.

So it is with the person that is sunken in sin and ignorance about spiritual things and who does not know the love of God. He or she has not yet been touched by the saving grace of Jesus, and has not yet experienced the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. He or she is like a barren land, lifeless. The coarse heart is insensible to the manifesta-

tion of the goodness and love of God. But when one begins to receive the first drops of heavenly dew, the Holy Spirit penetrates into the rigid heart, even if initially it is only on the surface. The work of softening begins, and as the soul yields to the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit, the transformation becomes evident. Like the rain that changes little by little the hardened clods into beautiful soil, so with the persons who receive the manifestation of the Holy Spirit into their hardened heart, making them soft, meek, pleasant, glad and happy. Their countenance shows a new brightness, and the new experience in their life brings peace into their heart. The marks of wickedness and sin slowly diminish, and a new appearance is seen in their semblance. The power of the Spirit of God transforms the dry into moist, the barrenness into fertile fountains of good fruits. There is a total change of the carnal nature into the spiritual nature, and spiritual fruit springs forth from the soul. See Galatians 5:17–24.

The first spiritual rain

The Lord promised to pour out power upon His children through His Spirit at the appropriate time, and for a special work, as revealed in Joel 2:28–32.

The Jewish nation could have been blessed with this wonderful promise, but because they rejected Jesus Christ, they rejected also the power of the Holy Spirit which would have come upon them. Thus God turned to another class, at first made up of only a few men and

women. These were faithful and sincere souls, ready to submit themselves wholly to God's will. They were humble, unlearned persons, without any social or political prestige, who needed that extra power to carry out the Great Commission. See Matthew 28:20.

How would Christ's promise, "I am with you always," be fulfilled? Jesus had promised, "I tell you the truth; It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send him unto you. And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment" (John 16:7, 8).

After Christ's ascension, the disciples were cheered with the promise of the coming Comforter. (See Acts 1:8.) But they did not spend their waiting time in indolence. They humbled their hearts, thoroughly confessed their sins, and made reconciliation among themselves. They met together to recollect the instructions of their Master to pray, praise, and glorify God. See Acts 2:1–8.

Those who were seeking earnestly the necessary preparation received a confirmation of divine acceptance. The Holy Spirit descended upon them in a powerful way without measure, and they were fitted for the great work of preaching the gospel.

The immediate results of the early rain

The results of this wonderful manifestation of God's power were

seen immediately. Thousands accepted the message and were confirmed in the faith. See Acts 6:7; 11:21.

So the apostolic church, without money, without chapels, without the support of the state or society, without great personalities among them or doctors according to human science, established solely upon the foundation of the apostolic faith, became a mighty stronghold. The foundation of Christianity was established forever by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The promise is for the time of the end

When in 1844 God again gathered together His people by the threefold angel's message, it was His design to manifest His power once again by pouring out the Holy Spirit upon them. This would enable them to give the final warning to mankind, and prepare them for the finishing of the gospel work and for the end of the world, in fulfillment of Acts 2:14–20. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us:

"If all who had labored unitedly in the work in 1844, had received the third angel's message and proclaimed it in the power of the Holy Spirit, the Lord would have wrought mightily with their efforts. A flood of light would have been shed upon the world. Years ago the inhabitants of the earth would have been warned, the closing work completed, and Christ would have come for the redemption of His people."³

Forty-four years later, in 1888, at the General Conference held in Minneapolis, God again wished to

pour out His Holy Spirit upon those who were assembled. “The Lord in His great mercy sent a most precious message to His people through Elders Waggoner and Jones. This message was to bring more prominently before the world the uplifted Saviour, the sacrifice for the sins of the whole world. It presented justification through faith in the Surety; it invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God. Many had lost sight of Jesus. They needed to have their eyes directed to His divine person, His merits, and His changeless love for the human family. All power is given into His hands, that He may dispense rich gifts unto men, imparting the priceless gift of His own righteousness to the helpless human agent. This is the message that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”⁴

Although the great majority did not understand and accept the message, the few who accepted it received power to begin a reformatory movement in the church. When later the crisis mentioned in *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 514 arrived, putting the church to a test, these two classes were defined by their actions not only before the church but also before the authorities in the world. While a large class chose to support the error of committing “treachery to the king-

dom of Christ,”⁵ a minority remained firm on the platform of the truth, without wavering, choosing to obey God rather than man. The task of enlightening the world can only be carried out effectively by such who love the “commandments of God” and have the “faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12). Those who are to be represented by that other angel of Revelation 18 will be clothed with the power of the Holy Spirit in its fullness under the latter rain.

What is needed for us to receive the latter rain?

Current events indicate more than ever before that we are in the final moments of the history of our evil, corrupt, sick, old world. God is eager to deliver His chosen ones from the oppression of the arch-deceiver who is so furious, knowing that now his time is shorter than ever. But the Lord waits anxiously for His people to be ready for the latter rain. What shall we do then? What was it that enabled the early disciples to receive the early rain? When Jesus appeared to them in the upper room after His resurrection, He knew their great need and granted them a great portion of power. “He breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Ghost” (John 20:22). It was with this portion of the Holy Spirit that the disciples were able to realize their real condition and each of them endeavored to make a preparation, helping one another in this work. They prayed together, fasted, confessed their sins and humbled their hearts, until they reached the

unity of the faith and sanctification which enabled them to receive the desired power.

As individuals and as a church we should pray daily for the power of that divine breath so that we may overcome our pride, our defects of character, our selfishness and misunderstandings. We should humble our hearts before God and among our own selves. It is necessary to confess our mistakes, to fast and pray, and consecrate our lives to the Lord. The conditions to receive the latter rain are the same: “Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord” (Acts 3:19). “Many have in a great measure failed to receive the former rain. They have not obtained all the benefits that God has thus provided for them. They expect that the lack will be supplied by the latter rain.”⁶

“But unless the members of God’s church today have a living connection with the Source of all spiritual growth, they will not be ready for the time of reaping. Unless they keep their lamps trimmed and burning, they will fail of receiving added grace in times of special need.”⁷

“It is God who began the work, and He will finish His work, making man complete in Jesus Christ. But there must be no neglect of the grace represented by the former rain. Only those who are living up to the light they have will receive greater light. Unless we are daily advancing in the exemplification of the active Christian virtues, we shall

not recognize the manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the latter rain.”⁸

“Near the close of earth’s harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest ‘in the time of the latter rain.’ In response, ‘the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.’ ‘He will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain’ (Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23).”⁹

The body of believers are in the stage of the church militant. It is the church which is still “enfeebled and defective.” It is made of a heterogeneous membership, people of different characters, possessing different levels of spirituality. After the shaking has thoroughly accomplished its work, the church will receive the spiritual showers of the latter rain. The Holy Spirit will be given to all those who remain and are ready, the church will become triumphant, and the following prophecy will be fulfilled:

“A little one shall become a thousand, and a small one a strong nation: I the Lord will hasten it in his time” (Isaiah 60:22).

“Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be

wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men. Revelation 13:13. Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.”¹⁰

A dangerous counterfeit work

There are two aspects in the texts mentioned above which must be examined: The first one is that the remnant which is to receive the latter rain will be made up of thousands, not of millions. Therefore we have an urgent work to undertake in these last days of probationary time to include those who profess true faith, but who are bound to a large class made up of millions of members—“a place whence the divine presence and glory have departed”¹¹ long ago.

The second aspect is that Satan will also be active at that time, working signs and miracles so as, if possible, to deceive the very elect. Through the false pentecostalism which he has developed in various fallen churches he will do such a stupendous work that many will be deceived. These signs will be a test for Seventh-day Adventists. The servant of the Lord says:

“We need not be deceived. Wonderful scenes, with which Satan will be closely connected, will soon take place. God’s Word declares that Satan will work miracles. He will make people sick, and then will suddenly remove from them his satanic power. They will then be regarded as healed. These works of apparent

healing will bring Seventh-day Adventists to the test. Many who have had great light will fail to walk in the light, because they have not become one with Christ.”¹²

The lukewarm and indifferent condition prevailing among many will prepare the way for the deceptive work of the evil one. May the Lord help us that none of those who belong to God’s remnant people may be deceived. We should pray for a daily baptism of the former rain, so that we may be ready to receive more abundantly the powerfully blessed showers of the latter rain, the last rain poured out upon God’s remnant church. “The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against.”¹³

“All we have to do is to keep the vessel clean and right side up and prepared for the reception of the heavenly rain, and keep praying, ‘Let the latter rain come into my vessel.’”¹⁴

References:

¹ *The Review and Herald*, March 2, 1897.

² *Ibid.*

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

⁴ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 91, 92.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

⁷ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

⁸ *The Review and Herald*, March 2, 1897.

⁹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

¹⁰ *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

¹¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 250.

¹² *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 53.

¹³ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 282.

¹⁴ *The Upward Look*, p. 283.

What Shall I Give to God?

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What shall I render unto the Lord for all his benefits toward me?" (Psalm 116:12).

It would be well for every one of us to look back on our lives to see how the Lord has been merciful toward us.

By nature, people are not willing to give. Instead, they are always expecting to receive something. When the end of the year approaches with its season generally known for festivities, almost everyone is hoping to receive gifts.

We ask ourselves: How much have we received from the hands of the Lord? We receive from Him life, health, daily bread, clothing, a shelter in which to live. All these we receive freely. We are a very privileged people. The Lord has been very benevolent toward each one of us.

The greatest Gift

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

The greatest Gift which we have received from our heavenly

Father was His Son, Jesus Christ, who died to save us. The apostle John says: "We love him, because he first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Adam and Eve had been warned about the fall of Satan, that he had been expelled from heaven, and was trying to establish his throne on earth. They were to watch and not separate from each other. But the woman gave heed to the voice of the serpent, ate of the forbidden tree, and then took the fruit to her husband, and he did eat also.

"But through disobedience, [man's] powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan, and would have remained so forever had not God specially interposed."¹

"The fall of man filled all heaven with sorrow. The world that God had made was blighted with the curse of sin and inhabited by beings doomed to misery and death. There appeared no escape for those who had transgressed the law. Angels ceased their songs of praise. Throughout the heavenly

courts there was mourning for the ruin that sin had wrought.

"The Son of God, heaven's glorious Commander, was touched with pity for the fallen race. His heart was moved with infinite compassion as the woes of the lost world rose up before Him. But divine love had conceived a plan whereby man might be redeemed. The broken law of God demanded the life of the sinner. In all the universe there was but one who could, in behalf of man, satisfy its claims. Since the divine law is as sacred as God Himself, only one equal with God could make atonement for its transgression. None but Christ could redeem fallen man from the curse of the law and bring him again into harmony with Heaven. Christ would take upon Himself the guilt and shame of sin—sin so offensive to a holy God that it must separate the Father and His Son. Christ would reach to the depths of misery to rescue the ruined race."²

We understand that in the plan of redemption our heavenly Father has given Heaven's greatest Gift to this fallen world by sending Jesus to die in our stead.

I will give Him my heart

“My son, give me thine heart, and let thine eyes observe my ways” (Proverbs 23:26).

The greatest gratitude which we may manifest towards the Lord is to give Him our sinful heart. Jesus is calling us every day: “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). What does it mean to give the heart to Jesus? Does it mean to be a prospective member of the church? Does it mean to be a baptized member? Does it mean to go to church and attend every worship meeting? It means much more than all these. It is the surrender of body, soul, and spirit to Him, and to do the will of God. Many whose names are registered upon the church rolls have not yet given their hearts to Jesus. They have one foot in and the other one out of the church. The true Christian seeks first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. There are many who give only half of their hearts to God, but He does not accept half-and-half surrender. Surrender must be total and complete. A work done half-and-half is a constant denial of Christ.

To surrender the heart to Christ means to live a new life, and this is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit. Man cannot change himself by exercising his own will. He does not possess faculties through which such a change may take place. The leaven, something totally from without, must be introduced into the dough that it

may be transformed. The same is with the grace of God; it should be introduced into the heart of the sinner so that he or she may be fitted for the kingdom of God.

The reviving power must come from God. This change can be accomplished only by the Holy Spirit. All who have a desire to be saved—distinguished or humble, rich or poor—are to submit their will to the attraction of this power.

“As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. No mere external change is sufficient to bring us into harmony with God. There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart.”³

The heart of one who surrenders it to Christ overflows with love for those for whom He died. People do not love others just because they say amen and try to please them, but because they are the property of Christ. The truly converted soul dedicates his or her whole life to the service of Christ.

I will work to save souls

When we surrender our heart to Jesus we do it because we are constrained by His love, and this will lead us to love the souls for whom He gave His life. In order to work for the Lord in behalf of those who are lost, we should know what is the value of a soul.

“Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18, 19).

The redemption of the human race cost the highest price ever paid, the blood of Christ. He left His throne of glory in heaven to come to this world of sin to give His life for us. From His birth until His death He lived the life of a pilgrim. Though He was the Creator of all things He had nowhere to lay His head (Luke 9:58).

“The value of a soul, who can estimate? Would you know its worth, go to Gethsemane, and there watch with Christ through those hours of anguish, when He sweat as it were great drops of blood. Look upon the Saviour uplifted on the cross. Hear that despairing cry, ‘My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?’ (Mark 15:34). Look upon the wounded head, the pierced side, the marred feet. Remember that Christ risked all. For our redemption, heaven itself was imperiled. At the foot of the cross, remembering that for one sinner Christ would have laid down His life, you may estimate the value of a soul.”⁴

Today, as never before, we ought to understand our responsibility toward God and the souls who are lost in the darkness of sin. The missionary has a special duty to fulfill, and that is to take the message of salvation to the lost.

Many times this work requires a sacrifice and renunciation of the things that he or she cherishes. When we are called to work in a prosperous field where we have everything we want—such as good means of transportation, good food, a good dwelling place—we are very encouraged. But very often a sacrifice is involved which requires us to leave behind families, relatives, ease, and advantages, and go where the Lord calls us to work.

I remember when I was called to work in Angola, Africa, where civil war has been raging for over 30 years. Many people spoke to me and my family words of discouragement, but I felt that the Lord was calling me and, thinking on the words of Isaiah 6:1–8, I accepted the call. When I arrived in Angola and saw the condition of the country and the brethren, I was horrified, but my colleague who was with me said: “Brother, do not be sad. Here in Africa was where I had my best experiences with God.” After more than four years of work, and because of the experiences I have made with God, I can say now: “Blessed be the name of the Lord.” It has been here in a land which, through war, has been stripped of many of its comforts and resources, that I have been able to feel the presence of the Lord, His protection, and care more than ever before.

The tithe is the Lord's

We are the property of Jesus Christ. We belong to Him by creation and redemption. When Christ dwells in the heart, He purifies the

soul from all iniquity, and the greatest desire will be to see the progress of God's work. If we are faithful stewards, the resources for the support of the missions will never be lacking. The Lord's treasury will always be full to support the needs of the work.

“A tithe of all our increase is the Lord's. He has reserved it to Himself, to be employed for religious purposes. It is holy. Nothing less than this has He accepted in any dispensation. A neglect or postponement of this duty, will provoke the divine displeasure. If all professed Christians would faithfully bring their tithes to God, His treasury would be full.”⁵

Unfortunately some members of the church are acting as Ananias and Sapphira did in withholding that which belongs to the Lord. The tithe is just as sacred and holy as the Sabbath, and it does not belong to us. It is the Lord's. It is a great sin to withhold that which should be given to the Lord. Many do not experience prosperity in their spiritual and material lives. They are weak and unstable because they are not faithful stewards. To steal is a transgression of God's law, and the Bible identifies those who rob God as thieves. Are members of the church robbing God?

“Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine

house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” (Malachi 3:8–10).

We should never spend the Lord's money for our own needs or enjoyment. The work of God needs the means, and many foreign missions have great necessities. We should be faithful so that the light of the gospel may reach all nations, tribes, tongues, and people.

What else can I give?

“Those who have been made partakers of the grace of God should not be slow to show their appreciation of that gift. They should not look upon the tithe as the limit of their liberality. The Jews were required to bring to God numerous offerings besides the tithe; and shall not we who enjoy the blessings of the gospel, do as much to sustain God's cause as was done in the former, less-favored dispensation? None should forget to make thank offerings and free-will offerings to God, that through their instrumentality the precious light that they have received may be borne to others just as worthy as themselves. . . .

“Oh that I could impress all with the importance of following God's order in all things, and of becoming workers for Him! Let us humble our hearts before the Lord, and when we become indeed His true followers, we shall feel to confess that we have done very little for the dear Saviour who has done so

much for us. Let us closely examine our own hearts, our motives, and our actions, realizing that these must each bear the close scrutiny of the Master, and that then we shall receive His impartial verdict. . . .

“The Lord will work for His people when those who have newly come to the faith and those who are older in the truth say individually, I can and will do something for the Master. I will lay up something in the bank of heaven, even if it cost me present self-denial. And after His servants have come up to their privilege and done all that they possibly can do, even at a sacrifice to themselves, then the Lord will still advance His cause. He can subdue hearts the most obdurate. He can, by His Holy Spirit, bring the most selfish and grasping to appreciate truth above earthly treasure, and bring their talents of means and ability into His service.”⁶

The reward of following Christ

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:7, 8).

We should work for the Lord today with all the power and strength that He has given us, because one day we will receive the reward. When Jesus will come

again we shall have the privilege of seeing one another personally, face to face, as well as to meet those whom we led to Jesus. This will be our greatest reward, our greatest joy, and then to live in that place which He has prepared for us.

“Every action of ours in befriending God’s people will be rewarded as done unto Himself.”⁷

“The redeemed will meet and recognize those whose attention they have directed to the uplifted Saviour. What blessed converse they have with these souls! ‘I was a sinner,’ it will be said, ‘without God and without hope in the world, and you came to me and drew my attention to the precious Saviour as my only hope.’ . . . Others will say, ‘I was a heathen in heathen lands. You left your friends and comfortable home and came to teach me how to find Jesus and believe in Him as the only true God. I demolished my idols and worshiped God, and now I see Him face to face. I am saved, eternally saved, ever to behold Him whom I love.’

“Others will express their gratitude to those who fed the hungry and clothed the naked. ‘When despair bound my soul in unbelief, the Lord sent you to me,’ they say, ‘to speak words of hope and comfort. You brought me food for my physical necessities, and you opened to me the Word of God, awakening me to my spiritual needs. You treated me as a brother. You sympathized with me in my sorrows, and restored my bruised and wounded soul, so that I could grasp the hand of Christ that was reached out to

save me. In my ignorance you taught me patiently that I had a Father in heaven who cared for me. You read to me the precious promises of God’s Word. You inspired in me the faith that He would save me. My heart was softened, subdued, broken, as I contemplated the sacrifice which Christ had made for me. . . . I am here, saved, eternally saved, ever to live in His presence and to praise Him who gave His life for me.’

“What rejoicing there will be as these redeemed ones meet and greet those who have had a burden in their behalf! And those who have lived, not to please themselves, but to be a blessing to the unfortunate who have so few blessings—how their hearts will thrill with satisfaction!”⁸

Conclusion

Dear brethren, we are at the end of another year. May the Holy Spirit guide us into all truth as we surrender our lives to the Lord and seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness. Let us renew our covenant with the Lord so that when His Holy Spirit will be poured out upon the church, we may be able to stand and take part in the loud cry. Even so, come, Lord Jesus. Amen.

References:

- ¹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 17.
- ² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 63.
- ³ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 97.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 196.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, May 16, 1882.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, August 24, 1886.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, September 20, 1898.
- ⁸ *My Life Today*, p. 353.

MOVING? Please let us know.

The One Hope

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*Through the night of doubt and sorrow,
Onward goes the pilgrim band,
Singing songs of expectation,
Marching to the promised land.*

*Clear before us through the darkness
Gleams and burns the guiding light;
Brother clasps the hand of brother,
Stepping fearless through the night.*

*One the light of God's own presence
O'er His ransomed people shed,
Chasing far the gloom and terror,
Brightening all the path we tread;*

*One the object of our journey,
One the faith that never tires,
One the earnest looking forward,
One the hope our God inspires.*

*One the strain that lips of thousands
Lift as from the heart of one;
One the conflict, one the peril,
One the march in God begun.*

*One the gladness of rejoicing
On the far eternal shore,
Where the One Almighty Father
Reigns in love for evermore.*

*Onward therefore, pilgrim brothers,
Onward with the cross our aid;
Bear its shame, and fights its battle,
Till we rest beneath its shade.*

*Soon shall come the great awaking
Soon the rending of the tomb;
Then the scattering of all shadows,
And the end of toil and gloom.*

—Sabine Baring-Gould