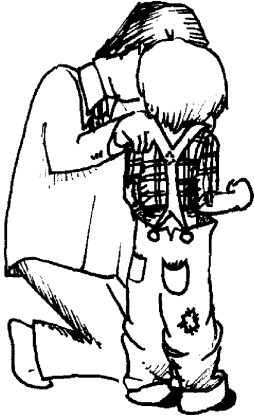


Chapter One



God Is Love: Love Is Healing and Life

“The power of love was in all Christ’s healing, and only by partaking of that love, through faith, can we be instruments for His work” (Counsels on Health, p. 31).

Fight! Fight!” came loud yells from the boys’ basement. It was recess at Belmont School and the children had to play inside because of rain. The teachers on duty rushed to the rescue, clapping their hands for attention; but to no avail. The 9-year-old champion, the central figure of the warfare, was deaf to their entreaties.

Just when the teachers had given up in despair the young boyish-appearing principal stepped in, and after mustering all his forces, the fight was finally brought to an end.

“Come up to the office with me, boys.”

Five guilty boys, headed by the champion, walked behind the man, and were soon arraigned before the court of justice. Eventually each one was disposed of—leaving the leader of the battle alone with the dispenser of punishments.

Something about the lone little figure drew Paul Day to him and made him wish to know more about him. It might have been the brown eyes beneath a shock of tousled brown curls, or it might have been the grotesque costume he wore. His slim little body was clad in faded tan trousers that were miles too big for him and sagged down over his thin knees almost to his ankles, and a tight little coat of plaid material that had apparently been made for a girl.

“Now, tell me your name and where you live.”

The boy’s brown eyes looked defiantly into the man’s blue ones.

“It’s Garvis Wilson, and I live ... live ...”

The defiance changed to wistfulness, and the little voice broke as he finished.

“I live ... Fesser, I live ... at the ...orphans’ home.”

“Oh, I see. You’ve had several fights before, haven’t you?”

“Yes, Fesser, me an’ the fellers has been a-fightin’ purt near ever recess since I bin a-comin’ to this school.”

“How long have you been coming to school?”

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“More’n a week, Fesser, ever since I bin t’ th’ orphans’ home.”

The young man’s manner was sympathetic as he drew the tiny bunch of wistfulness toward him.

“Why do you fight so much, Garvis?”

The expression in the boy’s eyes changed once more, and a sudden angry fire lit them.

“’Cuz the fellers call me ‘Dub.’ They called me ‘Double’ at first and then jist begin to call me ‘Dub.’ They do that ’cuz I ain’t got no fittin’ clothes; the britches is allus too big an’ the coat’s allus too tight an’ I allus look funny jist like I was two fellers—a big un an’ a little un.”

Paul Day sat at his desk, silent for a moment, looking steadily at Garvis. Presently the hurt, angry look in the boy’s eyes turned to triumph.

“But I lick ’em ever’ time, Fesser, even ‘f I am a ‘Dub.’ ’Spect it’s ’cause I’m two fellers reason I can lick ‘em! I’m a-goin’ tu keep a-lickin’ ’em too, long’s they keep a-callin’ me ‘Dub.’ ”

“I wouldn’t do that, Garvis. I’d be a man and not lower myself to fighting. Don’t you know that if you fight, you will always find somebody else to fight with you, and you will grow up to be a bad sort of man?”

“But, Fesser, I haven’t got nobody t’ b’long to an’ I hafta fight so’s the fellers won’t run over me. These big ol’ britches an’ this little ol’ streaked coat jist makes me feel like I want t’ jist fight, ‘n’ fight, ‘n’ fight ‘n’ jist keep a-fightin’!”

Paul Day was not much more than a boy himself, and something in his nature and experience made him long for some way to reach the small soldier’s aching little heart and heal the wound that was there.

“I am not going to punish you very much today, Garvis, but the next time it will be severe. But you won’t need it after this, will you? You are going to be a brave little man, aren’t you?”

“Yes, Fesser, I’ll try t’ be a big, brave man an’ not fight, but sometimes these big ol’ britches a-floppin’ ’round on me jist makes me s’ mad they jist make me be bad. But I’ll try t’ be good ’cuz I like you. I wisht I wuz your little boy so’s I c’d b’long.”

For some time after the boy had gone, Paul Day pondered over the situation. His mind went back to the days when he had not “b’longed.” He had not been an inmate at an orphans’ home, but he had lived in the home of a cold, selfish, unsympathetic aunt. He had not had to wear “big ol’ britches,” but his aunt had made him stay dressed up all the time, and worst of all, he had had to wear Windsor ties! How he had hated them! What money could buy he had. But he had not “b’longed,” as Garvis had termed his lack of love and sympathy.

The next day the sun shone and the playground at the Belmont School

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was alive with hundreds of happy voices and radiant with flashes of color.

“Fight! Fight!” There it was in spite of the splendor of the sunshine and the crisp freshness of the winter air.

Garvis and his opponents in battle were brought into Paul Day’s office. This time the champion was in tears, and he barely stepped inside the door, standing there hanging his head in shame—the defiant spirit was gone. As before, the young principal sent the other boys out first.

“Come here, Garvis.” The voice was tender, with a suggestion of hidden tears.

The tearful, shame-stricken little champion came forward, head hanging, not even glancing up. His ragged shoes that were not mates scraped the floor. He edged toward his hero. As he came near, his eyes glued to the floor, the shoes he had expected to see were not shiny, black man-sized shoes. They were tiny, tan pumps, and above each one was a slender silken ankle, then a soft, silky golden brown dress.

His eyes, traveling upward, stopped at a pair of sympathetic brown eyes, soft and sweet and smiling. Then he found Paul Day’s blue eyes just above and behind the glorious brown ones.

“Oh, there you are, Fesser.” A little sigh of relief escaped his lips. Then the sweetest voice he had ever heard came to him like an angel’s:

“Don’t mind me. I’m just Mrs. Fesser, and I have come to school today to get a glimpse of Fesser’s boys. He has told me about you.”

Paul Day smiled approvingly at his pretty little wife, then looked earnestly at Garvis.

“So you have been fighting again?”

The boy dropped his head, and in spite of his brave attempts to keep the tears back, they just would come.

“Yes, . . . it jist seems like I git all het up when the fellers call me ‘Dub’ an’ I don’t know whuther I’m more mad at the fellers er this ol’ tight coat an’ these big ol’ britches. Now ‘f I b’longed I don’t b’lieve I’d keer one speck. But,” he sobbed, “ ‘Taint no fun tu wear ’em when you don’t b’long.”

Two loving motherly arms went around the weeping little “Dub.” A sweet voice that sounded like heaven said things that made him forget the sorrow of not belonging.

“We want you to come and be our little boy, dear. God took our little son away and He has sent you to take his place. We need you. You belong to us.”

Then “Fesser” came nearer, his blue eyes misty.

“I never did belong, Garvis, until Mrs. Fesser took me. Now we’ll both belong to her.”

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The curly head lifted itself, and two happy eyes smiled through their tears into the eyes of Mr. and Mrs. “Fesser.”

“We’ll both b’long to her, Fesser, an’ I’ll b’long to both of you. I’ll be half yours an’ half hers. I don’t keer if I do hafta wear th’ little ol’ tight coat ‘n’ th’ big ol’ britches now, ’cuz I’ll hafta be two fellers t’ b’long t’ both of you, won’t I, Mis’ Fesser?”

God’s love for us is beautifully illustrated in this story by Kathryn Kimball about Little Dub. As Dub belonged to Mr. and Mrs. “Fesser,” so we belong to God. Our Father can do for us what Dub’s new parents did for him. God loves us so much that He created us. We wander away, then He redeems us, embraces us, and adopts us into His family.

There are several other acts that our Father performs even more wonderful than Dub’s new parents could do for him. These acts are all based on, and are a direct result of, His love.

Love Is Healing

“There went virtue out of him, and healed them all” (Luke 6:19). There is a vital power that comes from love. But in order to be able to give this powerful love to others we must be connected to Jesus and His love.

“I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me, ye can do nothing” (John 15:5). To be connected with Jesus opens a whole new realm of ministry.

The Desire of Ages, pages 262-266, tells of the leper who, ignoring taunts and shouts of “unclean,” pressed through the crowd to get to Jesus. The disease had made frightful inroads and made him a loathsome figure. The isolation from his family had caused them great pain. Leprosy itself was considered a symbol of sin, and hence he was looked upon by all as a great sinner.

He falls at Jesus’ feet and in a pleading voice says, “Lord, if Thou wilt, Thou canst make me clean.” No one had been healed of leprosy since Elisha’s experience with Naaman. How could he expect that Jesus could heal him now? He saw how people with other diseases had been restored to health. Maybe he could be healed, too. Hope sprang up in his heart, lifting his faith to new heights.

“And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed” (Matthew 8:3).

Immediately his skin became soft with the glow of a healthy child. Joy inexpressible spilled from his soul. Soon he would be restored to his family. The curse was gone. The name-calling would end. Accusations would be extinguished. He was a whole new person. Praise God!

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How did it happen? The book Education gives us insight into how Jesus was able to heal. *“Only the love that flows from the heart of Christ can heal. Only he in whom that love flows, even as the sap in the tree or the blood in the body, can restore the wounded soul. Love’s agencies have a wonderful power, for they are divine.... Would we learn the lesson, with what power for healing would our lives be gifted! How life would be transformed, and the earth become a very likeness and foretaste of heaven!”* (p. 114; emphasis supplied).

If we could love like Jesus loves, we would see more healing in this worldly lazar house. We can love enough if we connect with Him!

“Not all that this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind, or remove care, or banish disease. Fame, genius, talent—all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart or to restore the wasted life. The life of God in the soul is man’s only hope. The love which Christ diffuses through the whole being is a vitalizing power. Every vital part—the brain, the heart, the nerves—it touches with healing” (The Ministry of Healing, p. 115; emphasis supplied).

“The power of love was in all Christ’s healing, and only by partaking of that love, through faith, can we be instruments for His work. If we neglect to link ourselves in divine connection with Christ, the current of life-giving energy cannot flow in rich streams from us to the people” (Counsels on Health, p. 31).

“You cannot exert an influence that will transform others until your own heart has been humbled and refined and made tender by the grace of Christ” (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 128).

God asks us to believe that through sensing our need, obtaining the gifts of forgiveness and repentance, we can become channels of His love and healing for others.

“That love they knew not until they saw the suffering and death of Jesus Christ upon the cross of Calvary. The new commandment of love was given in behalf of the weak, the wretched, the helpless” (Medical Ministry, p. 121).

By giving our whole heart over to Christ, learning to love unconditionally, we can become a healing power in this hurting world. Jesus’ hands reach out, anxious to sanctify the pain we have known into healing for others who are hurting as we have been. When He chooses us to share His pain, He can more easily grant us the gift of healing. Or we can choose to rebel:

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Shall I Crucify My Saviour?

*Oh, the kindly hands of Jesus,
Pouring blessings on all men
Bleeding, nail scarred, hands of Jesus,
Shall I crucify again?*

—Anonymous

Love Is Reconciliation

He was standing on the porch of the courthouse. He was discouraged. His best friend had just been sentenced to death. He had been asked to testify as a character witness, but he said that he didn't want to be involved. Now he wished he had done more to help his friend. People wondered why he hadn't been more supportive. But when questioned about it, he stubbornly answered, "No, I don't even know him very well."

Unknown to him, his friend found out that he would not speak for him. The friend felt keen anguish over his lack of support. It added an almost overwhelming load to his death sentence. The condemned man thought that his best friends would be there for him, but they weren't.

The man standing on the porch decided to cover up his appearance by mingling in the crowd of onlookers after his friend was sentenced. He did not want anyone to recognize him as an associate of the condemned man.

Someone nearby asked him, "Aren't you a friend of the accused?"

He answered him angrily, with swear words, "No, I don't know who he is."

The man who had asked the question then knew he was mistaken, for it was commonly known that anyone who was a friend of the accused did not use such language.

Just as he was finished uttering his expletives, his attention was drawn to a small crowd of soldiers escorting the accused to the place of execution. His eyes fell on the face of his friend, who was looking directly at him. His friend showed no hatred in his expression and it broke the man's heart, for it was in that instant that he knew his friend had discovered the betrayal.

"In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there" (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 713). The man's mind was flooded with memories of how his friend, Jesus, had forgiven so many and in that gaze, Peter knew he had been forgiven and had been reconciled to Jesus. He felt sorrow in his heart for denying Jesus and sensed that he had not been separated from him as a friend. Though forgiven, Peter would remember always (repentance) this night of reconciliation.

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It was in the glance of Jesus that Peter knew he was forgiven and reconciled. The Bible, in its thorough coverage of this topic, has anticipated that some reconciliations are not as easy as Peter's. It outlines steps that one can follow that will lead to reunion or separation. These counsels are directly related to our survival. In our relationship to Jesus and to others, our only safe course is prayer.

"It is a perilous thing to allow an unchristlike trait to live in the heart. One cherished sin will, little by little, debase the character, bringing all its nobler powers into subjection to the evil desire. The removal of one safeguard from the conscience, the indulgence of one evil habit, one neglect of the high claims of duty, breaks down the defenses of the soul and opens the way for Satan to come in and lead us astray. The only safe course is to let our prayers go forth daily from a sincere heart, as did David, 'Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not' (Psalm 17:5)" (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 452).

If we have one sin of commission toward a brother or a sister, we need to make it right.

"If we have in any manner defrauded or injured our brother, we should make restitution. If we have unwittingly borne false witness, if we have misstated words, if we have injured his influence in any way, we should go to the ones with whom we have conversed about him, and take back all our injurious misstatements" (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 59; emphasis supplied).

The Spirit of Prophecy gives us guidelines on the attitude of heart we should have as we approach individuals with our concerns and burdens.

"Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart. No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach" (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 128, 129; emphasis supplied).

Reconciliation uses the principle of love and not censure. According to this reference, no one has been restored who was censured or reproached. When a church board is working on a problem, considering or recommending disfellowship of a member to the church at large, the principle of love should be followed in preference to the principle of enforcement. A church board should **never** disfellowship anyone. It must be the church that performs this uncomfortable task according to Matthew 18:17. As the process unfolds, much time should be spent with the person or people involved before such a terrible conclusion is reached.

Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the procedure for reconciliation in Jesus' own words. First, go to that person alone. Second, if that fails, take someone with

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you. Third, take it to the church and if that person doesn't hear the church, then keep trying to win him.

The Clear Word expresses it this way in verse 17: *"If he doesn't listen to the church, then treat him as an unbeliever who needs to be brought back to the Lord."*

"Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ" (Galatians 6:1, 2).

"Meekness" means "I am no better than you." "Bear" means to carry, not "bare" one another's burdens to someone else. We don't expose others' faults or condemn them, thereby making the load heavier. We don't embarrass, but love them, knowing but for God's love, I would have done the same thing. We settle things with our brothers and sisters outside a court of law.

"God will guard the interests of those who love and fear Him, and with confidence we may commit our case to Him who judges righteously" (Christ's Object Lessons, p. 249).

"Everyone who has been free to condemn or discourage will in his own experience be brought over the ground where he has caused others to pass; he will feel what they have suffered because of his want of sympathy and tenderness. It is the love of God toward us that has decreed this" (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 136).

It is important that we be careful how we treat others because God, in His love, has told us that we will be brought over the same ground that we have caused others to pass.

"In reforms we would better come one step short of the mark than to go one step beyond it. And if there is error at all, let it be on the side next to the people" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 3, p. 21).

Forgiveness

From the old sanctuary service comes the concepts of forgiving intentional sins and sins of ignorance. The Spirit of Prophecy clarifies this even further by referring to these sins as ones of commission and omission. A sin of commission is one of intentional occurrence, while a sin of omission is one of "I didn't know" or "I forgot."

In some cases, the only measurement for sins of omission is the person we offended when we didn't mean to. If they are hurt by what we say, then it becomes a sin of omission because we said it wrong and we didn't know it would hurt. We ask forgiveness. They may also ask us to forgive them because they now

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see that we did not intend to hurt them. Addressing your sin of omission leaves you forgiven by God, and your brothers and sisters.

This work of reunion is a delicate work. *Evangelism*, page 348, says “*To deal with human minds is the nicest work ever committed to mortal man.*” The word “nicest” means delicate, careful, and loving.

We need to remember that open sin cannot exist in the church without heavy responsibilities falling on the leadership. “*The plain, straight testimony must live in the church, or the curse of God will rest upon His people as surely as it did upon ancient Israel because of their sins. God holds His people, as a body, responsible for the sins existing in individuals among them. If the leaders of the church neglect to diligently search out the sins which bring the displeasure of God upon the body, they become responsible for these sins*” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 269; emphasis supplied).

It is imperative that these sins be eliminated from among us, or else we are held responsible by God for their existence. This work **must** be done in love. Not everyone can do it. “*All are not fitted to correct the erring. They have not wisdom to deal justly, while loving mercy. They are not inclined to see the necessity of mingling love and tender compassion with faithful reproofs*” (*ibid.*, emphasis supplied).

The Elijah Message

“*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse*” (Malachi 4:5, 6).

There are no more moving stories of reconciliation than those involving parents and children. One such story comes from France. Sitting on a public bench under the burning sun was a young man with his face buried in his hands. His attitude expressed complete despair. Evangelist Charvet, who had just retired after 34 years’ service, entered into a conversation with him, finally offering him a New Testament. “I don’t want it,” was the reply. “I used to have one, but it was too big to carry, and I threw it into the water.” The evangelist felt by intuition that this was not the real reason he had thrown the book away.

After a little more conversation and a few tactful questions, the young man opened his heart and told the evangelist his story. “Several months ago, I left my parents and went to the town to live my own life in my own way. But things did not go as I had expected. My hope and my money gradually disappeared. Now I have nothing left. I intended to return home—that is my home there, the white house you see in the valley—but having gone so far, I am ashamed to go any

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farther. I am afraid, too; for if my parents should refuse to forgive me, there would be nothing left but death.”

After listening to this sad confession, M. Charvet, profoundly touched by the story, opened his New Testament and read the parable of the prodigal son. The young man saw the application of the parable to himself, and began to weep over his sinful past. Suddenly the evangelist conceived a great idea. He told the prodigal to remain where he was while he went to the house in the valley that had been pointed out to him. Knocking at the door, he offered the New Testament to the man, who opened it and was soon joined by his wife. Asked what kind of book it was, he read to them the story of the prodigal (Luke 15:11-32).

Moved to the very depth of his being by the powerful story, which in the course of the ages has brought tears to so many eyes, the father opened his heart and told Charvet his story. “We had a son once, and he was everything to us,” he said. “Unfortunately, we did not get on well together, and he went away. We have heard nothing from him since. We would gladly forgive him if he would return, but we do not know where to find him.” Then Charvet told them everything. “I know where your son is,” he began. “He is quite near here, humble and repentant, and has sent me to ask your pardon. He wants but a word from you to return home.”

A few moments later the overjoyed mother was weeping on her son’s neck, and the father, after kissing him on both cheeks, was shaking his hands. Then they all gave thanks to God for His goodness, and gladly bought a Testament, in which they could read together of the reconciled life (Bible Society Record, as quoted in “Treasured Gleanings” from The Quiet Hour Echoes). Oh, that we could each become as sensitive to the heart cries of others as was M. Charvet!

“And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias [Elijah], to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just: to make ready a people prepared for the Lord” (Luke 1:17).

“In this age, prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warnings He sends.... With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 4, p. 1184; emphasis supplied).

What is the Lord asking you to do in reconciling yourself with your friends, family, and church? He is coming. Will you survive? You will if you make right that which

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you know is wrong in your own life. You will if you let God make a demonstration of His love through you. Not only will His perfect love cast out your fear of becoming what He wants you to be, but you will also have perfect joy. The Elijah message will have the effect of restoring family relationships. "If the Lord be God, follow Him."

The Path of Healing

Sam was frustrated. It seemed like everything he did was not quite good enough. His wife wanted him to do more. Pamela just wanted him to keep his motivation at a high level for she knew he was a fast, efficient, hard worker. Ever since the injury to his leg, Sam wanted to take it easy, but when his wife prodded him to fix things around the house he felt she was unsympathetic and cold. The frustration built so intensely that Sam became violently angry, surprising himself, his friends, and Pamela. He decided he needed help with anger management and came to see me at my office.

As Sam told his story, beginning in his childhood, he revealed that he had been sexually abused during his early teens. He explained how he had harbored feelings of hatred and anger at the person who inflicted this mistreatment and made him feel so inferior to everyone else. When I suggested that this abuse might be the roots of his surprise anger and violence, he bowed his head in admission.

"How can I fix this, Jere?" Sam asked.

In my counseling practice I attend seminars to keep abreast with new techniques, and, as providence would have it, I had become acquainted with what I thought was just the help that would start Sam on a path of healing.

Sam and Pamela were both Christians. Introducing the concept of forgiveness was relatively easy. The clinical procedures are listed below:

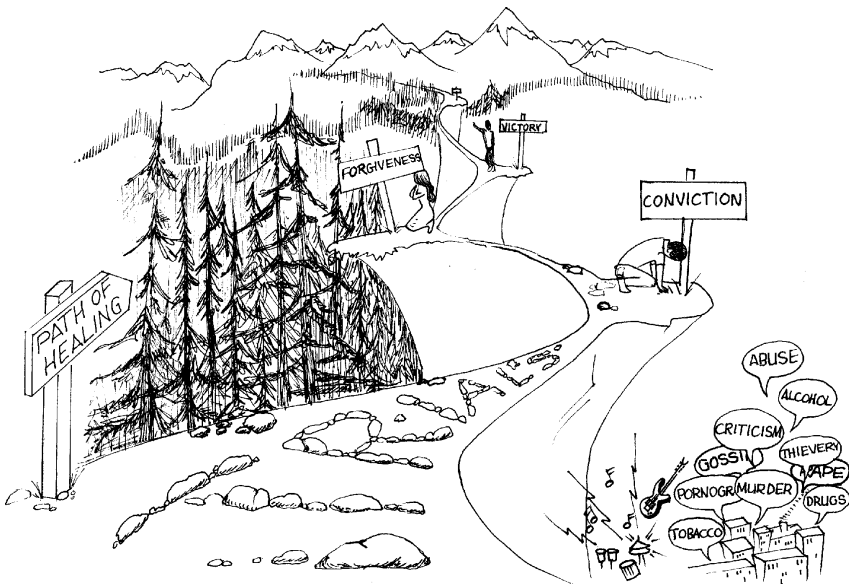
- 1) Write a letter to the person who abused you.
- 2) In this letter you should list all the abuses: physical, sexual and verbal.
- 3) Mention how those abuses hurt you.
- 4) Take some time, at this point, to ask yourself, "Am I able, with God's help, to forgive this person and tell them?" If so, offer them your forgiveness.
- 5) Explain to them, in closing your letter, that in spite of how bad these abuses hurt, you forgive them.
- 6) Amen, and thank you, Lord.

Should the person be deceased, write the letter and throw it in the fire or give it to a friend or relative who had knowledge of the abuse. At a youth ranch where I was principal, one evening we lit a fire in a huge pile of brush. The young people were encouraged to write experiences from which they wanted to be free. They were asked to grant forgiveness to those who caused them pain, wad up the papers, and toss them

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into the fire. Victories were gained that night because some of the students sent their letters to the people who had hurt them. Experience has taught me that this concept of forgiveness really works, both in and out of the clinical setting.

As good as forgiveness is, it is just a short distance up the path of healing. We might think of this as the Christian's walk to complete restoration, but many travel no further than the "cliff of conviction" or the "overlook" of forgiveness. Jesus invites us to travel the path of healing and experience the love he has for us. At the "cliff of conviction" comes the invitation to healing that is essential to our survival in the last days.



Responsibility or Justification?

In our dealings with others we face a multitude of pleasant interactions that strengthen the bonds of friendship and affinity. Others are negative, hurtful experiences. Someone causes us pain or we cause trauma to others. The negative reactions tend to divide families and friends. They can be hard to resolve and reconcile partly because we justify our own feelings. When resolving conflict no one should infer in any way that someone is emotionally unstable because they are hurt.

The ideal way to resolve conflict is to deal with it in a Biblical, healthy, and therapeutic way. Properly conducted, this is the first step in a healing pilgrimage. This healing journey is as long as we choose to make it.

The first viewpoint along the journey to higher ground is the Cliff of Con-

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viction. Thousands die here. Seeing no hope, they plunge into the abyss below. Despondent and discouraged, they often seek comfort among the unstable and destructive rocks of dependency: alcohol, illicit or prescription drugs, and other indulgences. When the rock upon which they choose to stand topples, they tumble toward the edge. Unless someone is there to rescue them, their fall will culminate in hopeless oblivion and, eventually, another needless suicide. It is while the victim is seeking comfort among the boulders, that a fellow traveler might come along and invite them to look higher. If the victim is willing to look, he will catch a vision of the trail he thought had ended at the point of conviction.

The next viewpoint on this trail is the Overlook of Forgiveness. It is the place where many lives are saved that would have been lost. From this overlook, the Pinnacle of Victory comes into view. It's yet a little higher up the trail. From Forgiveness, we can see on Higher Places a radiant group of people called Overcomers.

Let's examine a strategy that will help us relate to events at the first viewpoint, the one we have named Conviction. Conviction helps us gather momentum toward healing, for conviction always brings us to a choice; to continue traveling the upward path, or traveling the slippery trail downward to great loss.

As we meditate on our convictions pertaining to damaged personal relationships, we will see that we have either been hurt or have hurt someone else. Where we detect that we have hurt someone, we sense conviction, the need to resolve differences. We must choose to go to the one we hurt and apologize to them. As if by a miracle, we are at the second viewpoint of our healing journey, Forgiveness. If we linger too long at the viewpoint of Conviction and do not respond to its beckoning call, we fall easy victim to the shale slide toward discouragement and despondency. Seeking to salve our hurt when others do not apologize to us, we might seek indulgences to ease our pain. Most, if not all, suicides occur at this viewpoint of Conviction. It is essential to our survival that we move on from Conviction toward the overlook of Forgiveness, further up the trail.

Achieving the heights of Conviction and Forgiveness, however, are not enough. Who would want to repeat that cycle over and over again and not be free? We must travel on to yet higher ground, at the Rest Area of Victory. During these interactions with others that lead to forgiveness, we introduce the three R's, namely: Restitution, Resolution, and Reconciliation. In order to achieve this rest at the Viewpoint of Victory, we must be willing to follow the healing guidelines left along the path. We discover in the first message box along the trail that we must take responsibility for the hurts we have caused others. Remember, they are the expert on their feelings. If they say we have hurt them, we must say, "I am sorry."

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We need to ask forgiveness.

In the atmosphere of Responsibility, the three R's can be nurtured, but if we justify our actions, then the person we hurt is still in pain. No resolution or reconciliation can take place. Without excuse, we need to take responsibility for the pain that we have caused others. Justification of our actions or words does not heal anyone, but continues to cause them pain and may actually encourage them to take further steps on the downward trail to discouragement and hopelessness. The Responsibility or Justification decision, as a measure of reconciliation, is a valid guidepost.

What happens when someone doesn't take responsibility for the hurt they have caused? We then must forgive them, for our sake, even if they continue to justify their behavior and do not acknowledge our pain. God acknowledges our effort to resolve and reconcile. He forgives us, even when they will not accept our apology (Matthew 18:35).

The first steps on the path of healing are the most difficult. It often seems as if we are alleviating those who have hurt us from accountability. We leave vengeance with God, where it belongs. When we are harboring a hurt we are only damaging ourselves, not the person who hurt us.

"That which we do to others, whether it be good or evil, will surely act upon ourselves, in blessing or in cursing... Everyone who has been free to condemn or discourage, will in his own experience be brought over the same ground where he has caused others to pass; he will feel what they have suffered because of his want of sympathy and tenderness" (Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing, p. 136).

Time of Jacob's Trouble

Years ago, at Sanctuary Ranch, in northern British Columbia, we had a "make it right meeting." They were usually held during our Friday night vespers service. We would sing hymns while those who needed to make things right with each other would absent themselves and make things right between them, asking forgiveness. Staff and students alike had been coached by counsels from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy about the proper procedure to follow, according to Matthew 19:15. Only public sins were to be confessed to the group. We sensed the Holy Spirit's presence. I recommend this type of meeting to any church who needs the balm of reconciliation. Nothing can be hidden if we expect to gain heaven. We must learn how to give our problems, sins, troubles and trials to Jesus. He is the only one who can solve our problems.

Ahead of us is a time referred to as Jacob's Trouble. During this time,

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imagine yourself in a group of people awaiting Jesus' return. Your group will probably be located in a remote, uninhabited place or in a prison awaiting the execution of your sentence. You find yourself unconcerned for your own life, but deeply burdened about others around you. You have a deep sense of your own past mistakes that could prevent you from gaining heaven. You wonder if you have made everything right, but you can't remember anything for which you have not made restitution and been forgiven, by others, and by God. You also realize that you have forgiven all those who have mistreated you, whether they have asked for it or not. It is some comfort to realize that your forgiveness may have aided others, unknown to them, in being ready for this great day.

The Great Controversy, p. 620, reveals a picture of people who will be awaiting Jesus' return during the time of Jacob's Trouble. They have been tested severely and yet have not had recent failure. They see only their past weaknesses and they plead with God for deliverance. *"So in the time of trouble, if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance. But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone beforehand to judgment, and have been blotted out; and they cannot bring them to remembrance"* (emphasis supplied).

Notice the expressions "unconfessed sins," "while tortured," and then finally, "cannot bring them to remembrance." If they have no unconfessed sins to reveal then they have received forgiveness from God and are healed of their past mistakes. Their past is reconciled and resolved and their abuse of others has been forgiven. As a final step, God has forgiven them, as He has promised in 1 John 1:9

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." Healing is victory.

In the heat of anger, let us remember that if God can give us time and a view of the outcome, we can have victory. Victory is an objective, another viewpoint on the path of healing. It is essential to our survival.

"He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Revelation 21:7).

Most people feel that anger needs to be responded to immediately. Victory over anger is obtained by thoughtfully focusing on new choices.

Testimonies to Ministers, p. 18; *"He [Jesus] is affecting transformations so amazing that Satan, with all his triumphant boasting, with his confederacy of evil united against God and the laws of His government, stands*

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viewing them [human hearts] as a fortress impregnable” (emphasis supplied). These human hearts have traveled the path of healing.

Psalm 147:3 *“He heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds”* (NKJV). From my experience, the path of healing is the same path on which we experience justification and sanctification (growth in the Christian walk). It is the same path as conversion and maturation, and it begins in the special sense of our need. Such experiences as acceptance, help, companionship, appreciation, and sorrow for our mistakes are examples of our needs being met. Many there are who jump off the cliff of conviction at only the first step on the path of healing. At that point we may become discouraged by people’s comments about our search for something better, or by the denial of others to our request for forgiveness. It may be that they see things another way when we tell them we forgive them for what they did that hurt us. Do not be discouraged. Take courage, press on, even in the atmosphere of the painful reactions of others. Hebrews 13:5, *“I will never leave you nor forsake you.”*

Many battles will be fought at or near the edge of this cliff of conviction until we reach one of the most beautiful viewpoints on the trail of healing. It is the scene of forgiveness. Victory is a distance up the trail, but it allows such freedom as we have not yet experienced. We see new colors in our human experiences that we never knew were in the spectrum. Such colors as empathy, calmness, peace, tolerance, forgiveness, are a vivid part of our new rainbow. The victory viewpoint will be over alcohol, drug addictions, anger, cheating, gossip, bitterness, and abuse. No victory is more precious as the one over our past. A destiny emerges into view that we never realized before and how thrilled we are. New colors have been added to our rainbow at the viewpoint of victory but color bands are missing that are still needed.

As we turn back to the trail, we see a sign: “For more colors to add to your rainbow, please move upward.” The arrow on the sign points to higher places and other viewpoints of victory. There are people there, and even at this distance we can see that they are on their knees thanking God for their deliverance. Such a scene encourages me to press on, but sadly, as I turn around and look down the trail, many are still at the cliff of convictions, preparing to jump into oblivion rather than risk embarrassment and humiliation that results in conviction. How I wished they would press on. I begin singing, determined to sing until God and I will remember nothing of my past mistakes (Jeremiah 31:34).

“Beloved, now are we the children of God; and it has not been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, even as He is pure” (1 John 3:2, 3, NKJV; emphasis supplied).

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Love Is Life

When I was in college, a class in genetics was required for a biology major. Our teacher had a knack for getting us to think; he took it for granted that we would understand the basic chemical and physical concepts of cell division, anatomy, and the accompanying physiology. He wanted us to climb to a level above mere recall to the application and interrelationship of the sciences.

One day he challenged us to a thought question, “What is life?” We had just studied how amino acids had been formed in the lab and how the direction of such research was to determine the origin of life and then eventually create it. We knew that we could reduce living cells into the chemical components of life and that the only measurable loss from these cells was water. But if we added water back to this tube of cell parts and chemicals there were no living cells regenerated. Something else had been lost from the living cells that we could not recover in order to make new cells.

What is life? What a question! It has perplexed people for centuries. The answers, if only partial, must exist outside the laboratory. Let’s examine a few inspired statements to gain some insight into the nature of life.

“For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light” (Psalm 36:9). As simple as this song sounds, it is very profound; there is no bottom to its pool of thought. The next verse connects thoughts of Psalm 36:9 to the great God of the universe. *“For God is love”* (1 John 4:8). God is the fountain of life. He is love also. Can we not, then, conclude that love is life?

“I am come that they might have life” (John 10:10). Jesus wants us to have life “more abundantly.” What is this life? We have already seen that God is life, but has He told us any more?

“Not only is He the originator of all, but He is the life of everything that lives. It is His life that we receive in the sunshine, in the pure, sweet air, in the food which builds up our bodies and sustains our strength. It is by His life that we exist, hour by hour, moment by moment. Except as perverted by sin, all His gifts tend to life, to health and joy” (Education, p. 197; Psalm 36:9, quoted; emphasis supplied).

God keeps us alive moment by moment. This helps to explain why we couldn’t just rehydrate or reassemble cells and bring them back to life. Life comes from God in a constant stream.

“He is caring for us every moment; He keeps the living machinery in action; if we were left to run it for one moment, we should die” (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 56).

His care is as constant as His love. Satan claimed that he had a better plan. Under the devil’s plan, our lives are interrupted. God had to allow “the killer”

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to demonstrate his plan. But in the end, God's love will triumph, showing His love has always been constant, even in this demonstration of Satan's plan.

“Day by day, hour by hour, minute by minute, God works by His infinite power to keep you alive. It is He who supplies the breath which keeps life in your body. Did God neglect man as man neglects God, what would become of the race?” (Counsels on Stewardship, p. 224).

Aren't you glad that our lives are dependent upon God's love and not our love to each other or even to God?

“Selfishness is death. No organ of the body could live should it confine its service to itself. The heart, failing to send its lifeblood to the hand and the head, would quickly lose its power. As our lifeblood, so is the love of Christ diffused through every part of His mystical body. We are members one of another, and the soul that refuses to impart will perish” (The Desire of Ages, p. 417; emphasis supplied).

Selfishness is the opposite of love. It is death. The word opposite of death is life, so love is life! Our body is an example of how life is sustained by unselfishness. Can't you hear the stomach saying to the legs, “I am keeping all the food because I need it and I might not get any more”? Or the small intestine saying to the rest of the body, after the stomach shared food with it, “I am keeping all the nourishment for myself”? You say, “How ridiculous!” Our selfishness only proves how shortsighted and prone to death we are!

Christ's Object Lessons, page 258, tells the parable of a selfish man who said, *“I will tear down my barns and build greater”* (Luke 12:18-20). Inspired commentary on this verse is, *“In living for self he has rejected that divine love which would have flowed out in mercy to his fellow men. Thus he has rejected life. For God is love, and love is life”* (emphasis supplied).

Love is not obtainable in a test tube from a laboratory yet it is the one ingredient that makes life function. That love from God gives life every day but also “more abundantly.” Love is not only life, but healing; and we may experience that healing by connecting with Jesus to become a channel of His love to others. When nothing else will break the barriers, God uses His gift of love through us, as demonstrated in this true story by Melanie Show:

None of us liked to take care of Jessica. She was 18, beautiful, and completely unconscious. Oh, she would cry out when we washed and combed her beautiful long hair. And she would fuss and thrash about in bed from time to time. But that was all. She had lovely eyes, but I could never meet their wordless gaze.

Her story was familiar. She had been in a car accident, was brought to the hospital in comatose condition, and had more or less stayed that way ever since.

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At first she couldn't breathe on her own. In that one way she had improved since coming to our unit—she no longer needed the respirator, and her tracheotomy wound was well healed. But she still had casts on both legs from toes to knees. Her jaws were wired together. And she responded to no one.

Jessica used to be a model. I knew that because of the pictures her mother showed me on her infrequent visits. She lived in Jessica's past, unable to grasp the present. Sometimes she would ask whether Jessica's legs couldn't be positioned better, or whether her hair couldn't be arranged differently. But that seemed to be as far as she could come to coping with the now. When the whole family visited, they awkwardly gathered around Jessica's bed or wheelchair, not knowing quite what to do with someone who couldn't talk back. We told them to speak to her as though she could hear and understand, but it never came naturally to them. It really didn't to us, either.

The only person who seemed comfortable with her was Val, a new graduate nurse. She talked to Jessica like the peer she was, braided her hair, discussed the latest fashions and music.

And she sang to her.

Val sang, no matter who her patients were. But we couldn't help thinking her a bit eccentric to sing for Jessica.

Jessica's "progress" was typical. After a few weeks she had to be sent to a nursing home because we could do no more for her. And besides, the hospital needed her bed for someone more acutely ill. It was with some relief that we transferred her and turned our attention to those who could at least mumble to us.

Several months later we received a note from her mother. Prepared for a funeral announcement, we read that Jessica had awakened one day, looked at her mother and said, "I love you." The leg casts had come off, she was learning to walk again, and she was able to eat solid food. We just looked at one another, dumbfounded.

Then her mother wrote us of the day when Jessica was able to go home, although she was still under her doctor's observation. She had to relearn some things, such as history, French, and chemistry. But her mind was alive! She was doing all right!

About then I think we each began praising ourselves for our good care. At least she hadn't had to fight bedsores. We wanted to see her and hear from her own lips how great we'd been.

One day she did pay us a visit. And we learned that Jessica remembered nothing about us or our diligent care: the tube feedings, the hair washings, the every-two-hour turnings, the baths. She didn't remember anything.

Except someone singing.

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Val's love came through loud and clear, even when Jessica could not respond. God desires for us to respond to His love letters, the truths in His Word. A knowledge, and acceptance, of vital truth is essential to survival. It is a love letter from God. Love, as expressed in singing, created a response in Jessica even when she was in a coma.

The Love of God

The love of God is greater far
Than tongue or pen can ever tell;
It goes beyond the highest star,
And reaches to the lowest hell;
The guilty pair, bowed down with care,
God gave His Son to win;
His erring child He reconciled,
And pardoned from his sin.

O love of God, how rich and pure!
How measureless and strong!
It shall forevermore endure
The saints' and angels' song.

When years of time shall pass away,
And earthly thrones and kingdoms fall,
When men, who here refuse to pray,
On rocks and hills and mountains call,
God's love so sure, shall still endure,
All measureless and strong;
Redeeming grace to Adam's race—
The saints' and angels' song.

Could we with ink the ocean fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill,
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write the love of God above,
Would drain the ocean dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.

—by Frederick Lehman

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FOR FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies for the Church, volume 6, page 121

“The Lord wants His people to follow other methods than that of condemning wrong, even though the condemnation be just. He wants us to do something more than to hurl at our adversaries charges that only drive them further from the truth. The work which Christ came to do in our world was not to erect barriers and constantly thrust upon the people the fact that they were wrong.”

The Desire of Ages, page 189

“While the very purity of His presence condemned her sin, He had spoken no word of demunciation, but had told her of His grace, that could renew the soul.”

The Desire of Ages, page 462

“In His act of pardoning this woman and encouraging her to live a better life, the character of Jesus shines forth in the beauty of perfect righteousness. While He does not palliate sin, nor lessen the sense of guilt, He seeks not to condemn, but to save.”

The Desire of Ages, page 808

“Jesus did not overwhelm Thomas with reproach, nor did He enter into controversy with him. He revealed Himself to the doubting one. Thomas had been most unreasonable in dictating the conditions of his faith, but Jesus, by His generous love and consideration, broke down all the barriers. Unbelief is seldom overcome by controversy.”

The Ministry of Healing, page 495

“Until the judgment you will never know the influence of a kind, considerate course toward the inconsistent, the unreasonable, the unworthy. When we meet with ingratitude and betrayal of sacred trusts, we are roused to show our contempt or indignation. This the guilty expect; they are prepared for it. But kind forbearance takes them by surprise and often awakens their better impulses and arouses a longing for a nobler life.”

Medical Ministry, page 210

“If, after a course of provocation and injustice on their part, you

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treat them [the unreasonable, and unworthy] as you would an innocent person, you even take pains to show them special acts of kindness, then you have acted the part of a Christian; and they become surprised and ashamed, and see their course of action and meanness more clearly than if you plainly stated their aggravated acts to rebuke them.”

In Heavenly Places, page 290

“We should remember that all make mistakes; even men and women who have had years of experience sometimes err. But God does not cast them off because of their errors; to every erring son and daughter of Adam He gives the privilege of another trial. The true follower of Jesus manifests a Christlike spirit toward his erring brother. Instead of speaking in condemnation, he remembers the words, ‘He which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins’ (James 5:20).”

Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 95

“Satan exults over the condition of God’s professed people. While many are neglecting their own souls, they eagerly watch for an opportunity to criticize and condemn others. All have defects of character, and it is not hard to find something that jealousy can interpret to their injury. ‘Now,’ say these self-constituted judges, ‘we have facts. We will fasten upon them an accusation from which they cannot clear themselves.’ They wait for a fitting opportunity and then produce their bundle of gossip and bring forth their tidbits. ...

“Is there no law of kindness to be observed? Have Christians been authorized of God to criticize and condemn one another? Is it honorable, or even honest, to win from the lips of another, under the guise of friendship, secrets which have been entrusted to him, and then turn the knowledge thus gained to his injury? Is it Christian charity to gather up every floating report, to unearth everything that will cast suspicion on the character of another, and then take delight in using it to injure him? Satan exults when he can defame or wound a follower of Christ. He is ‘the accuser of our brethren.’ Shall Christians aid him in his work?”

Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 169

“Love is unsuspecting, ever placing the most favorable construction upon the motives and acts of others. Love will never needlessly expose the faults of others. It does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but rather seeks to bring to mind some good qualities of the one defamed.”

Our High Calling, page 237

“We must learn to place the best possible construction upon doubtful conduct of others.... If we are ever suspecting evil we are in danger of creating what we allow ourselves to suspect.... We cannot pass along without sometimes having our feelings hurt and our temper tried, but as Christians we must be just as patient, forbearing, humble, and meek as we desire others to be.”

Our High Calling, page 239

“There is light in following Jesus, talking of Jesus, loving Jesus, and I will not allow my mind to think or speak ill of my brethren. ‘Inasmuch,’ said Christ, ‘as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me’ (Matt. 25:40). I would not feel unkindness or hatred to anyone. I would not be an accuser of my brethren. Satan will try to stir up my mind to do this, but I cannot do it. I will cherish the forgiving Spirit of Jesus.”

Review and Herald, March 12, 1895

“He who opens his heart to the suggestions of the enemy, taking in evil surmisings, and cherishing jealousy, frequently misconstrues this evil-mindedness, calling it special foresight, discrimination, or discernment in detecting guilt and fathoming the evil motives of others. He considers that a precious gift has been vouchsafed to him, and he draws apart from the very brethren with whom he should be in harmony; he climbs upon the judgment-seat and shuts his heart against the one he supposes to be in error, as though he himself were above the temptation. Jesus separates from him, and leaves him to walk in the sparks of his own kindling. Let no one among you glory any longer against the truth by declaring that this spirit is a necessary consequence of dealing faithfully with wrongdoers and of standing in defense of the truth. Such wisdom has many admirers, but it is very deceptive and harmful. It does not come from above, but is the fruit of an unregenerated heart. Its originator is Satan himself. Let no accuser of others credit himself with discernment; for in so doing he clothes the attributes of Satan with the garments of righteousness. I call upon you, my brethren, to purify the soul-temple of all these things that defile; for they are roots of bitterness” (emphasis supplied).

The Upward Look, page 59

“The presence of Christ’s love in the heart will lead to love the very ones who are astray and who are in the wrong.”

Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, page 150

“If a person is in error, be the more kind to him; if you are not courteous, you may drive him away from Christ. Let every word you speak, even the tones of your voice, express your interest in, and sympathy for, the souls that are in peril. If you are harsh, denunciatory, and impatient with them, you are doing the work of the enemy.”

The Spirit of Prophecy, volume 4, pages 337-340

“As the people of God approach the perils of the last days, Satan holds earnest consultation with his angels as to the most successful plan of overthrowing their faith.... ‘We must cause distraction and division. We must destroy their anxiety for their own souls, and lead them to criticize, to judge, and to accuse and condemn one another, and to cherish selfishness and enmity. For these sins, God banished us from His presence, and all who follow our example will meet a similar fate’” (emphasis supplied).

Chapter Two

Vital Truth: End Time Events Revealed



“The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days”
(Selected Messages, book 1, p. 41).

The story is told about a man who had a beautiful, faithful collie dog named Laddie. The two lived alone at the edge of town in an old shack. The man was drunk most of the time. Laddie would accompany his master to town, many times helping the man return home if he was too inebriated. One day, in a drunken rage, the man decided to kill Laddie. He picked up a club and began swinging it at the dog. Since his coordination was slowed by the alcohol, Laddie was able to sidestep the blows. As the dog thwarted his efforts, the man’s anger increased until, finally, he decided to drown Laddie. The man staggered toward the lake and the collie willingly followed, thinking they were going on one of his beloved walks. This time the dog’s trust would be severely tested, for the man was leading Laddie to his death.

The man managed to get into the boat with Laddie, and rowed with some difficulty to the middle of the lake where he tied a large weight around the dog’s neck and dumped him overboard. Laddie sank rapidly, but worked free of the rope and popped to the surface not far from the boat. Further enraged at yet another failure, the man grabbed an oar, stood up, and swung it at Laddie’s head. Missing Laddie, he lost his balance, and fell into the water. Unfortunately, the man could not swim, even when he was sober.

Laddie, sensing trouble, quickly swam to his master, sank his teeth into the collar of his coat and towed him toward the boat. Pulling himself into the boat, the man collapsed and slept off his stupor. Hours later, when he was finally able to row back to shore, head aching, eyes inflamed, he was surprised to see Laddie waiting for him on the shore, wagging his tail. Touched by Laddie’s unconditional love, the man wrapped his arms around Laddie’s neck and, weeping, cried out, “Oh Laddie, I am so sorry. I am so glad you are still here. Thank you for saving my life!”

Isn’t that how it is with us? Though we might try to put Him out of our

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boat, Jesus is the only way our little craft will make a safe harbor. Though we may try to dethrone Him, He saves us in our time of difficulty. When we most need Him, He is there. It is in reading the stories recorded in the Bible that our trust in His faithfulness is strengthened. Like Laddie, He saves us in spite of the stupor of sin and hatred in our lives.

Has the Bible, God's own collection of stories and letters, been changed in any way so as to weaken its truths for our present generation? Does the Bible, correct in every past prophecy, also forecast a time of trouble before Christ returns to earth? Could it be possible that the Bible also gives us some instructions about how to survive the end times? Our faith will increase as we study this ultimate survival manual—the Bible.



The Validity of the Bible

In 1947 a young Bedouin shepherd boy threw a rock into a cave opening just to see if he could hit it. As the rock fell inside the cave the boy heard the sound of shattering pottery. Curious, he entered the cave, and discovered some large clay pots containing scrolls. He sold some to his relatives, who then sold them to archaeologists, who in turn identified the scrolls as manuscripts that dated back to about AD 70. Coins were also found with the scrolls in the clay pots, identified as being minted about 134-104 BC.

Up to AD 1947 science versus religion debates centered around the question of the origin of the Bible. Hand-copied manuscripts created a host of questions as to whether these copies were flawed with copy errors. Before 1947 the oldest manuscripts were dated AD 900. These were not close enough to the

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original writings to eliminate the questionings of those who felt the Bible was full of errors. It was these transcriptions, dated AD 900, that were used in the first King James edition of the Bible in AD 1611.

After the discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls, written in AD 70, scientific eyebrows were raised. Quite miraculously, the wording of these ancient translations was almost identical to the Bible we hold in our hands today. They also established the validity of the copies dated AD 900.

In May of 1844, a scholar by the name of Constantin von Tischendorf determined to find more of the ancient scrolls that he knew must exist. Through a series of providences, he discovered additional manuscripts and scrolls at St. Catherine's Monastery at the foot of Mount Sinai. In 1859, on his third visit to St. Catherine's, he found 346 parchments (all in the same handwriting), including all of the Old and New Testaments! The complete Bible! These were discovered to be older than manuscripts used by Tyndale in his Bible, and others who wrote the King James Version in 1611! This discovery at St. Catherine's was named Codex Sinaiticus. It was dated as having been written very early in the Christian era (AD 300-350). This was much earlier than Tyndale's materials, dated AD 900. They also substantiated the scrolls found in the Dead Sea caves.

Comparisons were made between the Codex Sinaiticus, Tyndale's later originals, and the Dead Sea scrolls with the King James Version of the Bible. The conclusions by the scholars indicated that only minute errors existed and that each manuscript read essentially the same. Sir Fredrich Kenjoi in 1939 said, "Our Bible as we have it today, represents as closely as may be the actual words used by the authors of the sacred books" (The Battle for the Book, by David Marshall, p. 74). Soon after 1939, the Dead Sea scrolls further confirmed Sir Fredrich's conclusion. For further study, I recommend David Marshall's book. What a thrilling journey of discovery is portrayed there!

The Essenes meticulously copied the manuscripts that have been handed down as a precious legacy: the Bible we have today. Later, the Mesorettes carried on the same work from around AD 900. The legacy of the 40 men who wrote the original text was protected by these ancient transcribers. The accidental discovery of the Dead Sea scrolls by the Bedouin shepherd boy, coupled with Constantin von Tischendorf's determination to find the manuscripts he knew existed, eventually revealed the validity of the Holy Bible.

Over the centuries, war has been waged over of the Bible. People throughout all ages have either passed God's word along verbally or laboriously copied texts from the original manuscripts. Their efforts have handed down the legacy of the word of God we treasure today.

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We discover that the Bible we hold in our hands is the same Word that came to the 40 writers of the 66 books over a span of 1,600 years. But the real confirmation of the Bible is in our own experience. We may find prophecy fulfilled accurately, careful transcriptions from early times, and testimony of God's interaction in men's lives, but the real confirmation is in our own experience with the Bible promises and how God keeps His Word.

Other Sources of Inspired Information on Survival

The Bible is now, and always will be, our only ultimate source and final authority of faith and survival counsel. It is an *a priori* (original) source. It is interesting to discover that the Bible mentions other sources of inspired information.

“Now the acts of David the king, first and last, behold, they are written in the book of Samuel the seer, and in the book of Nathan the prophet, and in the book of Gad the seer” (1 Chronicles 29:29). Two books are mentioned that are not included in the Bible but are inspired and written by two prophets: Nathan and Gad (“seer” is another name for a prophet according to 1 Samuel 9:9). Perhaps these books were not included because we already have the same information in the book of Samuel.

It is of interest that there were at least two books not included in the Bible that were inspired by God and written by prophets and seers. Might God have something more to share with us during the “time of the end” when there will be a “time of trouble” worse than all others in the history of the earth (Daniel 12:1)?

There were also prophetesses: Huldah and Anna. In 2 Kings 22:14 and in Joel 2:28 the Bible mentions that there will be more prophets.

Tests of a Prophet

As I studied, I discovered that the gift of prophecy was granted to God's people of old, to both men and women, and that there will be prophets in the end times. Here are the tests of a true prophet:

1. **Words agree with the Bible:** *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them”* (Isaiah 8:20). (See also 1 Corinthians 14:37.)

2. **Confesses that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh and is God:** *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world. Hereby know ye the Spirit of God: Every spirit that confesseth that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh is of God: and every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in*

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the flesh is not of God: and this is that spirit of antichrist, whereof ye have heard that it should come; and even now already is it in the world” (1 John 4:1-3).

3. **Speaks God’s words:** *“But the Lord said unto me, Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt speak... Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth”* (Jeremiah 1:7-9).

4. **Is humble:** *“And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted”* (Matthew 23:12).

5. **Reproves sin:** *“Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables”* (2 Timothy 4:2-4).

6. **Produces good fruit:** *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them”* (Matthew 7:15-20). (See also Galatians 5:22-24.)

7. **Will receive visions and dreams from the Lord:** *“And he said, Hear now my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream”* (Numbers 12:6).

8. **Has no breath while in vision:** *“And, behold, one like the similitude of the sons of men touched my lips: then I opened my mouth, and spake, and said unto him that stood before me, O my lord, by the vision my sorrows are turned upon me, and I have retained no strength. For how can the servant of this my lord talk with this my lord? for as for me, straightway there remained no strength in me, neither is there breath left in me”* (Daniel 10:16, 17).

9. **Words come to pass:** *“And if thou say in thine heart, How shall we know the word which the Lord hath not spoken? When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him”* (Deuteronomy 18:21, 22).

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“The prophet which prophesieth of peace, when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him” (Jeremiah 28:9).

10. Keeps all of God’s commandments: *“Ye shall walk after the Lord your God, and fear him, and keep his commandments, and obey his voice, and ye shall serve him, and cleave unto him”* (Deuteronomy 13:4).

This is a rigorous test, and will eliminate all false prophets and establish the true. The question remains: Does the Bible really forecast that there will be prophets arising in the last days?

“And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions” (Joel 2:28).

The context of the preceding reference refers to the last days in which we live: *“And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke”* (Joel 2:29-31). We will have prophets in the last days.

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I would not have you ignorant” (1 Corinthians 12:1). *“God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues”* (verse 28; emphasis supplied).

These verses indicate that God will have prophets in His New Testament church. In fact, God will make the keeping of His commandments and the gift of prophecy, by the Holy Spirit, two special marks of His remnant church.

Revelation 12:17 states, *“And the dragon [devil] was wroth with the woman [true church], and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ.”* What is the testimony of Jesus? Revelation 19:10 answers that question: *“Worship God: for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* Keeping the commandments of God and having the testimony of Jesus are two special marks for the church that the devil hates. Why? Because they proclaim a message against Satan and encourage the survivors to hang on!

Let’s cite an example: Does Mrs. Ellen G. White, wife of James White, one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church, fit the requirements of a true prophet? The following indicates that she passes the tests of a true prophet.

Characteristics of a Prophet

Test 1: **Words agree with the Bible:** Does she have visions of the truth

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that agree with the Bible? Comparing her books with the Bible, as we are instructed in Isaiah 8:20, I have not been able to find an instance where her visions disagree with the Bible. She consistently points to the Bible as our source of all truth.

Test 2: **Confesses Jesus:** She affirms over and over that Jesus Christ is God and our only Saviour. (See The Desire of Ages, a book on the life story of Jesus.)

Test 3: **Speaks God's words:** She does speak what God says to her in vision. Much of her writings begin with "I saw," or "I was shown."

Test 4: **Humility:** She prayed that God would keep her humble, and though she never claimed humbleness, she sought the gift and urged it in the lives of others. "*God help us to humble our proud hearts, and bring Jesus into our midst*" (Review and Herald, December 23, 1884).

Test 5: **Reproves sin:** Testimonies for the Church, which Ellen White wrote, are nine volumes of examples of reproof of sin in church members. The ancient prophets all reproved sin. Nathan's relationship with David is one example (2 Samuel 12:1-12).

Test 6: **Produces good fruit:** Spiritual fruit is produced as a result of a conversion experience. Examples will be given in this book regarding the good produced by her work. Even the world now recognizes the value of her counsels. And the fruits were evident in her personal life.

Test 7: **Will have visions from God:** (See Early Writings, pages 13 and 14). There were witnesses to this at her first vision.

Test 8: **Has no breath while in vision:** She had many visions during which she had no breath. "*Then Ellen came and sat down by me. She was in vision one and a half hours, in which time she did not breathe at all*" (Life Sketches, p. 112).

Test 9: **The word of the prophet comes to pass:** Here are a few examples that have not only come to pass, but when heeded produced a better quality of life. Paul Harvey, national commentator for ABC News, refers to these fulfillments from the pen of Ellen White. Many of these statements were written by Mrs. White while the followers of modern medicine were still practicing bloodletting and performing surgery with unwashed hands.

Over 100 years ago she wrote: "*Tobacco is a slow, insidious, but most malignant poison*" (Ministry of Healing, p. 327). Today, we have volumes of evidence supporting her early testimony.

She wrote: "*Grains, fruits, nuts, and vegetables constitute the diet chosen for us by our Creator*" (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 81). Today we know that we should eat at the base of the food pyramid for health reasons.

She wrote: "*From the standpoint of health the smoke and dust of the cities are very objectionable*" (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 82). Air pollution is found to be linked to respiratory disease.

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She wrote: *“Both the blood and fat of animals are consumed as a luxury. But the Lord gave special directions that these should not be eaten”* (Counsels on Diet and Foods, p. 393). A diet high in fat is now known to cause obesity, heart disease, and many other complications. Ellen has written so much information on this subject that booklets are now available from the E. G. White Estate that itemize her fulfilled prophecies. Many statements are also available from the medical community addressing the dangers of eating animal fat.

Test 10: **Keeps all of God’s commandments:** Ellen White advocated keeping all 10 commandments. *“He demands obedience to all of His commandments”* (Manuscript Releases, vol. 10, p. 102).

The impressive thought remains: although she has written so much that has been fulfilled, what about those things she wrote that have not been fulfilled? What about those things that have been forecast to happen in the future? Because past prophecies have been fulfilled the ones for the future will too.

In the last 11 chapters of her book, The Great Controversy, she wrote that severe weather disasters are coming. This will lead to spiritual intolerance of large groups against those who wish to worship on Sabbath. There will be pressure to appease the perceived wrath of God:

“In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. ... These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous. ... It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity” (The Great Controversy, p. 590).

To be ready for these times spiritual and practical preparations are essential. *“Some of us have had time to get the truth and to advance step by step, and every step we have taken has given us strength to take the next. But now time is almost finished, and what we have been years learning, they will have to learn in a few months. They [new converts] will also have much to unlearn and much to learn again”* (Early Writings, p. 67).

The Testimony of Jesus: Safe Instruction

Wouldn’t it be wonderful to have assurances that the Spirit of Prophecy

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by Ellen White is an inspired commentary on the Bible? Harmony between inspired writings is one mark of the remnant church (see Revelation 12:17). The Bible is made up mostly of the testimony of Jesus. Isaiah 8:20 says, *“To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them.”* This text divides inspired writings into two parts; that which is written by God directly, such as His law, in Exodus 20:2-17 (the Ten Commandments), and those portions of inspiration that are written by man by visions from God (testimonies).

Psalm 93:5 states, *“Thy testimonies are very sure,”* and Psalm 19:7 says that *“the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.”* If we follow inspired information we are promised wisdom so that we will not be deceived and we will survive. Second Chronicles 20:20 says it all: *“Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.”* In John 14:16, 17, Jesus promises a comforter: *“And I will pray the Father, and he shall send you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever; even the Spirit of truth.”* This Comforter, the Holy Spirit, has come and has given us all the gifts in 1 Corinthians 12, including the gift of prophecy.

One question still lingers: Were these laws and testimonies done away with after they were written or do they apply to our time? Are these counsels written for our day or are they for another day? The Bible indicates that they are relevant for our day.

Paul puts it this way, *“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). This verse assures us that what was written so long ago was written specifically for those of us who live at the end of time. In the writings of Ellen White, note the agreement with Scripture on this point and how she amplifies the classic principle of “truth for all time.”

“The instruction that was given in the early days of the message is to be held as safe instruction to follow in these its closing days” (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 41).

“Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God’s remnant people in the true testimony.... Satan cannot have so clear a track to bring in his deceptions and bind up souls in his delusions if the warnings and reproofs and counsels of the Spirit of God are heeded” (*ibid.* p. 48).

“All our health institutions, all our publishing houses, all our institutions of learning, are to be conducted more and more in accordance with

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the instruction that has been given” (Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 57; emphasis supplied).

Our survival will not depend upon our genius, our carefully laid plans, or how well we can sidestep disaster. Our survival will depend on our obedience to God’s counsels.

Special Creation

We have verified the validity of the Bible by its ancient manuscripts and by our own experience. We can experience this validity in our own lives by claiming more of its promises. As we experience the Bible in our hearts let us see what it says about the origin of life and the life-style he wants us to live.

Colossians 1:16 says, *“For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: All things were created by him, and for him.”*

Genesis 1:1 backs this simple declaration of God’s creative power. *“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”*

The Bible states that God created everything. This flies in the face of evolution. Evolution claims to have science behind its tenets, but the truth is that special creation is strongly supported by scientific evidence. (Origin by Design, Harold Coffin) The concepts of creation are also supported by the word of God and the complexity of nature.

A farmer and a scientist were walking in the farmer’s field. As they talked a discussion came up about how life began. The scientist waxed eloquent about the biochemical ooze that with time generated human beings. Presently they came to a cross fence in the field. As they were climbing through the fence the farmer, though profoundly impressed by the scientist, had a question.

“How did this fence get here?” He asked.

“Well,” said the scientist emphatically, “You or somebody probably built it.”

“Why do you say that?” asked the farmer. “If I give it enough time won’t it build itself?”

The scientist got the point. A fence is a relatively simple structure yet it required a design, while we who are so totally complex, allegedly happened by accident. The Psalmist says, *“I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy works; and that my soul knoweth right well”* (Psalm 139:14).

There are prominent world leaders in religion who believe the origin of life is by a gradual process. We must know for ourselves what is truth. We should anchor our faith in Scripture and let scientific evidence add to but not be the soul

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support of our faith. Be careful to sort speculation and opinion from evidence when reading scientific literature.

I find it comforting to know that I have a Designer and Creator who has a great destiny planned for me. The Bible, inspired by God, gives great pictures of this inheritance. We will build the temple of our lives on the foundation of belief in God as a Creator. Going back to the gospel of John we find that the Creator is Jesus.

“All things were made by him” (John 1:3).

This Jesus is described by Matthew, chapter 1 verse 21, when He was born in Bethlehem, *“...And you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”* Sin has killed us, but He came to save our lives. Now we have the knowledge that he has created and rescued us. This is the basis of thankfulness that leads to a religion (relationship) in God.

We find He created the garden in Eden, Genesis 2:8, *“The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put man whom he had formed.”* Verse 15 mentions the basis for a simple life-style that was given to man for all time, *“Then the Lord God took the man and put him in the Garden of Eden to tend and keep it.”*

Finally, the Bible says that He created all things in six literal, 24 hour days. Genesis 1:5, 8, 13, 19, 23, and 31 all say that the evening and the morning composed each day of creation. The Bible’s original language indicates a literal 24 hour day.

Something special happened on the seventh day as a result of His creation. Genesis 2:2, 3, *“And on the seventh day God ended His work which He had done, and rested on the seventh day. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God created and made.”* The Bible tells us that this day is the Sabbath that we should keep because it was the day God took time to appreciate His work. If God blessed the Sabbath then there is in it a special blessing for us.

In my counseling practice, a client came in who said he just dreaded doing anything for his wife. When the job was finished he wanted to take time to enjoy the work he had done and be appreciated for it, but as soon as one job was finished, she wanted to move onto the next with no time to appreciate previous accomplishments.

Even God needed time to appreciate His work and we should take time to appreciate His work, our successes, and lessons learned during the week. It is essential that we rest and worship on the day He blessed. Then we will get the blessing He promised. This blessing is guaranteed in the Ten Commandments in Exodus 20:8-11, and Isaiah 56:1 and 2. Because there is a great blessing in keeping the Sabbath, the adversary was anxious that the blessing not be real-

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ized by God's people. He began to contest this by persecuting those who kept it. This climaxes in Revelation 13 with a "no buy-no sell" and a death decree. Thus special creation becomes the foundation of our belief in a Creator-Redeemer and the resolution of the final issues of this world's history.

"Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water" (Revelation 14:7; emphasis supplied). Creation is an issue in final apocalyptic events. Worship is also contested in these closing days of earth's history. In order to worship Him who made heaven and earth we will need to be loyal to the day of worship that He blessed at creation.

The devil will oppose this truth with counterfeits that will be forced upon the conscience. This sets the stage in opposition to the plain statements of Scripture.

The Day of Rest

The more we use the Scripture as our guide to survival, the more confidence we will have in the truths contained in the Bible. We will begin to understand that God, the Creator, provided for His creation. He provided the earth and all the things therein that we, His crowning act of Creation, might know Him. Included in these gifts was the Sabbath, a special day that God set aside for communion with His children. The day of worship we observe will play a vital role in identifying the remnant who keep the commandments of God.

Did God really bless one particular day of the week above another?

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Genesis 2:1-3; emphasis supplied). Other versions of the Bible use the terms "holy" and "set apart" as a synonym of "blessed."

Moving on through the Old Testament we find that God directed Israel and her prophets to keep the Sabbath long before He wrote the law in stone for Moses on Mount Sinai. While leading them in the wilderness, God reminded the children of Israel to keep the Sabbath by giving them a double portion of manna on the sixth day and withholding it on the seventh.

"And it came to pass, that on the sixth day they gathered twice as much bread.... This is that which the Lord hath said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy sabbath.... Six days ye shall gather it; but on the seventh day, which is the sabbath, in it there shall be none" (Exodus 16:22-26). God wanted them

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to rest and worship on the Sabbath as a special sign that His people loved Him and were thinking of Him.

At Sinai, God gave them a special token that would help them remember the Sabbath when they were no longer in the wilderness. Among the Ten Commandments, given to Moses on two tables of stone, was the fourth, in which God asked us to remember the Sabbath day: *“Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work.... For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day and hallowed it”* (Exodus 20:8-11).

Some Christians feel that the ten commandment law was repealed, but even those who subscribe to that theory are keeping the other nine! Jesus says that He kept the Law in Matthew 5:17, 18: *“Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.”* James 2:10, 11 speaks about breaking even one law in the Ten Commandments, *“For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill.”*

If we violate one of the commandments we are guilty of violating all of them. This scripture in James, mentions two of the Ten Commandments law, adultery and killing. Jesus said that He did not come to do away with the law; so who did?

Who Changed the Sabbath?

Someone changed the Sabbath from the seventh day to another day. The Roman Catholic Church will not deny having changed the seventh-day Sabbath to Sunday, calling the first day of the week “The Lord’s Day” on their own authority. Though admitting no scriptural authority for such a change, the Catholic church says it was a command from Christ. The rest of Christendom followed her lead and “Protestants” also began keeping Sunday as their day of worship. A recent declaration by the Catholic Church leaves no doubt as to this claim.

“Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the Church ever did, happened in the first century [actually it happened in the fourth century] the holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. ‘The Day of the Lord’ [Dies Domini] was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the church’s sense of its own power.... People who think the Scripture should be the sole authority, should logically become [Seventh-day] Adventists, and keep Saturday holy” (Saint Catherine Catholic Church Sentinel,

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Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995). (See also The Apostolic Letter Dies Domini, by Pope John Paul II, pp. 17, 27, 34, 55, 75.)

What day is the true Sabbath? Can it be confused with any other day? Let's look at Luke 23:52-24:2: *“This man went unto Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. And he took it down, and wrapped it in linen, and laid it in a sepulchre that was hewn in stone, wherein never man before was laid. And that day was the preparation, and the sabbath drew on. And the women also, which came with him from Galilee, followed after, and beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid. And they returned, and prepared spices and ointments; and rested the sabbath day according to the commandment. Now upon the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain others with them. And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre”* (emphasis supplied).

Notice that the preparation day is mentioned, just as when Israel gathered manna, only now, it is in the New Testament among Jesus' followers. Jesus has just been crucified and is in the grave. You would think that He would have told them of any change of worship day, but He did not. The only evidence of change of the Ten commandments was by the Roman Church. (Samuele Bacchiocchi, Ph.D., From Sabbath to Sunday [Pontifical Gregorian University Press, Rome, 1977]).

The day after the preparation day was the Sabbath on which they rested according to the commandment. The seventh-day Sabbath was kept by His followers after Jesus' death.

On the first day of the week (Luke 24:1), the stone was rolled away. Thank God for that empty tomb! We all know what day that was, don't we? It was Easter Sunday! So all we have to do is look at the day before Easter Sunday. It was Saturday! And the day before that was the preparation day, Friday. So the Bible is very clear about which day His disciples honored as the Sabbath: the seventh day! The day before Sunday!

Did this day of worship continue through the New Testament? Read Acts 13:42, 44; 16:13; 17:2; and 18:4. The apostles met on the Sabbath many times.

Will the Sabbath be important in heaven? Yes. Isaiah 66:22, 23: *“For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.”*

Satan will make the Sabbath a point of controversy to try to destroy the blessing of that special day and establish his own day of worship. We must choose the sign of loyalty to God or choose the false sabbath. This will set the

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stage for the last scenes of history on earth. Our eternal survival depends upon our allegiance to God's will!

The Sunday Law

In planning and praying for survival, we should take a look at the future from the prophets' viewpoint. Joseph could plan for survival in Egypt 3,000 years ago because God gave him a prophet's view of what was coming.

Let's take a look at Revelation 13:15-17, especially verse 16. There the scripture refers to "*a mark*" given by the beast to allow people to buy and sell (verse 17). Further, it says that people who do not have this mark, and thereby worship the beast, will be killed. "*And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed. And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.*"

We need to know the meaning of this mark. The Bible reveals that the issue surrounding the mark involves worship. If I don't worship the beast, then I will be killed. If I do worship the beast, then God counts me as disloyal to Him (Revelation 14:9-11), and I will lose eternal life.

Verse 12 says that we should keep the commandments of God. Is it possible that the issue could be over the Ten Commandments? If I am faithful and I know the issue, I can make my decision now. "*Those who would not receive the mark of the beast and his image when the decree goes forth, must have decision now to say, Nay, we will not regard the institution of the beast*" (Early Writings, p. 67; emphasis supplied).

One of the final acts in the great controversy between God and Satan is the arrival of the mark of the beast. Revelation 13:15 and 17 mentions that those who do not worship the beast or his image will be killed. Using modern language, I would say it this way; "If I don't worship the way these beasts dictate, I will be killed or cut off from doing business for my livelihood. I will not be able to buy or sell, hence, I will need to grow my own food to survive. But if I receive the mark from the beast and his image, I can perform my business as usual."

On page 36 we learned that the last-day issues for Christendom involves a dispute over the proper day of worship. Those who wish to take their stand on the side of literal interpretation of Bible truth will face the fierceness of the wrath of the beast. The beast, in turn, will face the wrath of God. God says to remember His Sabbath; others say the day has been changed. Those who follow God's truths, keeping His Sabbath will be

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saved eternally. *“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God”* (Revelation 15:2). For further study about this victory, I recommend: Sunday Is Coming, by G Edward Reid and the King James version of Revelation.

The enforcement of worship by the beast will involve a union of church and state, with the church urging the state to enforce its dogmas. It may seem improbable, in light of all the current legislation aimed at religious tolerance, that a religious law could be enacted, but Sunday laws have existed for years. There were Sunday laws in the 13 Colonies. There was one in the 1890s in the United States when people were fined and jailed if they violated the Sunday worship day. (See The Great Second Advent Movement, by J. N. Loughborough, pp. 451- 452.) Eventually, before the end of time, those laws will again be enforced by death (see Revelation 13:15).

What will make church and state unite to legislate a Sunday Law and violate freedom of worship? The Great Controversy states the answer clearly, *“In accidents and calamities by sea and by land, in great conflagrations, in fierce tornadoes and terrific hailstorms, in tempests, floods, cyclones, tidal waves, and earthquakes, in every place and in a thousand forms, Satan is exercising his power. He sweeps away the ripening harvest, and famine and distress follow. He imparts to the air a deadly taint, and thousands perish by the pestilence. These visitations are to become more and more frequent and disastrous...*

“Then the great deceiver will persuade men that those who serve God are causing these evils. The class that have provoked the displeasure of Heaven will charge all their troubles upon those whose obedience to God’s commandments is a perpetual reproof to transgressors. It will be declared that men are offending God by the violation of the Sunday sabbath; that this sin has brought calamities which will not cease until Sunday observance shall be strictly enforced; and that those who present the claims of the fourth commandment, thus destroying reverence for Sunday, are troublers of the people, preventing their restoration to divine favor and temporal prosperity” (pp. 589- 590; emphasis supplied).

“Although church and state will unite their power to compel, ‘all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond’ (Rev. 13:16) to receive ‘the mark of the beast,’ yet the people of God will not receive it” (ibid. p. 450).

The remnant of true believers will refuse to pay homage to the false sabbath.

Church and State

The history of the Christian Church from the late 1100s to the landing of the pilgrim fathers on North American soil, reveals many examples of injustices

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that occurred during the control of the state by the church. The experience of the Waldenses, the martyrdom of millions during the middle ages, and the fines and imprisonment of early colonists of different faiths by the Pilgrim church, demonstrate irrefutably that the church is blindly cruel when it has the power of the state to enforce its wishes. (For further study I recommend the book, The Great Controversy, by E. G. White.)

As we examine the religious politics of the thirteen original colonies in early American history, we find the Pilgrim fathers in control. Laws were made to enforce their beliefs. It is interesting to note that the reason these Pilgrim/Puritan people came to America was to have religious freedom and to flee persecutors of their faith in England. It was soon revealed that they were unwilling to grant these same freedoms to others of different faiths.

Soon after they arrived, laws were enacted that restricted religious freedom. One such law required people to be church members in order to have a voice in civil government. A state church was formed and all people were required to contribute to the support of the clergy regardless of the fact that some beliefs were different. Another law required all people to attend Puritan church services under penalty of fine or imprisonment.

When Roger Williams came to America, he too sought religious freedom. He was a Puritan minister and highly respected by his church and its parishioners. He had a much more tolerant attitude toward those who differed with him in spiritual matters. In fact, he believed that this tolerance was the recognition of an inalienable right to worship God according to the dictates of one's conscience. His own faith was not threatened by others of different beliefs. He may have disagreed with their views, but he would defend their right to have them.

The Puritan elders could not tolerate such a belief as freedom of conscience and banished him from the colonies. He was forced to flee to the wilderness in the winter. This could have been a death sentence but for the providence of God on behalf of His servant. For 14 weeks Williams wandered in the forest suffering greatly from cold and hunger until an Indian tribe took care of him. They had benefited from his previous ministry and it was with affection that they provided him food and shelter. Many members of the tribe had become Christians through his ministry.

After his stay with the Indians he made his way to the shores of Narragansett Bay and formed a colony that he named Rhode Island where freedom of conscience would be a God-given right. Williams was the first person in modern times that established a civil government on the idea of liberty of conscience and the equal-

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ity of opinions. Roger Williams' ideas on freedom spread through Europe and others came to America seeking religious liberty. This freedom granted in Rhode Island attracted the oppressed and those yearning to be free. It had a profound influence on the other colonies and they too became bastions of spiritual freedom. This principle was at last to be incorporated into the Declaration of Independence and the U. S. Constitution. These words still stir the hearts of all those who are thankful for religious liberty and freedom of conscience.

“We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal; that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. ...No religious test shall be required as a qualification of office of public trust under the United States.” This is what made America great in the eyes of God.

“The Lord has done more for the United States than for any other country upon which the sun shines. Here he provided asylum for his people, where they could worship Him according to the dictates of conscience. God designed that this country should ever remain free for all people to worship Him in accordance with the dictates of conscience. He designed that its civil institutions in their expansive productions should represent the freedom of gospel privilege” (Maranatha, p. 193).

Other countries followed this example and they too became great. Some did not, and the results were devastating to the conscience.

“Thus again was demonstrated the evil results, so often witnessed in the history of the church from the days of Constantine to the present, of attempting to build up the church by the aid of the state, of appealing to the secular power in support of the gospel of Him who declared, ‘My kingdom is not of this world,’ John 18:36” (The Great Controversy, p. 297).

A Word from the Pope

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 the state. ...As Rome asserts that the church never erred; nor will it, according to the Scriptures, ever err; how can she renounce the principles which governed her course in past ages” (The Great Controversy, p. 564).*

We need to understand what the beast of Revelation 13 represents. To be able to cooperate with God's plan in maintaining liberty of conscience is a privilege. It is not without risks, or the possibility of persecution, but here is a cause to which we can give our life. The smile of Jesus will be upon us. It's a matter of survival.

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Christians First

Who are the first to be tested on the mark of the beast and asked to accept it? What is the consequence of accepting this mark? When people accept the mark, can they change their mind? These questions relate directly to our survival. Our eternal destiny depends upon our understanding of the importance of the answers to these questions.

Ezekiel 9:4-6 reads, *“And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. And to the others he said in mine hearing, Go ye after him through the city, and smite: let not your eye spare, neither have ye pity: slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man upon whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary. Then they began at the ancient men which were before the house.”*

The judgments of God will begin at the church. In Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 211, this issue is made very clear. *“Here we see that the church—the Lord’s sanctuary—was the first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God.”*

Peter explains how God’s judgments begin with the house of God—His church. First Peter 4:17: *“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that obey not the gospel of God?”*

Ellen White comments on Revelation 13:14-17, explaining how God’s people will be first to close their probation. *“The Lord has shown me clearly that the image to the beast will be formed before probation closes: for it is to be the great test for the people of God, by which their eternal destiny will be decided”* (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, vol. 7, p. 976; emphasis supplied). Notice that the people of God (the church) will make their final decision first, while probation is open for the rest of the world.

“The ‘image to the beast’ represents the form of apostate Protestantism which will be developed when the Protestant churches will seek the aid of the civil power for the enforcement of their dogmas” (The Great Controversy, p. 445).

Probation is closed for those who have already rejected the light, while the hand of mercy is still extended to those who have not yet heard and understood the truth of the issues involved. Clearly, there are two groups explained in Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, page 97: *“The time of God’s destructive judgments is the time of mercy for those who have had no opportunity to learn what is the truth. Tenderly will the Lord look upon them. His heart of mercy is touched; His hand is still stretched out to save, while the door is*

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closed to those who would not enter” (emphasis supplied).

“But I speak not my own words when I say that God’s Spirit will pass by those who have had their day of test and opportunity, but who have not distinguished the voice of God or appreciated the movings of His Spirit. Then thousands in the eleventh hour will see and acknowledge the truth. ‘Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that the plowman shall overtake the reaper; and the treader of grapes him that soweth seed’ (Amos 9:13)” (Selected Messages, book 2, p. 16).

Clearly, Christians will face eternal decisions before the rest of the world.

The Seal of God

When we neglect God’s call in preparing for the Lord’s return, succumbing to the pleasures of the world without remorse, we shall be left without the seal of God.

“The class who do not feel grieved over their own spiritual declension, nor mourn over the sins of others, will be left without the seal of God” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 211).

“Those who have in their foreheads the seal of the infinite God will regard the world and its attractions as subordinate to eternal interests” (Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 978).

“The seal of the living God is placed upon those who conscientiously keep the Sabbath of the Lord. ... It is a life and death question” (*ibid.* p. 980).

“Sundaykeeping is not yet the mark of the beast, and will not be until the decree goes forth causing men to worship this idol sabbath. The time will come when this day will be the test, but that time has not come yet” (*ibid.* p. 977; emphasis supplied).

“When the test comes, it will be clearly shown what the mark of the beast is. It is the keeping of Sunday” (*ibid.* p. 980).

“John was called to behold a people distinct from those who worship the beast and his image by keeping the first day of the week. The observance of this day is the mark of the beast” (*ibid.* p. 979).

If we are greatly surprised by the Sunday law, we will not have as much preparation time as those who have lived for and loved the true Sabbath. But when the decision comes to us, our survival depends upon our loyalty to the Sabbath truth. God will then have a people ready to help others at the eleventh hour.

The Remnant People, Who are They?

The Bible refers to the remnant in both the Old and the New Testament and

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each time it represents people who are loyal to God and His plan for their lives. In Isaiah 1:9 a remnant is mentioned whose influence deferred God's judgments. In chapter 11, verse 11 gives evidence that God's protecting care is over the remnant. The remnant will know that God's Word will guide them through their experience. Joel 2:32 states that the remnant is a group of people who will be called to do a special work in the end times. Paul says that there is a remnant who choose the grace of God (Romans 11:4, 5) while the apostle John wrote in Revelation 11:13 about how the remnant gave glory to God for their safety in times of trouble.

The remnant of Revelation 11 is mentioned again in Revelation 12 as having two identifying characteristics (verse 17). This remnant is the last one on this earth. It is a remnant of which we all will want to be a part. We will be welcomed to this remnant because we have a love of the truth as expressed in the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus. While the commandments are found in Exodus 20, Jesus told us that the foundation of these ten precepts is love to God and love to fellow man (Matthew 29:37-40).

The testimony of Jesus is identified in Revelation 19:10 as the Spirit of Prophecy. Those people who keep the commandments and have the Spirit of Prophecy are the remnant of Revelation 12:17 to whom the devil is violently opposed. God is inviting us to be a member of this remnant group. All He needs is our decision and then He will empower us to be faithful.

“War is coming against the remnant because they keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. ... Don't yield your sacred peculiarities which distinguish you from the world, from the nominal church and backslidden Adventists. ...” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 5, p. 290).

The promise of God is sure, *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy,”* (Jude 24)

Time of “No Buy-No Sell” Prophesied

In Revelation 13:16, 17 an economic embargo in conjunction with the mark of the beast is prophesied against God's people before the end. *“And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name.”* Notice the clause *“that no man might buy or sell.”* This refers to a time when, if we compromise with the world and receive the mark of the beast, we will be able to buy and sell. If we don't compromise, then we will receive the seal of God, and not be able to buy and sell.

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It would be helpful to know the sequence of events leading to this embargo against the remnant (see the Closing Events chart in back of this book). As the Sunday law is enacted, enforcement is mild at first. For Sundaybreaking, referred to as violating “Blue Laws,” fines are administered, then imprisonment, inducements, “no buy-no sell,” and finally the death decree.

Enforcement of the national Sunday law will occur. *“As the movement for Sunday enforcement becomes more bold and decided, the law will be invoked against commandment keepers. They will be threatened with fines and imprisonment, and some will be offered positions of influence, and other rewards and advantages, as inducements to renounce their faith. But their steadfast answer is: ‘Show us from the word of God our error,’ the same plea that was made by Luther under similar circumstances”* (The Great Controversy, p. 607; emphasis supplied).

Severity of Sunday law enforcement will increase. *“Fearful is the issue to which the world is to be brought. The powers of earth, uniting to war against the commandments of God, will decree that no man may buy or sell, save he that has the mark of the beast, and, finally, that whoever refuses to receive the mark shall be put to death”* (The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 4, p. 422; emphasis supplied).

“No buy-no sell” occurs before the enforcement of the death decree and before the seven last plagues begin to fall. *“I saw that the four angels would hold the four winds until Jesus’ work was done in the sanctuary, and then will come the seven last plagues. These plagues enraged the wicked against the righteous; they thought that we had brought the judgments of God upon them, and that if they could rid the earth of us, the plagues would then be stayed. A decree went forth to slay the saints, which caused them to cry day and night for deliverance”* (Early Writings, pp. 36, 37).

Because the death decree occurs at the final close of probation, then the time for “no buy-no sell” is in the latter end of the probationary time; that is, probation is still open and God’s merciful hand is still extended.

During this time we will need to be in the country or have a friend that has an outpost; a place where we will be able to grow food, etc. Far better to heed the instruction now and plan for what is ahead. It is a matter of survival. Remember Lot and Abraham; Abraham already had a farm, but Lot waited and left the city at the last minute, barely surviving. Some of his family didn’t make it.

Have you thought about what it will mean not to be able to buy or sell anything and experience “no money” living? We will have no money to pay utilities, buy gasoline, pay insurance, or purchase food. We can’t sell anything to earn money either. It will be too late to sell, and we cannot spend! We will have to have

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alternate systems for our families, friends, and others who come out to live with us. No need to have a paying job. Money is of no use to us.

This next reference further explains how the Sunday law is more severely enforced at the time of the “no buy-no sell.” It is safe to trust God when it appears that we will have to sever all our earthly supports.

*“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. Satan would make him believe that he must sacrifice his conscientious convictions. But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. ‘Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things will be added unto you’ (Matthew 6:33). Even in this life it is not for our good to depart from the will of our Father in heaven. When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, *What is God’s command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey one, and trust the other* (this counsel is repeated in Prophets and Kings, p. 184).*

“In the last great conflict of the controversy with Satan those who are loyal to God will see every earthly support cut off. Because they refuse to break His law in obedience to earthly powers, they will be forbidden to buy and sell. It will finally be decreed that they shall be put to death. But to the obedient is given the promise, ‘He shall dwell on high: his place of defense shall be the munitions of the rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure’ (Isaiah 33:16). By this promise the children of God will live.... They shall not be ashamed in the evil time; and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied (Psalm 37:19)” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 121, 122; emphasis supplied).

As in all else, God has a plan. We have the opportunity to prepare now by moving to the country. *“Again and again the Lord has instructed that our people are to take their families away from the cities, into the country, where they can raise their own provisions; for in the future the problem of buying and selling will be a very serious one”* (Country Living, pp. 9, 10; emphasis supplied).

“It is no time now for God’s people to be fixing their affections or laying up treasure in the world. The time is not far distant, when, like the early disciples, we shall be forced to seek a refuge in desolate and solitary places. As the siege of Jerusalem by the Roman armies was the signal for flight to the Judean Christians, so the assumption of power on the part of our nation in the decree enforcing the papal sabbath will be a warning to us. It will then be time to leave the large cities, preparatory to leaving the smaller

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ones for retired homes in secluded places among the mountains” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 464; emphasis supplied).

When the death decree is first enforced, it is the last opportunity to flee. While in flight, we will be dependent on God because we cannot then grow our own food. This is the time we claim the promise in Isaiah 33:16, which tells us that our bread and water will be sure, even when we are in the most desolate places. We need to make haste to get all things ready for the coming crisis (see *Country Living*, p. 21).

Do the Dead Reappear?

Another common deception of the day put forward in religious groups and in the entertainment media is the belief that the dead exist as spirit forms. It is natural to have questions about “ghosts.” The belief that when we die we go to heaven, purgatory, or come back to haunt and advise people is false according to the Scripture. Satan will try to threaten our spiritual survival by assuming we will listen to his deceptions if we hear them from the lips of deceased loved ones.

Can the dead return to communicate with the living? Job 7:9, 10: *“As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away: so he that goeth down to the grave shall come up no more. He shall return no more to his house, neither shall his place know him any more.”* It is a good practice, in Bible study, to line up two or more texts on the same topic. Even though one scripture is very plain, a better position can be secured when more than one text is cited. On this subject, two more texts follow: Ecclesiastes 9:5, 6: *“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun.”*

Psalm 146:4: *“His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.”*

In the light of these scriptures, it is clear that when we die we remain in the grave. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18, we remain in the grave until Christ’s return. *“For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.”*

Can we assume that Satan is the source for the appearances of dead people to those who are yet living? There are many reports of spirit apparitions giving counsel to the living, but the Lord calls these familiar spirits abominations. Deuteronomy 18:10-12: *“There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or*

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his daughter to pass through fire, or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [magic, communication with the dead]. *For all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord: and because of these abominations the Lord thy God doth drive them out from before thee.*” The NIV states that “familiar spirits” means “consults the dead,” just as the word *necromancer* refers to communication with the dead.

It seems clear from the Scripture that those who consult with “spirits of the dead” are not in harmony with God and that the spirits are not from God, however consoling or wise they may appear. What these spirits say to us would not be counsel from God and should be rejected as originating with the evil one. Ecclesiastes 9:10: *“For there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom, in the grave, whither thou goest.”*

Secret Rapture

The belief in a secret rapture has been accepted by various churches. It states that at some future time Jesus will select worthy people and take them suddenly from their workplace, home, or places of recreation. He may take pilots from airliners, or drivers from cars, so suddenly and secretly that the airplanes crash and the cars run off the road. Books have been written and movies made that describe the results of such a secret rapture.

Will Christians escape the time of trouble by being raptured? The Bible does not mention the word rapture nor does it support the idea of a secret exiting of God’s people from the earth. The concept of a secret rapture, as usually presented, is said to occur before Jesus’ second coming. The Scripture is clear that the Lord comes back to get His people, not secretly or separately.

“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 [NKJV]; emphasis supplied).

Paul here refers to a shout, the voice of an archangel, the trumpet of God—powerful non-secretive ways of declaring His coming. Notice the two groups who meet Him are the resurrected ones and those who are alive; no one else will be going to heaven to be with the Jesus. The Scripture says to comfort one another with this hope. We must not confuse this hope for to do so is to lose it, and

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be out of step with Jesus.

Concerning the wicked the Scripture is clear about them as well. *“And then shall that Wicked be revealed whom the Lord shall consume with the Spirit of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming.”* (2 Thessalonians 2:8). The righteous people are with Jesus as they meet in the air while the wicked are destroyed by the non-secret brightness of His coming. Revelation 1:7 says *“Behold He is coming with clouds and every eye shall see Him.”* Matthew 24:27; *“For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west so also will the coming of the Son of Man be”* (NKJV). These Scriptures all refer to a very obvious second coming.

Second Peter 3:10 is used by some who believe in the rapture, *“But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up.”*

This cannot be a secret appearing of Jesus through rapture, or any other coming, because there is a great noise and the elements are melting. His coming as a thief is **not secret** as a thief but as the **surprise** of a thief.

The text in Matthew 24:40 is also used to support the idea of a secret rapture. This Scripture, in context, states that it is the surprise of Christ’s return and not the secrecy of it that is important. The verses from 36–44 emphasize the suddenness and unexpected nature of the second coming. This idea of a secret rapture must be measured by the Scripture so that we are not deceived. Since the rapture does not exist, it would be eternally fatal not to be prepared.

Psalm 50:3, *“Our Lord shall come, and shall not keep silence.”*

Martyrs for Jesus Are Survivors

“In all ages Satan has persecuted the people of God. He has tortured them and put them to death, but, in dying they became conquerors.... He could incarcerate in prison walls, but he could not bind the spirit. They could look beyond the gloom to the glory.... Through trials and persecution, the glory—character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones” (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 30, 31).

I love, so much, a paragraph on page 7 from the preface to Martyr’s Mirror, by Thielman J. Von Braght, an account of the experiences of martyrs from the days of Christ until 1660.

“Many of them [martyrs] would not have exchanged the darkest and severest dungeons, or the caves of the earth, in which they had to hide themselves,

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for royal palaces. The wilderness to them was a delightful pleasure garden, the howling of wild beasts which surrounded them, as sweet music or the songs of birds; and water and roots or dry bread delighted them more than the daintiest viands and drink from the tables of the great.” These faithful ones are true survivors—they survived the ultimate test; making a gift of their lives to God.

The dictionary definition of a martyr is a “person who chooses to suffer death rather than to renounce his convictions.” When studying the subject of martyrs, we need to remember there are other people who die for the wrong cause and lose eternal life. It is imperative that if we are martyred, that we die for Jesus and His word, not for an opinion or mistaken interpretation. John 16:2: “*They shall put you out of the synagogues: yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.*”

There have been martyrs through all past ages. Able was the first martyr. Will martyrdom continue right up until Christ returns?

Observe this scene in heaven where all those who have survived from all ages are gathered: “*Nearest the throne are those who were once zealous in the cause of Satan, but who, plucked as brands from the burning, have followed the Saviour with deep, intense devotion. Next are those who perfected Christian characters in the midst of falsehood and infidelity, those who honored the law of God when the Christian world declared it void, and the millions of all ages who were martyred for their faith*” (The Great Controversy, p. 665). Notice it says “all ages.” Would this “all ages” include the last days?

“*When this grand work is to take place in the battle, prior to the last closing conflict, many will be imprisoned, many will flee for their lives from cities and towns, and many will be martyrs for Christ’s sake in standing in defense of the truth*” (Maranatha, p. 199; emphasis supplied). Yes, there will be martyrs in the last days.

You may say, “I could never be a martyr. I hate confrontation, pain, and suffering. How will I ever survive?” The disciples were also tempted along these lines: “*The disciples were not endowed with the courage and fortitude of the martyrs until such grace was needed*” (The Desire of Ages, p. 354; emphasis supplied). **You will have the courage when you need it!**

Let us consider what it is going to take to survive the onslaught ahead of us as Christians. “*Those who would rather die than perform a wrong act are the only ones who will be found faithful*” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 53; emphasis supplied).

Part of what made the Dark Ages so dark was the persecution. We are now part of a society who prides itself in its religious freedom. How could the fires

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of persecution be rekindled? The answer is found in *The Great Controversy*, page 48: “*There is another and more important question that should engage the attention of the churches of today. The apostle Paul declares that ‘all that live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’ (2 Tim. 3:12). Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber? The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world’s standard and therefore awakens no opposition. The religion which is current in our day is not of the pure and holy character that marked the Christian faith in the days of Christ and His apostles. It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled” (emphasis supplied).*

But there will be no martyrdom **after** the close of probation. “*If the blood of Christ’s faithful witnesses were shed at this time, it would not, like the blood of the martyrs, be as seed sown to yield a harvest for God. Their fidelity would not be a testimony to convince others of the truth; for the obdurate heart has beaten back the waves of mercy until they return no more. If the righteous were now left to fall a prey to their enemies, it would be a triumph for the prince of darkness*” (*The Great Controversy*, p. 634).

The witness of martyrdom will serve no purpose when every person has made a final decision. Then the promise in Isaiah 33: 16 will apply: “*Bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure.*” We will no longer, on this premillennial earth, raise our own provisions or build our houses even with no money. “No buy-no sell” is past and the death decree has been enforced. We will flee for our lives or be in prison awaiting Christ’s return. “*After Jesus rises up from the mediatorial throne, every case will be decided, and oppression and death coming to God’s people will not then be a testimony in favor of the truth*” (*Selected Messages*, book 3, p. 399).

“*God would not suffer the wicked to destroy those who were expecting translation and who would not bow to the decree of the beast or receive his mark*” (*Early Writings*, p. 284).

In vision, Ellen White observed a chosen few in heaven whose robes were edged in red. When she asked Jesus who this company was “*He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him. With them was an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments*” (ibid. p. 19).

The following song, *The Border of Red*, was written by my friend Warren Wilson, who was intrigued by Ellen White’s reference regarding the hem of red.

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The Border of Red

*There's a border of red on his garment,
His robe is a glistening white;
He lives on a street that's called holy,
His star-studded crown glitters bright;
He walks with the ransomed of ages,
Beloved of all Heaven, it's said;
Why is he so honored in Heaven?
Tell me, why is the border of red?*

*He was slain in the valleys of Piedmont,
Killed at the door of his home,
And pursued o'er the Waldensian mountains
To be slain by the legions of Rome.
Despised for his simple religion,
For Jesus he suffered and bled,
And now he will wear through the ages
The robe with the border of red.*

*He was found in the cruel Inquisition,
Slain with his Bible in hand,
He was dragged through the streets of the city
And burned for his heresy grand.
Condemned to the rack and the dungeon,
By torture his lifeblood they shed,
And now he will wear through the ages
A robe with a border of red.*

*He was hated, despised, and tormented,
Wandering, an outcast from men,
Oh, the fires will soon be rekindled
And martyrs will die once again!
By faith you may live to see Jesus,
And watch as He wakens the dead,
Or maybe you'll wear through the ages
The robe with the border of red.*

—Warren C. Wilson

“Christ will restore the life taken; for He is the Life-giver: He will beautify the righteous with immortal life” (Maranatha, p. 199).

Righteousness by Faith

Whether we are called by God to endure the last days of time or are laid to rest before Jesus' return, the covering of Christ's righteousness is essential. In a

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special way, as God's wrath is poured out in plagues, the remnant will receive protection. The acceptance of the blood-bought gift of righteousness offered by Jesus to replace our unworthiness is a major pillar of spiritual survival. Paul has some of the best discussion on this diamond of truth. Romans 5:1 says, "*Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.*" Being justified by faith is the first step in Christian growth and preparation for survival. This is all made possible by Christ Jesus, according to Romans 8:1. Think about it! You are justified when you accept Jesus.

Some of us tend to confuse this special gift with indulgence rather than the discipline required for survival. We allow ourselves to continue in sin while supposing to enjoy the covering of Christ's righteousness. In *The Desire of Ages*, pages 555, 556, we read, "*No repentance is genuine that does not work reformation. The righteousness of Christ is not a cloak to cover unconfessed and unforsaken sin; it is a principle of life that transforms the character and controls the conduct. Holiness is wholeness for God; it is the entire surrender of heart and life to the indwelling of the principles of heaven*" (emphasis supplied).

"The righteousness of Christ will not cover one cherished sin" (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 316).

A reference that integrates much of the Bible comments on the conditions of acceptance of righteousness by faith is found in the August 28, 1894, *Review and Herald*, and reads as follows, "*It is not the grace of Christ that makes void the law of God. Christ declared, 'I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love.'* To those who are making void the commandments of God, the True Witness says, '*I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear. Christ's white robe of righteousness will never cover any soul that is found in sin unrepented of and unforsaken. Sin is the transgression of the law.*' Therefore those who are trampling upon the law of God, and teaching others to disregard its precepts, will not be clothed with the righteousness of Christ" (emphasis supplied).

This covering of Christ's righteousness is referred to in the context of the last days in *Early Writings*, page 44. How necessary it is that we have this covering for survival? "*I saw that Satan was at work in these ways to distract, deceive, and draw away God's people, just now in this sealing time. I saw some who were not standing stiffly for present truth. Their knees were trembling, and their feet sliding, because they were not firmly planted on the truth, and the covering of Almighty God could not be drawn over them while they were thus trembling.*"

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“Satan was trying his every art to hold them where they were, until the sealing was past, until the covering was drawn over God’s people, and they left without a shelter from the burning wrath of God, in the seven last plagues. God has begun to draw this covering over His people, and it will soon be drawn over all who are to have a shelter in the day of slaughter. God will work in power for His people” (emphasis supplied).

Romans 6:1, 2 says, *“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?”* To be honest in heart with God is the essence of survival in these last days. First Corinthians 15:57 says that God has made it possible for us to have victory through Christ. *“But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Jude 24, 25 reemphasizes this: *“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and forever, Amen.”* Jesus can keep us from falling!

“We may be clothed with the righteousness of Christ, but His righteousness will not be a covering for the least iniquity” (Signs of the Times, July 29, 1889, p. 12). For an excellent synopsis of present truth on this subject that is entirely Bible-based, I refer you to Seventh-day Adventists Believe (Review and Herald Publishing Association, HAGERSTOWN, Maryland).

To be committed enough to accept this gift and to allow God to work in our lives is a struggle. It is a struggle because of our nature and our choices. Notice this reference from Signs of the Times: *“But many of you say, ‘I have prayed, I have tried, I have struggled, and I do not see that I advance one step.’ What is the trouble? Have you not thought you were earning something, that you were by your struggles and works paying the price of your redemption? This you can never do. Christ has paid the price of your redemption. There is only one thing that you can do, and that is to take the gift of God. If you feel that you are poverty-stricken in spirit, you can come in all your need, and plead the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour. But you cannot come expecting that Christ will cover your wickedness, cover your indulgence in sin, with His robe of righteousness. He has come to save His people from their sins. The people of God are to be as branches grafted into the living Vine, to be partakers of the nature of the Vine. If you are a living branch of the True Vine, Jesus will prove you by affliction, that you may bring forth fruit more abundantly”* (May 9, 1892; emphasis supplied).

Early Writings, page 47, outlines the struggle we will have with the bitter cup given us in the last days. *“God has shown me that He gave His people a*

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bitter cup to drink, to purify and cleanse them. It is a bitter draught, and they can make it still more bitter by murmuring, complaining, and repining. But those who receive it thus must have another draught, for the first does not have its designed effect upon the heart. And if the second does not effect the work, then they must have another, and another, until it does have its designed effect, or they will be left filthy, impure in heart. I saw that this bitter cup can be sweetened by patience, endurance, and prayer, and that it will have its designed effect upon the hearts of those who thus receive it, and God will be honored and glorified" (emphasis supplied).

In order to survive, we will have to practice patience and endurance. This promise assures us of growth: "*Patience is a plant that will make rapid growth if carefully cultivated*" (*My Life Today*, p. 97).

Selected Messages, book 1, page 363, says, "*If you would stand through the time of trouble, you must know Christ, and appropriate the gift of His righteousness, which He imputes to the repentant sinner.*" Without Christ's gift of righteousness, no one can stand. This covering is described in *Early Writings*, page 44. It is only through Christ and His grace that the last-day ark will survive the flood of evil and the disasters to come.

God promises our survival. "*He is watching those who are climbing, ready, when the grasp relaxes and the steps falter, to send help. Yes, tell it in words full of cheer, that no one who perseveringly climbs the ladder will fail of gaining an entrance into the heavenly city*" (*Messages to Young People*, p. 95; emphasis supplied).

We are guaranteed survival, if we overcome and endure to the end. "*And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved*" (Matthew 10:22).

The Sanctuary Message

God's love is shown very graphically in the sanctuary. God made a request that His people build Him a sanctuary. Exodus 25:8: "*And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.*" I think of friends that I enjoy being close to. I want them with me. This is the way God felt. He wanted to be closer to those He loved. He wanted to show them how He was hurting over the sins that caused separation.

Psalms 77:13: "*Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God?*" Besides being with His people, He wanted them to see what the sin problem cost and how valuable people are to Him.

The typical or ancient sanctuary service involved offerings for sin given by the people who had hurt God and each other. By giving these sacrifices

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(lambs without defects), God thought that His people would understand to the depth of their souls the agony that sin had brought to Him. He wanted also to let us know that the Lamb of God was coming to atone forever and for all the sins torturing God.

When the Baptist said in powerful witness, “*Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29), he was announcing that the great Lamb was now here to replace the animal sacrifices. God was saying through John that He was giving His Son for man and that man was as valuable as His own Son! “*Thou hast loved them, as thou hast loved me*” (John 17:23).

What need have we to ever place a low value on ourselves? God was willing to give Himself for man, valuing man as high as His own Son. A King died in our place after being hurt for thousands of years. If we can hasten His coming (see chapter 17, “Hastening Our Lord’s Return”), then we can stop the Father’s suffering, the Son’s suffering, the angels’ suffering, and our suffering. We were so valuable to God, that in the face of the high cost to Himself, He paid! He wants us in fellowship with Him, freed from the disease of sin. “*I will come again, and receive you unto myself*” (John 14:3).

How important is it for us to understand our worth? It is the difference between surviving or not.

“All need to become more intelligent in regard to the work of the atonement, which is going on in the sanctuary above. When this grand truth is seen and understood, those who hold it will work in harmony with Christ to prepare a people to stand in the great day of God, and their efforts will be successful. By study, contemplation, and prayer God’s people will be elevated above common, earthly thoughts and feelings, and will be brought into harmony with Christ and His great work of cleansing the sanctuary above from the sins of the people. Their faith will go with Him into the sanctuary, and the worshipers on earth will be carefully reviewing their lives and comparing their characters with the great standard of righteousness. They will see their own defects; they will also see that they must have the aid of the Spirit of God if they would become qualified for the great and solemn work for this time which is laid upon God’s ambassadors” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 575; emphasis supplied).

God wants us to understand and appreciate His work in the sanctuary, and by doing so we will be ready for the crisis times ahead. When Israel made the sanctuary on earth according to God’s specific instructions, God came and manifested His presence as the Shekinah glory.

“The Lord commanded Moses.... So Moses finished the work. Then a cloud covered the tent of the congregation, and the glory of the Lord filled

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the tabernacle” (Exodus 40:32-34).

Just like Noah’s ark, the sanctuary was built as God specified and His blessing was placed upon it. If we do not follow God’s plan, then we cannot expect our plans to receive God’s blessing. This is vitally important to all of our preparation for end time events. Receiving God’s blessing is the difference between success or misery and failure.

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; a blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: and a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside out of the way which I command you this day, to go after other gods, which ye have not known” (Deuteronomy 11:26, 27).

The sanctuary on earth during Biblical times was composed of three parts. A courtyard immediately surrounded the sanctuary. Inside this beautiful building was a first compartment called the Holy Place and in the second compartment, the Most Holy Place. These two compartments were separated by a beautiful curtain, or veil.

The sacrifices were made in the courtyard and the blood was ministered in the Holy Place on a daily basis for forgiveness of sins. But once a year this typical service was replaced by ministry in the Day of Atonement. The ministry of the first compartment provided for forgiveness and symbolic separation of sin from the sinner. The death of the lamb and its blood mediated the transfer of sin from the penitent to the sanctuary’s Holy Place.

On the Day of Atonement sins were separated from the sanctuary and placed on the head of a scapegoat. The people fasted and prayed for victory as they were forever separated from their past sins. This was called the cleansing of the sanctuary. Only the high priest ministered on this day.

In the antitypical service in heaven, which was the pattern for services (typical) on earth (Hebrews 8:5 and 9:23), no sacrifice could be found except Jesus (Hebrews 8:1 and 7:25). So He is the one that we should honor. He is the one that saved us! He became the Sacrifice and the Priest of His own life. The cross of Jesus was antitypical to the altar of burnt offering and was the place of agony. A place where the innocent died for the guilty at the hand of the guilty.

“The cross is a revelation to our dull senses of the pain that, from its very inception, sin has brought to the heart of God” (Education, p. 263). God wanted us to feel with Him the truth of the cost of sin. This brings true victory.

While carrying a vase for a potter, Ed dropped and broke it. In his generosity, Ed offered to pay him \$20 to replace it. The potter’s head dropped and tears filled his eyes. Ed was surprised at the potter’s behavior. Hadn’t he gone the

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second mile by offering more than the vase was worth? The potter then explained, “I made the vase in a class I attended. My instructor said that it was the best he had ever seen and asked if he could have permission to show it in a gallery. A man came along and offered me \$2,500 for it. I told the man ‘No, I want to keep it because my teacher said it was good.’”

We will never gain the victory over sin until we know the cost. Even with our best guess we underestimate the cost of a soul to Jesus.

“It’s impossible to bring back to repentance those who have fallen away from Christ if they reject Him and continue to mock the Christian faith. By doing this, they’re crucifying Christ all over again and holding Him up to public shame” (Hebrews 6:6, The Clear Word). When we sin Jesus pays the price again; we crucify Him afresh. Since Jesus is our high priest and makes intercession for us in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 7:25-27), we can pray effectively.

The cleansing of the sanctuary marked the Day of Atonement, and, in 1844, was a sign that showed the time of the end. This work of Jesus during our Day of Atonement is very important to Him, and He wants it to be important to us. Daniel 8:14 states, *“Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.”*

I invite you to study this important subject for your own spiritual joy. Jesus’ way is in the sanctuary! He wants us to survive by Him and in Him. For the best study on this subject, see Exodus 25-40, Leviticus 1-6, the book of Hebrews, Christ In His Sanctuary, by Ellen White, and chapter 16 of this book.

The Heavenly Sanctuary and the Intercession of Jesus

A few years ago I was challenged by a learned theologian to consider that the sanctuary in heaven does not exist, that the intercession of Jesus was not necessary or in existence, and that everything needed for man’s salvation was completed at the cross. For many years I had believed that there was a sanctuary in heaven and that Jesus was interceding for us there. I believed it because that was how I was taught. Now, I was faced with establishing this truth or rejecting it for myself. This experience of research was a very great blessing to me and I recommend it to all who have accepted traditional thoughts without examination.

My search began with the Bible in Exodus 25:8 where Moses was asked by God to build a sanctuary on earth. *“And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them.”* The next verse says that God showed him a pattern that he was to follow in the construction of this earthly sanctuary.

“According to all that I show you, that is, the pattern of the taber-

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nacle...” (Exodus 25:40, NKJV). It goes on to list all of the furniture of the sanctuary including the ark, candlestick, censor, table of shewbread and the altar.

Hebrews 8:5 repeats that Moses followed a pattern. *“Who served unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed thee in the mount.”*

“It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in heaven... For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us” (Hebrews 9:23-24).

If the patterns of the earthly sanctuary are in heaven, then there is a sanctuary in heaven from which Moses’ pattern was derived.

In Revelation 11:19 John saw the ark of the testament. In Revelation 1:12 the candlestick was also seen by him. In Revelation 8:3 the altar and censor were observed. This is more evidence that there is a sanctuary in heaven.

Jesus’ intercession is mentioned in Hebrews 7:25, *“Wherefore He was able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.”*

Romans 8:34 emphasizes the great love manifested in Jesus’ intercession, *“Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.”*

The Spirit of Prophecy is a master artist in painting word pictures of the work of the Father and the Son in the sanctuary in heaven. *“The intercession of Christ in man’s behalf in the sanctuary above is as essential as His death on the cross”* (The Great Controversy, p. 489; emphasis supplied).

In this reference, Christ is interceding for us in the heavenly sanctuary. This reference answers two questions; 1) is there a heavenly sanctuary? and 2) does Jesus intercede for us? But, did you notice that this intercessory work for us is as important as His death on the cross? That really says something, doesn’t it? The devil is attacking, using well-meaning, well-educated people, to dislodge the anchors of our faith in the ministry of Christ and the existence of the heavenly sanctuary.

Selected Messages, book 2, p. 170, states it another way, *“The perfect work of Christ was consummated in His death upon the cross. In His sacrifice and His intercession at the right hand of the Father is our only hope of salvation”* (emphasis supplied).

To just have the sacrifice is not enough, we must have both the blood of

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Jesus at the cross and the intercession of His death as our only hope. Let's thank God for such work and not let it be undermined by anyone.

This statement puts it all in a grand panorama and builds a solid foundation for the temple of our faith. *"The Scripture which above all others had been both the foundation and central pillar of the Advent faith was the declaration, 'Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed'"* (The Great Controversy, p. 409). This sanctuary that was to be cleansed at the end of this great prophetic period is the heavenly sanctuary and the beginning of the great day of atonement.

"Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: we have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected and not man" (Hebrews 8:1, 2 NKJV).

"Here [Hebrews 8:1, 2 quoted] is revealed the sanctuary of the new covenant, The sanctuary of the first covenant was pitched by man, built by Moses; this is pitched by the Lord, not man. In that sanctuary the earthly priests performed their service; in this, Christ our great High Priest ministers at God's right hand. One sanctuary was on earth, the other in heaven" (The Great Controversy, p. 413).

"The sanctuary in heaven, in which Jesus ministers in our behalf, is the great original, of which the sanctuary built by Moses was a copy" (The Great Controversy, p. 414).

While I was studying this subject a miracle began to happen in my heart. The ministry of Jesus is not just an event but an experience that we, by faith, can enter into with Him and even listening to what He is saying on our behalf. Early Writings, page 55, *"He [Jesus] stepped into the chariot and was borne to the holiest, where the Father sat... . Those who rose up with Jesus would send up their faith to Him in the holiest, and pray, 'My Father, give us Thy spirit.' Then Jesus would breathe upon them the Holy Ghost."* How clear that Jesus is receiving our prayers in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary and that our faith goes up to Him there. In that act of faith we receive the Holy Spirit. The devil would wish us not to have this experience. We must determine not to let Satan have his way and that the Holy Spirit may be received by us, by faith, in the Most Holy Place of the heavenly sanctuary.

"I saw the incense in the censor smoke as Jesus offered their confessions and prayer to the Father. And as it ascended a bright light rested upon Jesus and upon the mercy seat; and the earnest praying ones who were troubled because they had discovered themselves to be transgressors of God's law, were blessed,

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and their countenances lighted up with hope and joy” (Early Writings, page 256)

As I studied, I saw why this intercession of Jesus’ sacrifice was our only hope. The question arose: “What does Jesus say to the Father?” [John 17] *“This chapter contains the intercessory prayer offered by Christ to His Father just before His trial and crucifixion. This prayer is a lesson regarding the intercession that the Saviour would carry on within the veil when His great sacrifice in behalf of men, the offering of himself, should have been completed. Our mediator gave his disciples this illustration of His ministration in the heavenly sanctuary in behalf of all who will come to Him in meekness and humility, emptied of all selfishness, and believing in His power to save” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 5, p. 1145; emphasis supplied).*

This great prayer of Jesus in the seventeenth chapter of John is His prayer for our unity. He is also praying that we will not be of the world. Verse 14, *“I have given them my word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.”* To be not of the world is not to follow worldly policies in our lives, in our families, or in our churches and schools.

Just how great is this chapter? *“God’s family on earth have many lessons to learn in order to answer the prayer of Christ—His last prayer with His disciples before His humiliation. The seventeenth chapter of John, which contains this prayer, comprehends more than any other chapter in the New Testament” (Spalding-Magan Collection, p. 387; emphasis supplied).* I have often thought that the other chapters in the New Testament might be more significant but not so, according to inspiration. This intercessory prayer by Jesus in our behalf, before the Father for unity and separation from the world comprehends more than any other chapter of the New Testament.

“Christ has not a casual interest in us but an interest stronger than a mother for her child. ...Our Saviour has purchased us by human suffering and sorrow, by insult, reproach, abuse, mockery, rejection and death. He is watching over you, trembling child of God. He will make you secure under His protection. ...Our weakness in human nature will not bar our access to the heavenly Father, for He [Christ] died to make intercession for us” (Sons and Daughters of God, p. 77; emphasis supplied).

Preparation

The Bible is insistent regarding the necessity of preparation for the coming

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crisis. Note how, in 1 Corinthians 14:8-10, there is an emphasis not only on preparation but also on doing the right kind of preparation; *“For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air. There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without signification.”*

“Be thou prepared, and prepare for thyself, thou, and all thy company that are assembled unto thee, and be thou a guard unto them (Ezekiel 38:7).

The testimony of Jesus on the subject of preparation is also urgent. *“God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p. 452; emphasis supplied).* God wants us to prepare for these last days based upon what He has revealed will take place.

“What are you doing, brethren, in the great work of preparation? Those who are uniting with the world are receiving the worldly mold and preparing for the mark of the beast.... Now is the time to prepare” (ibid; p. 216). Our survival depends upon rejecting worldly influences in our lives. The warning is clear: If we allow worldly influences to creep in, we are preparing to receive the mark of the beast and we will not survive.

“Ministers and people are unprepared for the time in which they live, and nearly all who profess to believe present truth are unprepared to understand the work of preparation for this time. In their present state of worldly ambition, with their lack of consecration to God, their devotion to self, they are wholly unfitted to receive the latter rain and, having done all, to stand against the wrath of Satan, who by his inventions would cause them to make shipwreck of faith, fastening upon them some pleasing self-deception. They think they are all right when they are all wrong” (ibid., vol. 1, p. 466; emphasis supplied). Christian people, who in their profession and understanding of truth, are still unprepared to understand the work of preparation for this time and are wrong when they think they are right.

“Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in His dealings with Jacob that He will in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more

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exalted their profession, and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God and the more sure the triumph of their great adversary. Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble, or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless.

*“Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict unprepared will, in their despair, confess their sins in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress” (The Great Controversy, p. 620; emphasis supplied). The message is clear that to delay preparation for the day of God, thinking that we can “do it later,” threatens our survival. The sentence in a previous reference says “**Now** is the time to get ready” and not to say, as did King Agrippa, “*Almost thou persuadest me*” (Acts 26:28).*

“Study Revelation in connection with Daniel, for history will be repeated.... We, with all our religious advantages, ought to know far more today than we do know.... As we near the close of this world’s history, the prophecies relating to the last days especially demand our study. The last book of the New Testament Scriptures is full of truth that we need to understand” (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 116; emphasis supplied).

The testimonies are here pointing back to the Scripture for special study as we near the end of time. We ought to know more, and we ought to be better prepared than we are. To those of you who are living in any city of the seven continents, begin a work now to prepare for survival and move to the country!

“Those who are engaged in service for the Master need an experience much higher, deeper, broader, than many have yet thought of having. Many who are already members of God’s great family know little of what it means to behold His glory and to be changed from glory to glory. Many have a twilight perception of Christ’s excellence, and their hearts thrill with joy. They long for a fuller, deeper sense of the Saviour’s love. Let these cherish every desire of the soul after God. The Holy Spirit works with those who will be worked, molds those who will be molded, fashions those who will be fashioned. Give yourselves the culture of spiritual thoughts and holy communings. You have seen but the first rays of the early dawn of His glory. As you follow on to know the Lord, you will know that ‘the path of the righteous is as the light of dawn, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day’” Proverbs 4:18, R. V., margin (The Ministry of Healing, p. 503; emphasis supplied).

The promise is, and let it be said with encouraging words, that if we will make a beginning, God will bless us. If we neglect to make a beginning, the end

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will be a hardened heart and the mark of the beast. God in His great love is pleading with us to get to know Him and then, with His arm around us, He points the way. *“Every act of transgression, every neglect or rejection of the grace of Christ, is reacting upon yourself; it is hardening the heart, depraving the will, benumbing the understanding, and not only making you less inclined to yield, but less capable of yielding, to the tender pleading of God’s Holy Spirit”* (Steps to Christ, p. 33).

We have been warned that there is a storm coming from which we must have shelter in order to survive. *“The storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it? Are we one with Christ as He is one with the Father? Are we heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ? Are we working in copartnership with Christ?”* (Evangelism, p. 199; emphasis supplied).

Continuing our study of vital truth, consider a reference in Selected Messages, book 2, page 142: *“The work of the people of God is to prepare for the events of the future, which will soon come upon them with blinding force”* (emphasis supplied). It is clear that our work is to prepare ourselves and help others to be ready for the Lord’s soon return.

Survival

Our spiritual and practical preparation must have goals. Why should we prepare? To what end? The Bible states in Matthew 10:22, *“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”* This verse specifically challenges last-day survivors to endure to the end. There will be a temptation to compromise the truths of the Bible.

“The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested. Those who endeavor to obey all the commandments of God will be opposed and derided. They can stand only in God. In order to endure the trial before them, they must understand the will of God as revealed in His word. ... None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict. To every soul will come the searching test: Shall I obey God rather than men? The decisive hour is even now at hand” (The Great Controversy, pp. 593, 594; emphasis supplied). *“Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. ...As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan him-*

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self will personate Christ” (The Great Controversy, p. 624).

In order to endure we must understand and experience the Scriptures. We can only survive these last days if we make the Bible our guide book. God’s Holy Word will help us test the sayings of these demons in disguise.

When we begin to live by faith, we may lose old friends, maybe even our own family. But all should be tempered with the joy and peace of forgiveness. Does the Bible, our ultimate survival manual, have any practical advice to help us endure the terrible trials we will face if we are to survive? Yes, it does! God’s love is the bridge between heaven and earth.

The Only Argument Against the Truth

You may think it strange to say that there is an argument against the truth. We have confirmed the fact that the truth has a strong evidence-based existence. However, there is an argument that neutralizes the effect of truth, and, hence, affects our survival. Romans 8:18 gives us insight into this irony: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Second Corinthians 4:17 makes a similar statement, *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”* We give up too soon!

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, page 30, comments upon the verse in Deuteronomy 33:25 *“As thy days so shall thy strength be.”* *“Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet.”*

“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: but rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy” (1 Peter 4:12, 13). Notice that it says we should rejoice for every trial. This is indeed advanced Christianity. When you consider such trials as false accusations, scorn, ridicule, misjudged motives, and slander, you see how they may set the stage for the only argument against the truth.

In Acts 26:27, 28 Paul had been called to appear before King Agrippa, and appeal to him to become a Christian. Agrippa’s answer was, *“Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian.”*

The Acts of the Apostles, page 438, says, *“But Agrippa put aside the proffered mercy, refusing to accept the cross of a crucified Redeemer.”* “Al-

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most,” but not quite, was Agrippa’s response to Paul’s invitation.

Acts 24:25 tells some of the story of Felix and Drusilla. *“Felix trembled, and answered, Go thy way for this time; when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee.”* Felix and Drusilla did not want to make a decision about spiritual things when Paul appealed to them, but wanted to wait until later.

The Acts of the Apostles, page 426, comments on their experience: *“But instead of permitting his convictions to lead him to repentance, he sought to dismiss these unwelcome reflections. The interview with Paul was cut short. ‘Go thy way for this time,’ he said; ‘when I have a convenient season, I will call for thee’”* (emphasis supplied).

King Agrippa and his household, along with Felix and Drusilla, exemplify the attitude of those who decide to put off responding to Christ’s invitation to eternal survival. Some may have hurt feelings regarding some bad experiences or reproofs. This is expressed in *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 3, page 266: *“The spirit of hatred which has existed with some because the wrongs among God’s people have been reproved has brought blindness and a fearful deception upon their own souls, making it impossible for them to discriminate between right and wrong. They have put out their own spiritual eyesight”* (emphasis supplied).

For whatever reason, if we reject truth, we find that the heart hardens and we become less responsive. This is done at our eternal peril and threatens our survival. *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 5, page 681, describes this spiritual condition, which effectively neutralizes the effect of the truth, *“Let ministers and people remember that gospel truth hardens when it does not save. The rejection of light leaves men captives, bound about by chains of darkness and unbelief. ‘The soul that refuses to listen to the invitations of mercy from day to day can soon listen to the most urgent appeals without an emotion stirring his soul’”* (emphasis supplied).

The best summary of the arguments against the truth is expressed in *The Great Controversy*, page 460. Here it mentions the great obstacles and barriers to the effects of truth upon our lives and how we can have an effective argument against our own survival. *“The great obstacle both to the acceptance and to the promulgation of truth is the fact that it involves inconvenience and reproach. This is the only argument against the truth which its advocates have never been able to refute”* (emphasis supplied).

It is a serious matter to put off carrying out our convictions. The following poem explains just how serious it is.

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Almost

*A leper sat beside a cave
In upper Galilee;
His form was wasted and his grief
Was pitiful to see.*

*No future stretched inviting arms,
His hopes were for release,
For quiet in the mossy tomb
And rest of dreamless peace.*

*Of late, uneasy were his thoughts,
Hope reared its weary head;
One who could heal the leprosy
Lived south, so rumor said.*

*Some told of demons exorcised,
Some said He raised the dead,
And changed some water into wine,
And multiplied the bread.*

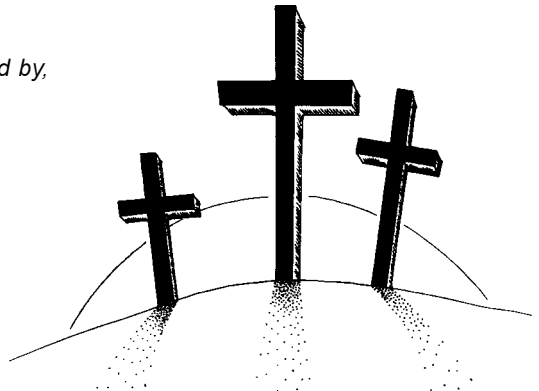
*"Soon will I rise and go to Him,
And see what can be seen,
Perhaps He'll see my hopeless state,
Perhaps He'll make me clean."*

*With languor he began to plan
To put away his sorrow;
He'd say, as every morning dawned
"I'm tired, I'll go tomorrow."*

*But days and weeks and months passed by,
His eyes were growing dim;
He knew that he must haste to Christ,
Or death would haste to him.*

*His journey was a painful one
And, as its end drew nigh,
He saw three crosses etched in black
Against a darkening sky.*

—Josephine Cunningham Edwards



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There is a strong connection between the third angel's message and medical missionary work:

“As religious aggression subverts the liberties of our nation, those who would stand for freedom of conscience will be placed in unfavorable positions. For their own sake, they should, while they have opportunity, become intelligent in regard to disease, its causes, prevention, and cure. And those who do this will find a field of labor anywhere. There will be suffering ones, plenty of them, who will need help, not only among those of our own faith, but largely among those who know not the truth” (Counsels on Health, p. 506).

“John was a representative of the people of God in the last days, to whom God has committed important and solemn truths. The world at large are given to gluttony and the indulgence of base passions. The light of health reform is opened before the people of God at this day, that they may see the necessity of holding their appetites and passions under control of the higher powers of the mind. This is also necessary, that they may have mental strength and clearness, to discern the sacred chain of truth, and turn from the bewitching errors and pleasing fables, that are flooding the world. Their work is to present before the people the pure doctrine of the Bible. Hence health reform finds its place in the preparatory work for the second appearing of Christ” (The Spirit of Prophecy, vol. 2, p. 44).

Chapter Three



Accusations: Words Can Hurt

“Neither do I condemn thee. . .” (John 8:11).

Her eyes looked down, but she knew that they were all staring at her. She could hear the whispers. The fingers they were pointing at her may as well be jabbing into her back. Their tongues were wagging. Her aching heart wished for someone who really understood. Her accusers had brought her to the temple, and cast her down in front of the Teacher. The accusers loudly flaunted her sin and bragged of their own cleverness in discovering her. “Moses and the law says she should be stoned!” yelled one man above their jeers and shamings. “What do *you* say?”

She suddenly knew that they were using her actions to trap the Teacher. There was no way He could meet their accusations without accusing others Himself. But, He said nothing. Neither yes or no. He merely wrote in the dirt, as if He were deaf to their taunts. Quietly, amid the dying accusations and whispered musings, Jesus said, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”* (John 8:7). He continued marking in the dirt. And, one by one, reading their own dirt, the accusers left.

At last, Jesus looked at her. “Where are your accusers; has no man condemned you?” She could hardly find her voice when she realized the concern in His tone. She looked into His eyes—eyes reflecting the love she felt—and said, *“No man, Lord.”* He replied, *“Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more.”*

Here we have a picture of people accusing this woman and also using it as a trap so they could accuse Jesus. Accusing people, whether they are guilty or not, is a habit that is easy to form. This woman was actually guilty, and yet, not accused by Christ. If Jesus did not accuse when guilty, what place is there to accuse the innocent? In each case, the vital issue is whether or not we should accuse one another at all. I think you will see that as we enter further into this study, that to accuse someone is to do a work other than what God would have us to do. Let’s look at a definition for the word “accusation.” The definition reads simply, “charged with a fault; to blame someone.”

One well-known text in Matthew 18:7 puts things in perspective. This view is somewhat different than we ordinarily take but, as usual, the Bible reveals the true

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light. *“Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come: but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”* We need to be very careful with our accusations, and with our offenses because the Bible says, “Woe to them.” It’s a mistake to be offended, but a greater one to offend.

Am I Offended?

So far, we have found that the one who offends has committed the greater sin than the one who is offended (Matthew 18:7). Let’s take a look at the fate of the offended. Is it a sin to be offended?

Proverbs 18:19 says, *“A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle.”* There is extreme danger in being offended. An offended person is harder to be won than a strong city. Evidently when we are offended, we put up arguments that are irrefutable and our position hardens our hearts and puts us in a position where no one can help us (Matthew 18:15-17).

In Matthew 24:9-13 we read about what some offended people do. *“Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name’s sake. And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.... But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”*

Here we see one result of being offended. The offended person is being set up to betray and hate others and that makes it a sin. Matthew 10:21-23 says that the offended will betray family members to death. *“And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come”* (emphasis supplied). It is a terrible thing to be offended. We need to do whatever we can to make it right, as soon as possible, to forgive them and seek forgiveness from God.

Note the chain of evil: someone says something or accuses someone else and that person becomes offended. That person, in turn, is setting themselves up to be a persecutor because they are offended.

“But because offenses will come, we should be careful not to stir up the natural temperament of those who love not the truth, by unwise words and by manifestations of an unkind spirit” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 16, p. 159).

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When we are offended we become unforgiving. Notice this statement regarding a person in that situation. *“He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances, and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but, as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, we are to pardon all who have done evil to us”* (Mount of Blessing, p. 113; emphasis supplied). Think of it! By being offended and unforgiving we cut off the very channel of mercy and recovery.

Long ago Sister F. was offended. Notice what spirits raced into her heart. *“Sister F. moves from impulse, and finds fault, and has had too much to say against her brethren and sisters. This will cause confusion in any church. If she could control her own spirit, a great victory would be gained.... Unless she is converted and an entire change is wrought in her, unless she educates herself to be slow to speak and slow to wrath, and cultivates true Christian courtesy, her influence will prove injurious, and the happiness of others connected with her will suffer. She manifests an independence which is a damage to her and alienates her friends. This independence has caused her much trouble and has wounded her best friends”* (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 51).

Sometimes it is little things that offend our human nature. Things like being jostled in a crowd or driving on a street or highway. Brother P. had this problem. *“Your hasty temper often causes you sincere and painful regret and self-condemnation. This passionate spirit, unless subdued, will increase to a peevish, faultfinding spirit; indeed, this is already upon you in a degree. You will be ready to resent everything. If jostled upon the sidewalk, you will be offended, and a word of complaint will spring to your lips. When driving in the street, if full half the road is not given you, you will feel stirred in a moment. If asked to put yourself out of your course to accommodate others, you will chafe and fret, and feel that your dignity is imposed upon. You will show to all your besetting sin. Your very countenance will indicate an impatient spirit, and your mouth will seem always ready to utter an angry word. In this habit, as in tobacco using, total abstinence is the only sure remedy. An entire change must take place in you”* (ibid. p. 424; emphasis supplied).

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Being offended is a fault. If we didn't become offended, we could stop a cycle of events perpetrated by Satan and the offender would be in a much better position of recovery. *"Christ has given direction for their guidance, declaring that they are to show Christian interest in one another. If one commits sin, do not talk of it among yourselves. Go first to the one who has offended. 'Tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.' 'If thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath caught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.' Do church members obey this word? Suppose that in every institution established among us, in publishing houses, sanitariums, and schools, God's people had sought to understand and follow His plan, as it is outlined in the Old and New Testaments. Suppose that the instruction given by Christ to the children of Israel had been woven into the life-practice. Would not we as a people stand today on vantage ground?"* (Review and Herald, April 1, 1902; emphasis supplied).

In conclusion to the matter of being offended, this reference states our need of conversion. *"But truth will bear away the victory. Those who will maintain the truth, irrespective of consequences, will offend some whose hearts are not in harmony with the truth as it is in Jesus. These persons cherish theories of their own, which are not the truth. The truth does not harmonize with their sentiments, and rather than give up their own ideas, they walk away from those who obey the truth. But there are men who will receive the truth, and these will take the places made vacant by those who become offended and leave the truth"* (Manuscript Releases, vol. 7, p. 180; emphasis supplied).

Remember Matthew 18:7 and this counsel in 1 Corinthians 10:32: *"Give none offense, neither to the Jews, nor to the Gentiles, nor to the church of God."* Let us safeguard our Christian experience by not becoming offended. Our own long-suffering is our indication of a connection to heaven! *"The highest evidence of nobility in a Christian is self-control.... Lowliness of heart is the strength that gives victory to the followers of Christ; it is the token of their connection with the courts above"* (The Desire of Ages, p. 301).

What if I Offend?

Let's notice again the same Bible verse, Matthew 18:7, *"Woe unto the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!"*

In his recent book The Wounded Spirit, Frank Peretti reveals how his

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mistreatment and rejection by schoolmates scarred his spirit. It is his belief that the shootings at Columbine High School might have been averted if someone had detected and helped to treat the wounded spirits of the boys who did the shooting. He claims that bullying is often the root cause of many of those wounds.

NBC news anchor Stone Phillips reported on March 6, 2001, in regard to the shooting at Santana High School near San Diego, California, that since 1974 two out of three perpetrators in school shootings felt bullied.

As Christians, we should each study to make ourselves a committee of one to seek out these hurting youngsters and let them know someone cares. They will be the very ones who try us most; they question our authority, they say nothing matters to them. But what they really mean is, “No one cares enough about me to be my friend.” Teenagers need to be aware that their words and actions carry an impact.

This philosophy seems to be supported by Ellen White: *“In one moment, by hasty, passionate, careless words, may be wrought evil that a whole lifetime’s repentance cannot undo. Oh, the hearts that are broken, the friends estranged, the lives wrecked, by the harsh, hasty words of those who might have brought help and healing!”* (Messages to Young People, p. 135).

We are called to be comforters, not to cause offense. When our pain seems important enough to inflict discomfort upon another, we are representing the enemy of souls. We must speak, even God’s truths, in love, in cases where we find our brother in error. Our words can easily offend. When in doubt, silence is better than gold.

“Words spoken in reply to one who is angry usually act as a whip, lashing the temper into greater fury.... The religion of Christ brings the emotions under the control of reason and disciplines the tongue” (*ibid.* p. 136). We are called to be inoffensive as well as unoffended, as wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.

Scripture states exactly how we should react when accused, whether we are guilty or innocent. Romans 8:33, 34 asks that very question: *“Who will lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.*

“How shall we react?” is indeed to ask the question, “How does God react toward us?” In Romans 8:1, He says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation [or accusation] to them which are in Christ Jesus.”*

The Zacchaeus Principle

The story of Zacchaeus is about a tax collector hated by most of the people in the community. There were many dishonest things that tax collectors

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did in those days, including overcharging and paying the government the tax and keeping a hefty override. So, Zacchaeus is in town one day and he notices that Jesus is coming to where he is doing business. Being a short man, he climbs up into a tree to view Jesus over the crowd. As Jesus comes by, He sees Zacchaeus in the tree. Jesus tells him that He wants to come to his house for dinner. The people then accuse Jesus of associating with crooks and fraudulent people. If He was truly the Messiah, He wouldn't do that!

True to His word, Jesus came to Zacchaeus' house, and Zacchaeus made a decision as a result of that visit to become a follower of Christ. Then he made this speech in Luke 19:8: *“Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold. And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house.”* This verse ties in neatly with our scripture in Matthew 18:7, which says to be careful how you offend someone and be careful how you are offended, but “woe to them who offend you.” Here, Zacchaeus is saying that if he has offended anyone by false accusation he will repay fourfold.

The Scripture admonition to those who have made false accusations, false charges, fraudulent dealings, is a fourfold repayment. As a result of Zacchaeus' commitment, Jesus says in Luke 19:9, *“This day is salvation come to this house.”* This gave the seal to Zacchaeus' promise. Because of his false charges, Zacchaeus chose to make fourfold repayment. This is a hefty restitution, but it still does not cover all of the damage.

Guilt or Innocence—Judge Not

Some soldiers came to John the Baptist because they were interested in the life-style that He recommended. They asked Jesus this question in Luke 3: 14, *“And the soldiers likewise demanded of him saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages.”* Three things Jesus told them, one of which was not to accuse anyone falsely. Accusation is an offense that brings woe upon those who make it.

Joseph, in Genesis 39, was running for his life. He held a shredded piece of his coat, the other half was held by the wife of Potiphar, Joseph's employer. Potiphar's wife had falsely accused Joseph of adultery with her. As a result of her accusations, Joseph was put into prison. He remained there, but he didn't go to prison with a hateful attitude toward anyone; he knew he was innocent. So he continued to work for God in prison and gained the attention of many of the prisoners that were there. The word spread about Joseph and his wisdom.

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One day the king had a dream, and Joseph was called from prison to interpret it. He gave the interpretation, and the plan of implementation, given him by God. There would be seven years of good crops, followed by seven years when there wouldn't be any harvest. Joseph helped a whole nation, indeed, helped supply a lot of the then-known world with food, during a time when it was really difficult to get food. As a result, Joseph was made prime minister of the country.

In the example of Joseph there is a promise of vindication that will assure us that we can afford to be calm and quiet under accusation. *“And if like Joseph they suffer calumny and false accusations, Providence will overrule all the enemy’s devices for good, and God will in His own time exalt as much higher, as for a while they were debased by wicked revenge”* (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 1, p. 1097; emphasis supplied). What a promise for those who have been accused! Romans 8:28 says, *“And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.”*

Matthew 7:3 talks about judging other people, and here's how it reads, *“Why beholdest thou the mote [the little splinter] that is in thy brother’s eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?”*

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, page 125, comments on this verse in a powerful way. *“According to the figure that our Saviour uses, he who indulges a censorious spirit is guilty of greater sin than is the one he accuses, for he not only commits the same sin, but adds to it conceit and censoriousness”* (emphasis supplied). There's not much room to accuse, is there?

Matthew 7:1 says, *“Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it will be measured to you again.”* As we deal with one another, in a manner that accuses some other person, or talk about them, or gossip about them, the judgment that we give to somebody else is the judgment that is going to be passed upon us. In a more practical application, the path that we take others over, we'll have to go over ourselves.

In Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pages 136, 137 we read: *“Everyone who has been free to condemn or discourage, will in his own experience be brought over the same ground where he has caused others to pass; he will feel what they have suffered because of his want of sympathy and tenderness.”* We will learn to guard our tongue more closely, and as a result, we will more tenderly value our friends. So we need to be very careful about how we deal with one another in an accusing way. *“‘Thou that judgest doest the same things,’ does not reach the magnitude of his sin who presumes*

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to criticize and condemn his brother.... His words describe one who is swift to discern a defect in others.... But Jesus declares that the very trait of character developed in doing this un-Christlike work is, in comparison with the fault criticized, as a beam in proportion to a mote” (ibid., p. 125; emphasis supplied).

When we make accusations intended to hurt others, we are promoting our own fall.

The Spirit of Persecution

In the Garden of Eden, when Adam and Eve first did that which God had told them not to do, one of the first things they did was to accuse each other. This is found on page 126 in Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing: *“It was through sin that men gained the knowledge of evil; no sooner had the first pair [meaning Adam and Eve] sinned than they began to accuse each other.”* And this is what human nature will inevitably do when uncontrolled by the grace of Christ. As soon as we sin ourselves, we accuse.

As the spirit of accusation continues to grow, we will see more restrictive measures put on individuals. Notice this statement: *“When men indulge this accusing spirit, they are not satisfied with pointing out what they suppose to be a defect in their brother. If milder means fail of making him do what they think ought to be done, they will resort to compulsion. Just as far as lies in their power, they will force men to comply with their ideas of what is right”* (ibid. p. 126; emphasis supplied).

Accusation begins the spirit of compulsion and then develops persecution. That example is given at the top of page 127 in Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing. Finally, let’s look at the remedy on page 128, *“Not until you feel that you could sacrifice your own self-dignity, and even lay down your life in order to save an erring brother, have you cast the beam out of your own eye so that you are prepared to help your brother. Then you can approach him and touch his heart. No one has ever been reclaimed from a wrong position by censure and reproach; but many have been thus driven from Christ and led to seal their hearts against conviction. A tender spirit, a gentle, winning deportment, may save the erring and hide a multitude of sins. The revelation of Christ in your own character will have a transforming power upon all with whom you come in contact”* (emphasis supplied). It is wrong to reproach anyone, even if they are guilty!

The spirit that should be manifested when we are accused, or the spirit that we should manifest toward each other is best expressed in two texts. The first one is Romans 12:15: *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep.”* In this verse, it points out that we should be so closely

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identified with the interests and concerns of each other, that when one weeps, we weep with them, and when they rejoice, we rejoice with them. Certainly there is no spirit of accusation, condemnation, criticism, in this attitude. A similar statement is found in 1 Corinthians 12:26: *“And whether one member suffer, all members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it.”* Speaking of members, it sounds like a church group, doesn't it? He could be a member of a business, or a member of an organization of any kind. When one of us suffers, we are so closely identified with them that we suffer too. Or, if someone is accused, maybe a friend of ours, we suffer with them as though it were happening to ourselves.

One of the most tragic stories in the Bible is of Jesus during His trial. He was accused of wrongdoing, and yet everything that He had done was right. He was accused of treason, of causing insurrection, of being associated with the wrong people. His accusers hated Him. The people who were accusing Him wanted to use the law of the land to force Him to do things that they were promoting. Finally they killed Him because He wouldn't comply with their wishes.

His example gives us the best response to accusations. Matthew 27:12-14 says, *“When he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? And he answered him to never a word.”*

The Desire of Ages, page 750, states, *“For long hours of agony, reviling and mockery have fallen upon the ears of Jesus. As He hangs upon the cross, there floats up to Him still the sound of jeers and curses. With longing heart He has listened for some expression of faith from His disciples. He has heard only the mournful words, ‘We trusted that it had been He which should have redeemed Israel.’ How grateful then to the Saviour was the utterance of faith and love from a dying thief! While the leading Jews deny Him, and even the disciples doubt His divinity, the poor thief, upon the brink of eternity, called Jesus Lord. Many were ready to call Him Lord when He wrought miracles, and after He had risen from the grave; but none acknowledged Him as He hung dying upon the cross save the penitent thief”* (emphasis supplied).

Many of His friends left Him, forsook Him, but here is a thief who is honest in heart and wants to declare his confidence in Jesus. He just asked the Master if He would save him in His kingdom. This brought encouragement to our Lord. Think about it. All the church people, all the leaders of the nation, the leaders of the community accused and forsook Him. But this guilty thief saw something that no one else beheld in Christ and asked Him for help. Amid all the accusations, here is the accused thief coming through for God. That is truly an amazing story.

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Let It Pass

Be not swift to take offense, let it pass.

Anger is a foe to sense, let it pass.

Brood not darkly for a wrong which will disappear ere long,

Rather sing this cheery song, let it pass.

Echo not an angry word, let it pass.

Think how often you have erred, let it pass.

Any vulgar souls that live, man condemns without reprieve,

'Tis the noble who forgives, let it pass.

If for the good you've taken ill, let it pass.

Oh be kind and gentle still, let it pass.

Time at last makes all things straight, let us not resent but wait,

And our triumph shall be great, let it pass.

Bid your anger to depart, let it pass.

Take these homely words to heart, let it pass.

Follow not the common throng, better to be wronged than wrong,

Therefore sing the cheery song, let it pass, let it pass.

—Unknown

The above poem points out the examples of how we should react to accusations. By acting this way, we are practicing faith, trusting that God will take care of us. God always operates on balanced books. He will see to it that the accusations that come to us will work out for our best good and for the good of the accuser.

In *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, Ellen G. White Comments, vol. 3, pages 1162, 1163, we discover the steps that accusations bring to cause disunity in the church, and in any organization. *“Brethren sometimes associate together for years, and they think they can trust those they know so well just as they would trust members of their own family. There is a freedom and confidence in this association which could not exist between those not of the same faith. This is very pleasant while mutual faith and brotherly love last; but let the ‘accuser of the brethren’ gain admittance to the heart of one of these men, controlling the mind and the imagination, and jealousies are created, suspicion and envy are harbored; and he who supposed himself secure in the love and friendship of his brother, finds himself mistrusted and his motives misjudged. The false brother forgets his own human frailties, forgets his obligation to think and speak no evil lest he dishonor God and wound Christ in the person of His saints, and every defect that can be thought of or imagined is commented upon unmercifully, and the character of a brother is misrepresented.”*

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mented as dark and questionable.

“There is a betrayal of sacred trust. The things spoken in brotherly confidence are repeated and misrepresented; and every word, every action, however innocent and well-meaning, is scrutinized by the cold, jealous criticism of those who were thought too noble, too honorable to take the least advantage of friendly association or brotherly trust. Hearts are closed to mercy, judgment, and the love of God; and the cold, sneering, contemptuous spirit which Satan manifests toward his victim is revealed.

“The Saviour of the world was treated thus, and we are exposed to the influence of the same malicious spirit. The time has come when it is not safe to put confidence in a friend or brother.

“As in the days of Christ spies were on His track, so they are on ours now. If Satan can employ professed believers to act as accusers of the brethren, he is greatly pleased; for those who do this are just as truly serving him as was Judas when he betrayed Christ, although they may be doing it ignorantly. Satan is no less active now than in Christ’s day, and those who lend themselves to do his work will represent his spirit.

“Floating rumors are frequently the destroyers of unity among brethren. There are some who watch with open mind and ears to catch flying scandal. They gather up little incidents which may be trifling in themselves, but which are repeated and exaggerated until a man is made an offense for a word. Their motto seems to be, ‘Report and we will report it. ‘These tale-bearers are doing the devil’s work with surprising fidelity, little knowing how offensive their course is to God.... The door of the mind should be closed against ‘they say’ or ‘I have heard.’ Why should we not, instead of allowing jealousy or evil-surmising to come into our hearts, go to our brethren, and, after frankly but kindly setting before them the things we have heard detrimental to their character and influence, pray with and for them? While we cannot love and fellowship with those who are bitter enemies of Christ, we should cultivate the spirit of meekness and love that characterized our Master, a love that thinketh no evil and is not easily provoked” (The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, Ellen G White Comments, vol. 3, page 1163; emphasis supplied).

Notice one place here in the previous reading, that it is not safe to put confidence in a friend or a brother. We need to continue to grow in our friendships and our trusts and use good judgment as to how much confidential information we share with each other.

But at the same time, notice this quote entitled “The Value of a Friend” from The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary, volume 3, page 1163,

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“Things will go wrong with every one, sadness and discouragement press every soul; then a personal presence, a friend who will comfort and impart strength, will turn back the darts of the enemy that are aimed to destroy. Christian friends are not half as plentiful as they should be. In hours of temptation, in a crisis, what a value is a true friend! Satan at such times sends along his agents to cause the trembling limbs to stumble; but the true friends who will counsel, who will impart magnetic hopefulness, the calming faith that uplifts the soul, ...oh, such a help is worth more than precious pearls!” (emphasis supplied).

When we have friends who are being accused, that is the time they need us the most. We can stand by them and encourage them, and let them know that we don't think those things are true. If the accusations **are** true, we can do what we can to help and comfort them, not accusing, condemning, or neglecting them. If accused, how special is that friend who will “be there” for us, even if we are wrong.

In The Great Controversy, pages 519, 520, we read, *“There has ever been a class professing godliness, who, instead of following on to know the truth, make it their religion to seek some fault of character or error of faith in those with whom they do not agree. Such are Satan's right-hand helpers. Accusers of the brethren are not few, and they are always active when God is at work and His servants are rendering Him true homage. They will put a false coloring upon the words and acts of those who love and obey the truth. They will represent the most earnest, zealous, self-denying servants of Christ as deceived or deceivers. It is their work to misrepresent the motives of every true and noble deed, to circulate insinuations, and arouse suspicion in the minds of the inexperienced. In every conceivable manner they will seek to cause that which is pure and righteous to be regarded as foul and deceptive. But none need be deceived concerning them. It may be readily seen whose children they are, whose example they follow, and whose work they do. 'Ye shall know them by their fruits' (Matt. 7:16). Their course resembles that of Satan, the envenomed slanderer, 'the accuser of the brethren'” (emphasis supplied).*

The new phrase there, “*accuser of the brethren,*” is a quotation from the Bible, which is in Revelation 12:10: *“And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night.”*

Further, Biblical mention is found in Zechariah 3:1, 2: *“Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him. And the Lord said to Satan, ‘The*

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Lord rebuke you, O Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” (RSV). Joshua is standing before the angel and before God in judgment, as we all will be, and the devil is right there to accuse him and us. The accusations are all true because we’ve all made mistakes. Accusing is not part of our work; this is the devil’s work. He’s accusing Joshua, and God rebukes him. God doesn’t want us to accuse each other, either.

Stoning System Continued Today

In Old Testament times, there were some offenses punishable by death. The punishment dealt out was by stoning. This “stoning system” has been used to vividly illustrate, the harmful effects of accusations and gossip.

“I had a dream. I saw A in close conversation with men and with ministers. He adroitly would make statements born of suspicion and imagination to draw them out, and then would gain expression from them. I saw him clap his hands over something very eagerly. I felt a pang of anguish at heart as I saw this going on. I saw in my dream yourself and B in conversation with him. You made statements to him which he seemed to grasp with avidity, and close his hand over something. I then saw him go to his room, and there upon the floor was a pile of stones systematically laid up, stone upon stone. He placed the additional stones on the pile and counted them up. Every stone had a name—some report gathered up—and every stone was numbered.

“The young man who often instructs me came and looked upon the pile of stones with grief and indignation, and inquired [of A] what he had and what he supposed to do with them. A looked up with a sharp, gratified laugh. ‘These are mistakes of C. I am going to stone him with them, stone him to death.’ The young man said, ‘You are bringing back the stoning system, are you? You are worse than the ancient Pharisees. Who gave you this work to do? The Lord raised you up, the Lord entrusted you with a special work. The Lord has sustained you in a most remarkable manner, but it was not for you to degrade your powers for this kind of work. Satan is an accuser of the brethren. ... You have a higher calling, a more important work. Leave all such work of gathering stones for the enemies of God’s law. You brethren must love one another, or you are not the children of the day, but of darkness” (Manuscript Releases, vol. 12, p. 10-11; emphasis supplied).

The Lights Come On

Another graphic illustration shows the effect of our words and action on each other. In Testimonies for the Church, volume 9, pages 28, 29, is outlined the

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story of two maps. The first map Ellen White saw in vision, *“I saw jets of light shining from cities and villages, and from the high places and low places of the earth. God’s word was obeyed, and as a result there were memorials for Him in every city and village. His truth was proclaimed throughout the world.*

“Then this map was removed and another put in its place. On it light was shining from a few places only. The rest of the world was in darkness, with only a glimmer of light here and there. Our instructor said: ‘This darkness is the result of men’s following their own course. They have cherished hereditary and cultivated tendencies toward evil. They have made questioning and faultfinding and accusing the chief business of their lives. Their hearts are not right with God. They have hidden their light under a bushel.’ If every soldier of Christ had done his duty, if every watchman on the walls of Zion had given the trumpet a certain sound, the world might ere this have heard the message of warning. But the work is years behind. While men have slept, Satan has stolen a march on us” (emphasis supplied).

Notice the reference to the two maps; one has lights everywhere, lights in every village. There are very few lights on the second map where there is cherished a spirit of questioning, faultfinding, and accusing. These traits have taken the lights out of the map.

If we really want to be evangelistic as Christian people, we need to cherish the spirit of love and concern for each other, not accusing and finding fault. Then we will have a profound positive evangelistic effect on others.

Notice this reference in Christ’s Object Lessons, pages 340, 341: *“That our influence should be a savor of death unto death is a fearful thought; yet this is possible. Many who profess to gather with Christ are scattering from Him. This is why the church is so weak. Many indulge freely in criticism and accusing. By giving expression to suspicion, jealousy, and discontent, they yield themselves as instruments to Satan. Before they realize what they are doing, the adversary has through them accomplished his purpose”* (emphasis supplied). Why is the church so weak today? Here we have the answer: they yield themselves to suspicion, jealousy, discontent, criticism, and accusation.

In John, chapter 17, Christ prayed for; unity among His people here on earth. This closeness would be an example to the world. It seems this lack of unity is one of the biggest reasons why the Christian church is so ineffective at present. Instead of unity, there is so much accusation and misunderstanding among our people.

“If we have a sense of the long-suffering of God toward us, we

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shall not be found judging or accusing others. When Christ was living on the earth, how surprised His associates would have been, if, after becoming acquainted with Him, they had heard Him speak one word of accusation, of faultfinding, or of impatience. Let us never forget that those who love Him are to represent Him in character” (The Ministry of Healing, p. 489; emphasis supplied).

Jesus never spoke one word of accusation. The previous reference says that those who accuse others are actuated by the spirit of Satan.

There is a promise also found in The Ministry of Healing on page 90, *“The souls that turn to Him for refuge, Jesus lifts above the accusing and the strife of tongues”* (emphasis supplied). A promise that when we are subjects of accusations of any kind, the Lord will help us to rise above these and have a plan and strategy to cope with them. Jesus never accused; *“Jesus is our example in all things”* (Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 50; emphasis supplied).

Paul in his experiences, when he was preaching, ran into a similar experience: *“Jealousy, evil surmising, and accusation had closed the hearts of many of the Corinthian believers against the full working of the Holy Spirit which searched all things, yea, the deep things of God”* (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 271; emphasis supplied). Accusations will undo the work of loving relationships and much of what God purposes to do on this earth in evangelism.

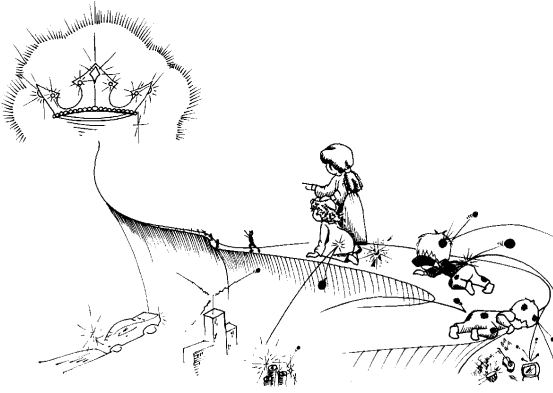
“More love is needed, more frankness, less suspicion, less evil thinking. We need to be less ready to blame and accuse. It is this that is so offensive to God” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 212; emphasis supplied). What really hurts God is our accusations against each other.

“Is there no law of kindness to be observed? Have Christians been authorized of God to criticize and condemn one another? Is it honorable, or even honest, to win from the lips of another, under the guise of friendship, secrets which have been entrusted to him, and then turn the knowledge thus gained to his injury? Is it Christian charity to gather up every floating report, to unearth everything that will cast suspicion on the character of another, and then take delight in using it to injure him? Satan exults when he can defame or wound a follower of Christ. He is ‘the accuser of the brethren.’ Shall Christians aid him in his work?” (ibid. vol. 5, p. 95; emphasis supplied).

Black Balls

There is an interesting story by Ellen White in volume 1 of Testimonies for the Church about accusations: *“I then saw a company pressing through the crowd*

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with their eyes intently fixed upon the heavenly crown. As they earnestly urged their way through the disorderly crowd, angels attended them, and made room for them to advance. As they neared the heavenly crown, the light emanating from it shone upon them and around them, dispelling their darkness, and growing clearer and brighter, until they seemed to be transformed, and resembled the angels. They cast not one lingering look upon the earthly crown. Those who were in pursuit of the earthly mocked them, and threw black balls after them. They did them no injury while their eyes were fixed upon the heavenly crown, but those who turned their attention to the black balls were stained by them. The following scripture was presented before me, ‘Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth’” (p. 349; emphasis supplied).

The “black balls” were thrown from one group who were seeking the earthly crown, toward a group who were seeking the heavenly crown. What were these black balls? *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 696, explains what they are: “*Angels flee from the dwelling where words of discord are exchanged, where gratitude is almost a stranger to the heart, and censure leaps like black balls to the lips, spotting the garments, defiling the Christian character*” (emphasis supplied).

These black balls, then, are censure, criticism, and accusations which spot our garments **only** if we pay attention to them. We now have a clue that would save us from these black balls. We do not give them any attention or become offended. We keep our eyes on the heavenly crown when under attack.

“*Every man who praises himself, brushes the lustre from his best efforts. A truly noble character will not stop to resent the false accusations of enemies; every word spoken falls harmless; for it strengthens that which it cannot overthrow. The Lord would have His people closely united with Himself, the God of patience and of love. All should manifest in their lives the love of Christ. Let none venture to belittle the reputation or position of another; this is egotism. It is saying, ‘I am so much better and more capable than you, that God gives me the preference. You are not of much account’”* (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 607; emphasis supplied). (See also chapters 16, “Treasures in the Trash,” and 17 “Hastening Our Lord’s Return” for more

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ways to prepare the way for the return of Jesus.)

Consider the words of this poem by Margaret Bruner, entitled “The Monk and the Peasant.” My wife, Linda, added a few lines about the joy of forgiveness.

The Monk and the Peasant

*A peasant once unthinkingly spread lies about a friend
But later found the rumors false and hoped to make amends.
He sought the counsel of a monk, a man esteemed and wise
Who heard the peasant’s story through and felt he must advise.*

*The kind monk said, “If you would have a mind again at peace,
I have a plan whereby you may from trouble seek release.
Go fill a bag with chicken down and to each door yard go,
And lay one fluffy feather where the streams of gossip flow.”*

*The peasant did as he was told and then to the monk returned
Elated that his penance was a thing so quickly earned.
“Not yet,” the old monk sternly said, “Take up your bag once more
And gather up the feathers that you placed at every door.”*

*The peasant, eager to atone, went hastening to obey
But not one feather met his sight, the wind had blown them all away.*

—Margaret Bruner

*His feathers then forever free, released upon the wind
Brought him dismay and sorrow once he recognized his sin.*

*The man had learned, to his dismay, his unkind words could end
The precious love and friendship, the trust of his dear friend
His mother said, “Boys flying kites haul in their white winged birds,
But you can’t do that way when you are flying words.”*

*Then helplessly, the peasant to his friend, the monk, did say
“I never shall forget the hopeless lesson learned today.”
The monk said, “Courage brother mine, there is yet hope—return
And ask forgiveness of your friend, so prove the lesson learned.”*

*With shame he shuffled slowly back, knocked at his friend’s abode,
Confessed his accusation, and there left his guilty load.
At first his friend was angry, but knew he must forgive,
For he, too, had been guilty but now could, in freedom, live.*

*“Arise, my friend, it was not me that you offended here
But Christ Himself, the crucified, who sheds another tear.”
The accused and the accuser then knelt in one accord
To plead for the forgiveness of their understanding Lord.*

—Linda Franklin

Please consider the references included under “For Further Study.”



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Perhaps you will conclude, as I did, that there is little, if any, room for placing an accusation against anyone; be it true or false. There are many have advocated reform and have lived it many years. Making changes in our lives that would eliminate accusations is a call to reform for all. **It is reform for reformers.** This cannot be neglected if we are to survive.

In the next chapter we will consider a problem that results from accusations toward church leadership. Groups of accusers form, focusing their attention on the church's shortcomings. These "splinter groups" criticize and, in the name of reformation, do great harm. Certainly we have no need to accuse anyone. The devil does it just fine through those who are willing to accept his principles of condemnation!

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, book 1, pages 411, 412

"No one is able to explain the Scriptures without the aid of the Holy Spirit. But when you take up the Word of God with a humble, teachable heart, the angels of God will be by your side to impress you with the evidences of the truth. When the Spirit of God rests upon you, there will be no feeling of envy or jealousy in examining another's position; there will be no spirit of accusation and criticism, such as Satan inspired in the hearts of the Jewish leaders against Christ" (emphasis supplied).

The Publishing Ministry, page 309

"The Lord lives and reigns. Soon He will arise in majesty to shake terribly the earth. A special message is now to be borne, a message that will pierce the spiritual darkness and convict and convert souls. 'Haste thee, flee for thy life,' is the call to be given to those dwelling in sin. We must now be terribly in earnest. We have not a moment to spend in criticism and accusation. Let those who have done this in the past fall on their knees in prayer, and let them beware how they put their words and their plans in the place of God's words and God's plans" (emphasis supplied).

In Heavenly Places, page 288

"When the Holy Spirit moves upon human minds all petty complaints and accusations between man and his fellow man will be put away. The bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will shine into the chambers of the mind and heart. In our worship of God there will be no distinction between rich and poor, white and black. All prejudice will be melted away. When we approach God it will be as one brotherhood. We are pilgrims and strangers, bound for a

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better country, even a heavenly. There all pride, all accusation, all self-deception, will forever have an end. Every mask will be laid aside, and we shall 'see him as he is' ” (emphasis supplied).

Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 339

“Zacchaeus declared: ‘If I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore to him fourfold.’ You could at least have made efforts to correct your acts of injustice to your fellow men. You cannot make every case right, for some whom you have injured have gone into their graves, and the account stands registered against you. In these cases the best you can do is bring a trespass offering to the altar of the Lord, and He will accept and pardon you. But where you can, you should make reparation to the wronged ones” (emphasis supplied).

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 520

“Even under false accusation those who are in the right can afford to be calm and considerate. God is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misinterpreted by men, and we can safely leave our case in His hands. He will as surely vindicate the cause of those who put their trust in Him as He searched out the guilt of Achan. Those who are actuated by the spirit of Christ will possess that charity which suffers long and is kind” (emphasis supplied).

Manuscript Releases, volume 18, pages 361, 362

“Every heart that is controlled by these principles in 1896 will be loyal. When those who are in God’s service resort to accusation, they are adopting Satan’s principles to cast out Satan. It will never work. Satan will work. He is working upon human minds by his crooked principles. These will be adopted and acted upon by those who claim to be loyal and true to God’s government. How shall we know that they are untrue, disloyal? ‘By their fruits ye shall know them’ ” (emphasis supplied).

The Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, October 24, 1893

“O that the mercy and love of God were cultivated by every member of our churches! O that brotherly love might be revived, never to wane, but to grow more and more fervent! It is true that words of admonition and counsel are frequently needed in the church, but they are never to be given by those who are filled with suspicion and distrust, who are eager to weigh others in the scales of their own opinions. No one can do the work of reproof and counseling in the way that Christ would have it done, whose heart is not filled with

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peace and love. We are near the end, there is no time to waste in educating ourselves in the line of accusation of brethren, and we are not to take up a reproach against our neighbor. Deal tenderly and graciously with every soul, and especially deal tenderly with those who are liable to err. They, of all others, need your help the most. Never take up a report against a brother or a neighbor, or harbor evil surmisings against him. Thou shalt not imagine evil in thy heart against thy brother” (emphasis supplied).

The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald, August 28, 1883

“Envy and jealousy loose the blood-hounds of suspicion, and minds that love the sport join in hunting down the fair fame of Christ’s ambassadors. An unjust insinuation is started, a conjecture is set afloat; and it gathers strength as it passes from one to another of those who desire it to be true. These evil reports are received with great satisfaction by some who have been reproved for heinous sins or grave defects of character. They smarted under the reproof, and yet did not reform. Now their consciences are eased; they learn that the reprover cannot be trusted; somebody has circulated a damaging report; somebody has brought an accusation. They leave the distasteful work of caring for their own souls and repenting of their own sins, and climb upon the judgment seat to condemn another” (emphasis supplied).

The Home Missionary, September 1, 1894

“He who is a follower of Christ will distinguish between the sacred and the common, and will cling to the true evidence of a man’s character and work, for Christ has said, ‘By their fruits ye shall know them.’ The Christian will move forward amid all manner of opposition. He will despise flattery because it is born of Satan. He will detest accusation because it is the weapon of the evil one. They will not cherish envy or indulge in self-exaltation because these are the characteristics of the adversary of God and man. They will not be found as spies; for Satan used the despised Jews in doing this work against Jesus. They will not follow their brethren with a flood of questions as the Jews followed Christ for the purpose of entangling him in his words, and provoking him to speak of things in order that they might make him an offender for a word” (emphasis supplied).

Patriarchs and Prophets, page 417

“The water gushed forth in abundance to satisfy the host. But a great wrong had been done. Moses had spoken from irritated feeling; his words were

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an expression of human passion rather than of holy indignation because God had been dishonored. 'Hear now, ye rebels,' he said. This accusation was true, but even truth is not to be spoken in passion or impatience. When God had bidden Moses to charge upon Israel their rebellion, the words had been painful to him, and hard for them to bear, yet God had sustained him in delivering the message. But when he took it upon himself to accuse them, he grieved the Spirit of God and wrought only harm to the people. His lack of patience and self-control was evident. Thus the people were given occasion to question whether his past course had been under the direction of God, and to excuse their own sins. Moses, as well as they, had offended God. His course, they said, had from the first been open to criticism and censure.

They had now found the pretext which they desired for rejecting all the reproofs that God had sent them through His servant” (emphasis supplied).

The Desire of Ages, page 354

“The servants of Christ will be brought before the great men of the world, who, but for this, might never hear the gospel. The truth has been misrepresented to these men. They have listened to false charges concerning the faith of Christ’s disciples. Often their only means of learning its real character is the testimony of those who are brought to trial for their faith. Under examination these are required to answer, and their judges to listen to the testimony borne. God’s grace will be dispensed to His servants to meet the emergency. ‘It shall be given you,’ says Jesus, ‘in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.’ As the Spirit of God illuminates the minds of His servants, the truth will be presented in its divine power and preciousness. Those who reject the truth will stand to accuse and oppress the disciples. But under loss and suffering, even unto the death, the Lord’s children are to reveal the meekness of their divine Example. Thus will be seen the contrast between Satan’s agents and the representatives of Christ. The Saviour will be lifted up before the rulers and the people” (emphasis supplied).

Education, pages 89 and 90

“If the look that Jesus cast upon him had spoken condemnation instead of pity; if in foretelling the sin He had failed of speaking hope, how dense would have been the darkness that encompassed Peter! How reckless the despair of that tortured soul! In that hour of anguish and self-abhorrence, what could have held him back from the path trodden by Judas? ...

“Human beings, themselves given to evil, are prone to deal untenderly

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with the tempted and the erring. They cannot read the heart, they know not its struggle and pain. Of the rebuke that is love, of the blow that wounds to heal, of the warning that speaks hope, they have need to learn” (emphasis supplied).

The Desire of Ages, page 441

“Christ’s instruction as to the treatment of the erring repeats in more specific form the teaching given to Israel through Moses: ‘Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in anywise rebuke thy neighbour, that thou bear not sin for him’ (Lev. 19:17). That is, if one neglects the duty Christ has enjoined of trying to restore those who are in error and sin, he becomes a partaker in the sin. For evils that we might have checked, we are just as responsible as if we were guilty of the acts ourselves” (emphasis supplied).

Gossip

These six things doth the Lord hate: yea, seven are an abomination unto him: A proud look, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, An heart that deviseth wicked imaginations, feet that be swift in running to mischief, A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren” (Proverbs 6:16-19).

The Upward Look, page 363

“Christians will be tested and tried. But if they are sincerely trying to serve God, strength will be given them for every conflict. They are not to listen to false reports that come to their ears, but are to go straight forward in the path of duty. They are to learn to think for themselves, and their actions are ever to be in accordance with the Word of God. ...

“Often difficulties may be healed by silence. Let the evil talker alone. Go about your work as one who has a sacred trust to fulfill. When you are criticized, move on as one who hears not. Your heart may be wounded; nevertheless, do not allow yourself to be turned aside from your work. Give your time and attention to matters of eternal interest” (emphasis supplied).

Additional references on the subject of gossip:

Education, page 235 (gossip compared to cannibalism)

Fundamentals of Christian Education, page 487 (Christ grieved by gossip)

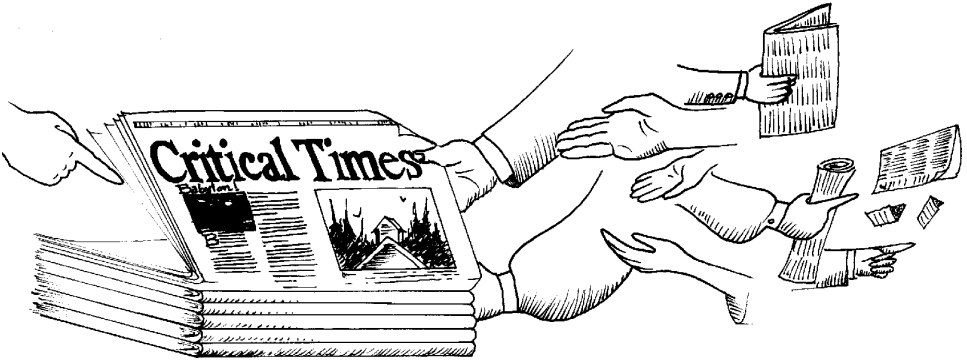
In Heavenly Places, page 88 (counsel about gossip)

Our High Calling, page 359 (we will not escape gossip)

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- Testimonies to Ministers, pages 406, 407 (do not countenance gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, page 185 (souls separated from God by gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, page 185 (what Satan knows about gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 2, page 466 (2/3 of church trials arise from gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 4, page 195 (faith undermined by gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 4, page 607 (strife engendered by gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 57 (gossip closes eyes to what is pure)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 58 (how to prevent gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 94 (gossip actuated by jealousy)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 95 (neglect own soul while gossiping)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 176 (twofold curse of gossip)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, pages 241, 242; (gossip separates close friends)
- Testimonies for the Church, volume 5, page 242 (sin of gossip should not be tolerated)
- That I May Know Him, page 184 (close mind against gossip)
- The Upward Look, page 42 (courage for a victim of gossip)

Chapter Four



Critical Ministry: An Oxymoron?

“Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard” (The Acts of the Apostles, p. 12).

The spirit of criticism is sometimes mislabeled as reformation. We discovered in Chapter Three that we should neither accuse nor be offended. How should we relate to organizations who accuse and criticize, especially when their accusations are aimed at the church?

In Luke 6:37 Jesus says, *“Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.”* According to this verse, if we engage in a spirit of condemnation, we also are condemned. If we want to avoid the spirit of condemnation toward us, we must not condemn anyone else.

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing tells us that the path that we take others over is the path we will have to tread ourselves. *“That which we do to others, whether it be good or evil, will surely react upon ourselves, in blessing or in cursing. Whatsoever we give, we shall receive again”* (p. 136).

Critical Ministry or Supporting Ministry?

In self-supporting work, there are two main groups of people. The first group, now labeled “supporting ministries,” is comprised of organizations and people that work as a support to the church in witnessing to the world field. There are others, “independent ministries,” who feel called upon to take the mistakes and failures of the church to the pulpit. True, there are mistakes and failures in any

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organization, but God has given us a way to handle them personally and responsibly. We are not to carry on a critical ministry or have a condemning attitude, which is the principle of Matthew 18:15-17. If someone in the church does something that offends you, discuss it, but only with that person. Gain your brother if you can. If you can't, and you feel it is a matter of his salvation or life and death, take one or two others to hear him. If this person refuses to listen to anyone, the counsel is to treat him as one who needs to be won to Christ. Take it to the church. These verses give no license for you to let an offense stand between you and fellowship.

John 3:17 states clearly that *“God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved.”*

Romans 2:1 states: *“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”* Brothers and sisters, we need to be very careful how we judge others because the Bible says that, automatically, the things we condemn in others are the very things we do ourselves. Invariably, the path over which we take others is the path we will have to tread. This truth, if followed, saves heartache and pain down the road. Any of us who have been too critical will have to pass over the road of being criticized ourselves. The love of God that has ordained that experience is a most unforgettable lesson book.

“Everyone who has been free to condemn or discourage, will in his own experience be brought over the same ground where he has caused others to pass; he will feel what they have suffered because of his want of sympathy and tenderness” (Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, p. 136; emphasis supplied).

Romans 8:1 says, *“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.”* This verse emphasizes the positive path members of the church should follow. We must walk “after the Spirit.” Ellen G. White elaborates on this pathway of the church in *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 9: *“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and sufficiency.... The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to the ‘principalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God”* (emphasis supplied).

“Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one

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object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard” (ibid., p. 12; emphasis supplied). Why, then, would we ever want to engage in a critical ministry of the very thing that is the closest to the heart of God? It really doesn’t make any spiritual sense. In fact, it is devastating to our own personal spiritual experience. This idea is clearly stated on page 11: “The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only begotten Son” (emphasis supplied).

Isaiah 56:7 tells us what we are to call the church: “*For mine house shall be called an house of prayer.*” Each member is to recognize that God’s church is a house of prayer. It is open to all people, those who criticize and those who don’t. There is a place in every heart to gain victory over this treacherous sin.

Critical ministries are actually supporting Satan’s work. “*Divisions, and even bitter dissensions which would disgrace any worldly community, are common in the churches, because there is so little effort to control wrong feelings, and to repress every word that Satan can take advantage of. As soon as an alienation of feeling arises, the matter is spread before Satan for his inspection, and the opportunity given for him to use his serpentlike wisdom and skill in dividing and destroying the church. There is great loss in every dissension....*

“*Worldlings look on, and jeeringly exclaim, ‘Behold how these Christians hate one another! If this is religion, we do not want it.’ And they look upon themselves and their irreligious characters with great satisfaction. Thus they are confirmed in their impenitence, and Satan exults at his success” (Selected Messages, book 1, p. 123; emphasis supplied). The reason for separating should not be because of our criticism of others. Rather than condemning one another, let us turn our spiritual weapons on the world around us and work toward gaining more souls for the kingdom by bringing them into fellowship with Christ.*

In volume 3 of Testimonies for the Church, Mrs. White expresses severe warnings to those who wish to vent in public feelings of condemnation toward the church in general or toward particular individuals. She says, “*It is worse, far worse, to give expression to the feelings in a large gathering, firing at anyone and everyone, than to go to the individuals who may have done wrong and personally reprove them. The offensiveness of this severe, overbearing, denunciatory talk in a large gathering is of as much more grave a character in the sight of God than giving personal, individual reproof as the numbers are greater and the censure more general. It is ever easier to give expression to the feelings before a congregation, because there are many present, than*

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to go to the erring and, face to face with them, openly, frankly, plainly state their wrong course. But bringing into the house of God strong feelings against individuals, and making all the innocent as well as the guilty suffer, is a manner of labor which God does not sanction and which does harm rather than good. It has too often been the case that criticizing and denunciatory discourses have been given before a congregation. These do not encourage a spirit of love in the brethren. They do not tend to make them spiritually minded and lead them to holiness and heaven, but a spirit of bitterness is aroused in hearts” (pp. 507, 508; emphasis supplied).

God never sanctions a critical ministry. If the spirit of God dwells in our hearts, His love is perfected in us and we will never indulge in a spirit of condemnation or criticism. The Bible in 1 John 4:7-12 tells us that love is of God and if we do not love others, we do not know Him.

Sometimes people excuse their criticism because they think they are going to set things right, especially regarding leadership that they consider weak and ineffective. But we are told to leave this to God. *“There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port”* (Selected Messages, book 2, p. 390; emphasis supplied).

Campaigns to criticize the leadership of our church need not be made public, because condemnation and criticism only make their burdens heavier. Let us support them and help all we can so that unity and the grace of Christ may be found in each heart.

“Let the men standing as watchmen and as shepherds of the flock proclaim the solemn truth, sound the notes of warning to all people, nations, and tongues. Let them be living representatives of the truth they advocate, and honor God’s law by strict and holy compliance with its requirements, walking before the Lord in purity” (ibid. p. 378). Who among us want to be watchmen on the walls of Zion? Let those, then, urge the true reformation—that of conversion and coming back to God, not criticizing and causing dissension and division.

When people have true conversion and loyalty to Christ, they will see that *“the church is organized for service; and in a life of service to Christ, connection with the church is one of the first steps. Loyalty to Christ demands the faithful performance of church duties. This is an important part of one’s training; and in a church imbued with the Master’s life, it will lead directly to*

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effort for the world without” (Education, pp. 268, 269; emphasis supplied). Can you see the vision? As we become connected with Christ, we do not focus on criticism and condemnation of each other, but in the united effort of reaching the world for Christ.

How to Deal With Error

Elder W. D. Frazee says it this way in his book Another Ark to Build, page 126: “When God chooses men to deal with errors among His people, He desires them to go about this work in the right way, and the right way does not include circulating reports that are derogatory to the church and its leaders. But this is the very thing the criticizers do. When a leader makes a mistake, they pounce upon it like a buzzard on a corpse and call all the other buzzards to come and enjoy it with them. If we love the church as Jesus loves it, we will not be eager to promote reports that reflect on the church and its leadership or even listen to them.”

But what happens if the reports are true? Have we any inspired counsel on this? Elder Frazee also quotes from Letter 48, written by Ellen G. White to a church elder. “*You have undertaken to point out the defects of reformers and pioneers in the cause of God. No one should trace the lines which you have done. You have made public the errors and defects of the people of God, and in so doing have dishonored God and Jesus Christ. I would not for my right arm have given to the world that which you have written. You have not been conscious of what would be the influence of your work.... Let God by inspiration trace the errors of His people for their instruction and admonition; but let not finite lips or pen dwell upon those features of the experience of God’s people that will have a tendency to confuse and cloud the mind.... God will charge those who unwisely expose the mistakes of their brethren with sin of far greater magnitude than He will charge the one who makes the misstep. Criticism and condemnation of the brethren are counted as criticism and condemnation of Christ*” (Selected Messages, book 3, pp. 343-345; emphasis supplied). So those who criticize others are in greater sin than those whose sin is being magnified!

How much more plain can it be? Why would we ever want to criticize our church, each other, or Christ? Still there are groups who do this, mistakenly labeling themselves as reformers. Mrs. White has this to say of them: “*There is a class who profess to believe the truth, but who cherish secret feelings of dissatisfaction against those who bear the burdens in this work.... Such readily receive, cherish, and circulate reports which have no foundation in truth, to destroy the influence of those who are engaged in this work. All who wish to*

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draw off from the body will have opportunity. Something will arise to test everyone. The great sifting time is just before us. The jealous and faultfinding, who are watching for evil, will be shaken out” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 1, p. 251; emphasis supplied).

When we criticize and condemn, we are setting ourselves up to be shaken out of the church! We must give a solemn and clear warning about this—this is not the spirit or the type of activity in which God wants to see us engaged. The sad part is that those who want only to criticize and condemn not only destroy themselves, but may also destroy others’ chances of heaven.

Mrs. White also elaborates on the end result of criticism. She writes, *“There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members of the church. One influence is working for the purification of the church, and the other for the corrupting of the people of God.... Although there are evils existing in the church, and will be until the end of the world, the church in these last days is to be the light of the world that is polluted and demoralized by sin.... There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places; and for any man to call the attention of the world and other churches to this church, denouncing her as Babylon, is to do a work in harmony with him who is the accuser of the brethren”* (The Faith I Live By, p. 305; emphasis supplied). If we find ourselves involved in that sort of work, we must consider ourselves to be in league with Satan as identified in Revelation 12:10.

Tearing Down or Building Up?

We are not to turn our accusations against the church; rather, we are to join forces with her against the tide of evil.

“Those who start up to proclaim a message on their own individual responsibility, who, while claiming to be taught and led of God, still make it their special work to tear down that which Christ has been for years building up, are not doing the will of God. Be it known that these men are on the side of the great deceiver. Believe them not” (Testimonies to Ministers, p. 51; emphasis supplied). We see pamphlets and hear messages that tear down the church. We should not to give ear to or read these materials.

In the October 3, 1893, issue of the Review and Herald, Mrs. White again affirms that the remnant church is not to be identified with Babylon. She wrote: *“The Lord has sent messages of warning and entreaty, messages of reproof and rebuke, and they have not been in vain. But we have never had a message that the Lord would disorganize the church. We have never had the prophecy con-*

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cerning Babylon applied to the Seventh-day Adventist Church, or been informed that the 'loud' cry consisted in calling God's people to come out of her; for this is not God's plan concerning Israel" (emphasis supplied).

Angel Tears

Home is where the angels linger
Listening to the words we say.
Are they saddened by our anger—
Happy when they hear us pray?
Angels smile at calm and order
Joyous, heavenward they fly.
But a harsh, unloving spirit,
Always makes the angels cry.

Does your angel smile beside you
In the Sabbath meeting-place?
Whispering fears and cruel doubtings
Put a tear upon his face.
Worldly musings, love of pleasure,
Those who love and make a lie,
Bickering brother's tongues of fire
Wound and make the angels cry.

Sickness, death can leave you weeping,
Premature those last good-byes.
When you're lonely, torn by sorrow,
That is when your angel cries.
All too soon, time will be over,
When the angels in the sky
Bring the Lord to claim His children—
Nevermore will angels cry.

—Linda Franklin

Tithe

It is clear that we do not have the message to leave the church. Let us not give heed to seducing spirits that would suggest otherwise. We can discern mistakes in the church, but that is not the reason to send our tithe money to any other organization. "Cannot you see that it is not best under any circumstances to withhold your tithes and offerings because you are not in harmony with everything that your brethren do? The tithes and offerings are not the property of man, but are to be used in doing a certain work for God; unworthy ministers might receive some of the means thus raised; but dare anyone, because of this, withhold from the treasury and

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brave the curse of God. I dare not” In *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 74; (emphasis supplied).

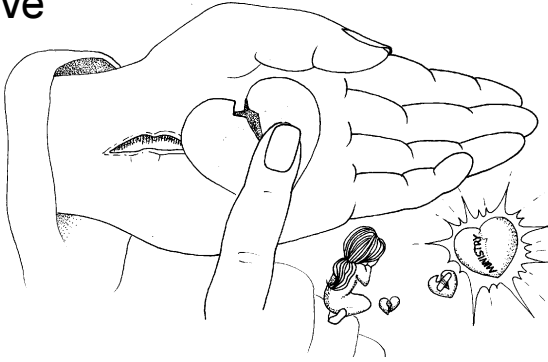
We often hear from various pulpits and papers that because there is so much evil in the church we should withhold our tithes. Each of us must seriously reconsider this position advocated by certain organizations that engage in critical ministry.

The Lord needs each of us to be a supporting, not a critical ministry. Notice this special counsel from *Counsels to Writers and Editors*: “*Do not understand me as approving of the recent action of the General Conference Association, of which you write; but in regard to that matter it is right that I should speak to them. They have many difficulties to meet, and if they err in their action, the Lord knows it all, and can overrule all for the good of those who trust in Him*” (pp. 156, 157; emphasis supplied). God is in charge of His church. His work is to lead His church. Our work is to go to one another when we see a problem, but not to accuse, criticize, or condemn. Ellen White knew many more errors in the church than we do, yet she maintained her connection with the church.

“We cannot now enter into any new organization; for this would mean apostasy from the truth” (*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 390).

We are survivors only as we trust God to overrule every mistake for good. Why would we want to be an exception to Romans 8:28 (*all things work together for good*), when the rubber of our heart hits the rocky road of life? What about those painful personal experiences which tend to challenge our trust? The following chapter is a discussion of how others have not only survived, but have allowed God to transform the broken pieces of their lives into healing ministries.

Chapter Five



Broken in Heart: A Purpose in Pain

by Linda Franklin

“The tears of the penitent are only the raindrops that precede the sunshine of holiness” (The Desire of Ages, p. 300).

Harry brought more joy to the angels than any of us realized. After the altar call at our old-fashioned gospel meetings, adults and children alike would ask each other, “Who stood tonight?”

“Just Harry.” Our group shrug confirmed the ineffective effort of our minister to save anyone’s soul that night. Harry was a sort of consolation prize; he had a slight mental handicap, but he was a friendly soul with innocent puppy-dog eyes framed in a timeless face. It was hard to tell if Harry was an aged 30-year-old or a well-kept man in his 60s. He was always clean; his slacks and white shirt sharply pressed, his rosy cheeks and balding head always shiny, as if to overcompensate for his shortcomings.

Harry’s dedicated caregiver, an ancient mother in Israel, always sat in the back row. Not so, her son. Chin forward, head listing slightly starboard, Harry clutched his tattered Bible tightly with both hands in front of him, giving the impression of being propelled to his pew by the Word itself. His broad, reverent smile almost made one forget his hunched shoulders and deformed body.

Though I don’t remember hearing him speak, Harry must have understood the minister’s words, for he was always ready to stand when the altar call was extended. I would sometimes muster up enough nerve to sit at the side of the room where I could watch Harry, though I was painfully shy and was uncomfortable walking to the front. But it was worth it, once in a while, to watch Harry. He would direct his fixed smile at the speaker from the first word of the sermon and then, when he knew the call was about to be made, Harry would lift his eyes

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toward heaven, an angelic glow irradiating his otherwise homely features. Then Harry would stand up, clutching his Bible as if he knew what he was doing.

Though I tried focusing where Harry looked, I could see nothing—except the fear that held me in my seat, keeping me from standing or saying anything about my convictions. For instance, I knew I should have told the other children my age who mocked Harry behind his back, “You shouldn’t laugh at Harry.” But I didn’t.

The sticks and stones of thoughtlessness others directed by a knowing glance, a shake of the head, a cluck of the tongue behind Harry’s back never bothered him; Harry had no enemies because he acknowledged none. He was a committed Christian. Like Stephen of old, he chose to look above and beyond, toward heaven. I can see that clearly now, though the truth evaded me at the time. Harry would be old now, but if he can still hear and if he can still grip his Bible, I am sure it is still pulling him to his feet answering altar calls.

I had forgotten about Harry, but as I sat quietly considering the subject of submission recently a thought-picture of Harry sped across my inmost soul, and it suddenly seemed clear to me that Harry, better than all the rest of us at those old gospel meetings, had understood surrender. His weaknesses were obvious, his strength was in surrender. Harry was happy in service. He always smiled, his rosy cheeks glowed more with the joy of service than with the stifling summer heat of the big tent where he was regularly found washing thousands of dishes at our yearly conventions.

In Jesus’ sermon on the mount, in Matthew 5, the first people to whom He directs the attention of the multitude are the poor in spirit: “*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven*” (verse 3). Many times I have come to that place in life where the Lord has arranged for me to know the blessing of brokenness. It is as if He is saying to me, “My child, take My Spirit and you will not have to continue to sacrifice your own.”

Shadows in the Valley

Our son’s burn accident was the most consuming fire of surrender we have yet endured. He was only 8 when he suffered third-degree burns over a significant portion of his body. As parents, Jere and I almost begged his physician to promise us that he would live. As Jed’s life hung in the balance, I finally came to the place of surrender where I knew I had to sacrifice my will for His and say those dreadful words, “Not my will but Thine be done.” As soon as I breathed this prayer, my sorrow was reduced to a bearable level. Today, whenever I am tempted to grasp for my “rights,” I have only to look at my son’s scars to realize the price my Father paid to claim my will, my rights, my all.

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Unless I had known that valley of surrender those many years ago, I could not have experienced the mountaintop of gratitude for the sacrifice God made for me in allowing the death of His only Son.

Jed's scars keep me in a constant attitude of gratefulness for intervening in what could have been a tragedy. What my heart has borne helps me to lift up others who suffer. Just the other day, as he was chauffeuring us to church, Jed's upbeat philosophy of life emerged when he observed, "Mom, have you ever noticed how the shadows always point to the rainbows?" Instantly, I was back in the valley of the shadow of death holding his little burned hands in mine, desperately wanting to put the words of his survival into my Father's mouth. But, it was in that valley where, instead, I came to the cross and saw a weeping Father give His only begotten Son to an unappreciative world. And, because of my Father's heart of sacrifice, I have a chance at immortality. Truly, tears of submission compose the rainbows of serenity.

Jed's observations about the shadows pointing to the rainbows launched me on an in-depth study of the power in surrender as revealed in the light of the cross. The light of the cross may help explain that place of brokenness to which we all must come before we know the joy of victory:

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10).

Life's Negatives: Developing a Perfect Picture of His Image

Like me, you may have had the privilege of having one of those sparkling acquaintances, maybe a friend or a child, who blessed your life through their acceptance of a physical, emotional, or mental challenge. Is there a brighter torch for truth than a heartbroken, heart-healed warrior for Christ? Far from acting as if they expect others to treat them as a hero or martyr, they live above the darkness, blessing others with the atmosphere of heaven by living beyond their pain. Like Harry, these gems, because of their beauty in surrender, send a gleam of hope from heaven's gates to those who reach toward them in times of despair. Faith is borne of adversity—when we trust the hand of God to dip us in the solution He sees will best develop His image in our dark lives.

"The fact that we are called upon to endure trial shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop" (The Ministry of Healing, p. 471; emphasis supplied).

"When trials and tribulations come to you know that they are sent in order that you may receive from the Lord of glory renewed strength and increased humility, so that He may safely bless and support and uphold you.... We

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miss very much because we do not grasp the blessings that may be ours in our afflictions. All our sufferings and sorrows, all our temptations and trials, all our sadness and griefs, all our persecutions and privations, and in short all things, work together for our good. All experiences and circumstances are God's workmen whereby good is brought to us" (My Life Today, p. 185; emphasis supplied).

Georgia Senator Max Clelland, triple amputee and veteran of Vietnam, in his book *Strong in the Broken Places*, assures us, "It is possible to become strong in the broken places ... most people discover that adversity does make them stronger."

Becky Conway was only 15 when she lost her leg to cancer. But Jesus had been the center of her life, the "trunk of her tree" as she puts it. When she lost her leg, it was merely a pruning of a limb, so to speak, that seemed to cause the nutrients of her soul to concentrate within the remaining portion of her body, resulting in a deeper and stronger relationship with God. It was an exposure to the world of others' pain such as she had never known. At the time she was hospitalized, Becky befriended a young lady who was dying of intestinal cancer; the same cancer which had taken her sister the year before and from which her father was also suffering. They had in-depth discussions about living and dying, with each feeling sorry for the other's lot. By accepting their own plight, the girls made the burden much easier for their parents knowing that whatever happened, they were each resigned and even joyful in the will of God.

Becky's father, Jim, says, "It is out of the experiences of life, when God comforts us, that we learn to comfort others. We can't continue to say, 'God, get me out of this!' It is through the experiences God allows to come to us that He is saying, 'Time to grow up, Jim.' And we have only two choices: to become angry at God, continue to try to control each crisis, praying against His will, or accept the working out of God's will. Like Job, we need to admit that we don't know all of the purposes God has in mind, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him' (Job 13:15). Jim goes on to say that throughout Becky's ordeal, he rebelled, prayed against God's will, and was a miserable person. But when he came to the point of saying, "Not my will, but Thine be done," he found peace. Though he does not yet understand why it happened, he knows that God often has higher purposes to accomplish than human eyes are willing to see.

Keith Miller claims, "Every problem in my life has become a bridge across which I have helped another."

Trials are our opportunity to accept God's comfort. Perhaps it is in the darkest valleys that those who would be pure in heart learn to trust God by looking toward the light, trusting by faith, that all things will work together for good.

Ellen White understood trials, pain, adversity, and hardship—the most com-

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mon roads toward brokenness: *“The whole universe of heaven are watching the conflict, and if our eyes could be opened we would see angels in the ranks, for the Holy Spirit is promised to all who fight manfully the battles of the Lord. There are soldiers engaged in the battle who are not perfect, compassed with infirmities, falling into sin, ignorant, and needing instruction at every step; but to feel their need, to sense their poverty is essential before they can be helped. When they fall upon the Rock and are broken then the everlasting arms are around the helpless. Heavenly agencies are employed to do their work, fit them as vessels of honor, overpowering the enemies, piercing the cloud and shadow of Satanic agencies. ... A conqueror stands at your head, victory is sure”* (The Ellen G White 1888 Materials, vol. 2 p. 794; emphasis supplied).

Life will bring, in the wake of its sunshine, a few drops of rain, sometimes a shower or two, once in a while a deluge of trouble above which we struggle to keep from being swept into a flood of total despair. God’s child must remember that from the shadows of earth is being written the greatest story ever told. We are not just watching the great controversy unfold from eternity past to eternity future, we are part of the story. We can even read between the lines, if we choose to accept the eyesalve He wants to give us!

The drama of the ages does not just involve Christ, Satan, and those few giants of faith of whom we read in Hebrews 11; it involves you and me. Each one of us is a piece of the unfinished puzzle, a small, but indispensable, portion of the total picture, though it often seems our days appear in the negative rather than the positive we desire to see. Our Father, the great artist, knows just how much of the darker hues to allow in the lives of each of His children so that their canvas is completed for the world to see. No one knows how important one swipe of His brush across the canvas of our life may be to those observing our faith, but that part is important to the whole picture because Someone is watching, and He is all-wise.

Next time you think things are just not developing properly, remember that it is quite impossible to have a fully developed picture without a negative, the timing of which and the solutions of which are in God’s hands. The world watches to see how we are going to react when the rinsing process begins and the rain falls. In accepting life’s negatives, however broken they may leave us, we endure only a few years of earthly life. Should He call upon us to suffer, we can do so with our head high, for His sake. We can stand up, like Harry. We have been chosen, among those called, to fall on the Rock.

Step by step, day by day, I must test Him with the burden of my tears. Maybe you are tired of crying as you wonder about elusive victories. There are practical applications—what does a service of surrender really mean?

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All for the Best

*Things mostly happen for the best.
However hard it seems today,
When some fond plan has gone astray
Or what you've wished for most is lost
An' you sit countin' up the cost
With eyes half-blind by tears o' grief
While doubt is chokin' out belief,
You'll find when all is understood
That what seemed bad was really good.*

*Life can't be counted in a day.
The present rain that will not stop
Next autumn means a bumper crop.
We wonder why some things must be—
Care's purpose we can seldom see—
An' yet long afterwards we turn
To view the past an' then we learn
That what once filled our minds with doubt
Was good for us as it worked out.*

*I've never known an hour of care
But that I've later come to see
That it has brought some joy to me.
Even the sorrows I have borne,
Leavin' me lonely an' forlorn
An' hurt, an' bruised, an' sick at heart,
In life's great plan have had a part.
An' though I could not understand
Why I should bow to Death's command,
As time went by I came to know
That it was really better so.*

*Things mostly happen for the best.
So narrow is our vision here
That we are blinded by a tear
An' stunned by every hurt and blow
Which comes today to strike us low.
An' yet some day we turn an' find
That what seemed cruel once was kind.
Most things, I hold, are wisely planned
If we could only understand.*

—Edgar Guest

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Little Things, Like Money

Sometimes, like Job, we may be called upon to face trials in order to test our connection with our Father. But we can also choose to fall on the rock of surrender by relinquishing our hold upon the things of earth. Some of these are by requirement, this is called obedience. God calls for volunteers, but once we are in the army, we follow His rules. Tithing demonstrates our induction into boot camp. As we learn to surrender 10 percent, by habit, we will eventually discover that all of our money is rightfully His and will find ourselves volunteering for service above and beyond His promise of 10 percent joy. Our puny cash flow is merely a single wave upon the shoreline of His endless ocean of riches. He sends a wave of income, we toss a portion back upon the waters. Inevitably the next wave is bigger, but our faith, having been blessed by surviving the last trial, lifts our vision above mere earthly treasures.

Once we understand the ebb and flow of His blessings we can understand why He would counsel us to “*shun debt like the leprosy*” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 217). Debt imprisons us from becoming the blessing we could be to others. If you are in debt, He cannot call upon you to help His church, the apple of His eye, the object of His supreme regard. Surrender may be as simple as slicing up that credit card, allowing it to be consumed upon the altar if that is what keeps us from being debt free. If you have not yet experienced the freedom He longs for you to have with regard to debt, test Him. It may be one of the hardest tests you have yet endured, but get ready for blessings to pour from the windows of heaven. By those blessings with which He blesses us, just so are we in debt to our needy brother. Financial surrender means that we become and remain an open channel of blessing. He may call upon you to help your brother, in secret, someday.

The Word shares stories hinting about finances to help steady those of us upon whom the ends of the earth are come: Ananias and Sapphira, the widow’s mite, the parable of the talents. Surrendering our talents, our things—these are merely practice runs until we come to the place where we can totally surrender our broken heart. The heart we have so long salvaged ineffectively with our selfish indulgences. Money is not the only giant challenging us from across our valley of Elah (where a young shepherd boy defeated a giant).

Satan has a “designer comfort” for each of us, a comfort which, when indulged, begins, deceptively, to anaesthetize that longing within us for our Creator. Like a customized hammock, our need for comfort lures us into the sleep of Laodicea, where, upon Satan’s enchanted ground, we lie in blissful ignorance of our true state. We begin to think that all the references we read apply to others.

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We know we must arise, someday, but the hammock is so comfortable. Can it compare to the mansion He's gone to prepare? For any amount of discomfort we are called on to endure, heaven will be cheap enough. We will be more than compensated by our Father for anything we suffer here. He asks of us nothing but that which is in our best interest to surrender. If only we could see the bright ending when we are in the dark valley. God wants to build our faith, and not fear to fight the Goliath that stands between us and victory.

Giants for God

Beyond our own mountain ranges of painful surrenders are those giants for God who have actually laid their hearts and lives on the altar of surrender. These stories amaze me. Some people have managed to surrender rejection, painful memories, even illness. "Wait!" you say. "Why would anyone want to hang on to those things, anyway? What would they have to lose?"

We have nothing to lose except our grip on the ineffective solutions we keep rubbing into the pain from which we are unable to escape. He takes the heart we give Him, broken and bleeding, and heals us. How does healing, the growth of the soul, interface with the struggles of everyday life? If surrendering our pain is so good for us, why is it so hard? The other day my husband's prayer in this regard caught my attention: "... and thank You, Lord, for everything You send to save us from ourselves." It occurred to me as he prayed, that this is the principal purpose of trials; pain, brokenness—to save us from ourselves and to perfect His image within us. Like the vessel marred, He breaks us and reshapes us—and fires us in the heat until we are cured or choose to be destroyed. Our survival depends upon escaping from ourselves.

In *The Blessings of Brokenness*, Charles Stanley explores the apparent oxymoron in his book's title: "Broken. Blessed. The two words don't seem to go together. If anything, they seem to be exact opposites. We all know what it means to be broken—to be shattered, to feel as if our entire world has fallen apart, or perhaps been blown apart. We all have times in our lives when we don't want to raise our heads off the pillow, and when we feel the tears will never stop flowing. Brokenness is often accompanied by emptiness—a void that cannot be filled, a sorrow that cannot be comforted, a wound for which there is no balm. Nothing feels blessed about being broken.... The blessing comes only if we experience brokenness fully and confront why it is that God has allowed us to be broken. If we allow God to do His complete work in us, blessing will follow brokenness."

Catherine Marshall, in her book, *A Man Called Peter*, reveals her struggle with tuberculosis. To her, it was not just a disease. She had grown up believing TB

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to be the most dreaded and loathsome degradation imaginable! When, as a young mother, she discovered she had contracted the very disease she most dreaded, she sank into grief and despair. She had always considered herself a dedicated Christian, but it was impossibly hard for her to accept the fact that a loving God would allow her to suffer from that which she dreaded most. She prayed, studied, tried to repent of everything that might be standing in the way of her being healed, for she felt it was not God's will that she die from the disease.

It was not until she read a booklet her husband gave her as she left for her parents' home to rest for several months that the "law of brokenness" began to dawn upon Catherine. In the pamphlet was the story of a missionary who had been bedridden for eight years. During those long years, she had persistently asked God why she had been laid on the shelf when she had been doing God's work? There was rebellion in her heart—she must be returned to active duty. God should make her well. But nothing happened. Exhausted with the failure of her prayers and with a desperate resignation, she finally prayed, "All right, Lord, I give in. If I am to be sick for the rest of my life, I bow to Thy will. I want Thee even more than I want health. It is for Thee to decide." Thus leaving herself entirely in the Lord's hands, she began to know the peace that had evaded her all during her illness and she soon returned to active duty.

To Catherine, health had seemed to be her right. She had never stopped rebelling against her illness. What a revelation to her that submission and surrender may be the only way! Finally, with tears eloquent with what she was about to do, she prayed, "Lord, I've done everything I've known how to do, and it hasn't been good enough. I'm desperately weary of the struggle of trying to persuade You with what I want. I'm beaten, I'm whipped through. If You want me to be an invalid for the rest of my life, all right, here I am. Do anything You like with me and my life."

When Catherine discovered and prayed that prayer of resignation she says, "There was no trace of graciousness about the gift of my life, my will, nothing victorious and expectant. I had no faith left, as I understood faith. Nevertheless, a strange deep peace settled into my heart." The next time her lungs were X-rayed, it became evident that the disease was losing its grip. Within weeks, Catherine was completely well. But the healing of her body was obviously subservient to the greater accomplishment—the wellness of her soul. Whatever stands between God and His child, that thing which stands where brokenness should stand—is the very thing from which He seeks to release our grip. It may even stand between us and survival!

I had a similar experience when I was in my early 20s. I remember what

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a revelation it was to me when I learned that there was a possibility that it might be God's will for me to experience health. From birth I suffered with "incurable" allergies, asthma, bronchitis, fevers of unknown origin, and fearful bouts of pneumonia. Because so many doctors had said so, I believed that I was incurable. Illness was my heritage. It became my excuse for weakness, my replacement for exercise, my reason for even shunning spiritual growth. It took some time to reach the altar where I was willing to open myself up to the possibility of releasing, like Christian in Pilgrim's Progress, the familiar, but uncomfortable burden upon my back.

I cannot, now, understand why it was difficult for me to surrender my brokenness to His healing touch except that I had become comfortable with my disability. Christian friends and physicians were patient with me, speaking faith when I expressed doubt, until, miracle of miracles, I began to believe that if He willed it, I, too, could have the gift of health. It seems so simple, now—I had but to release my grasp on illness to accept His gift of health. I am vibrantly healthy, now, and so thankful, for health is important to survival.

Healing is Forgiveness

I was once asked to help with a seminar for abused women. The week-end course was designed to create a comfortable environment for church women to experience release from emotional pain. The last exercise was one that will remain forever etched in my mind.

I sat at the back of the room near a huge stone fireplace praying that these women could be free from the pain they had suffered. The women who sought freedom from their past were asked by the facilitator to list everything they had lost, because of their abuse, on a piece of paper. She then asked those who desired to begin their healing journey to toss their list of losses into the flames. The cedar logs crackled invitingly, ready to receive the sacrifice I was sure each woman wanted to submit. But, to my amazement, very few women could perform this exercise. They had been shown the way, but could not submit their pain to the healing flame. They sat immobilized by fear and frustration. Most of them had tears streaming down their cheeks as they clutched their familiar list. To burn it would mean to open themselves up to the yawning chasm of forgiveness, healing and peace—so foreign to their pain. It seemed obvious to me, as an onlooker, that though Jesus was willing to take their pain, they could not give it to Him.

But what a witness for God's goodness are those who have walked through the flames of submission and tasted the sweet victory of forgiveness! Broken healers, having known the divine touch, bring us those amazing stories that so

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inspire us to lay our helpless soul on the Rock and be broken. He is able to save us, even from ourselves.

Most of us are familiar with the fascinating stories of Corrie ten Boom's experiences in Nazi concentration camps during World War II. Few Christians have been called to endure as was Corrie. Her messages of faith and forgiveness are so inspirational because she was so misused, but also because she was so willing to ask for healing. Though she did not find the path to forgiveness easy, she endeared herself to countless thousands by making her humanity transparent in her book, The Hiding Place.

One night in a Munich church, where she had just delivered a sermon on forgiveness, Corrie recognized, walking down the aisle toward her, a former German S. S. guard, one especially loathed by the prisoners at Ravensbruck. She didn't think the man recognized her, but that was no real comfort. This man had "despitefully used" Corrie and her sister during their imprisonment. Corrie's sister, Betsy, had died at Ravensbruck, but not before challenging Corrie to give her heart to Jesus and to be thankful for everything (even the lice), and to be forgiving of those who tormented and abused them in the concentration camps.

As this former S. S. guard approached and extended his hand toward her, asking for her forgiveness, Corrie's arm became ramrod stiff. She tried to smile and shake his hand and at least appear to believe the message she had just delivered, but vengeful thoughts boiled within her. She found herself totally helpless to practice what she had preached! In that instant she called upon her Source of strength, as she had done in so many times and in so many hard circumstances. She offered a quick inward prayer, "Jesus, I cannot forgive him. Give me Your forgiveness!" Immediately, she says, it was as if a weight had been removed from her arm, and she lifted it toward the man. As her hand touched his, there sprang into her heart such a joyful love as she had not believed possible.

Is Corrie's experience unique? Yes, but no more unique than what our story can add to the great controversy when we come to the Gethsemane of our experience and say, "Not my will, but Thine be done." Only because He sought and found that place of brokenness was Christ able to carry out the plan of salvation by which we are assured of eternal life today. Wrung from a heart of unconditional love, Christ's final blessing upon those at whose hands He was dying proves the depths of His surrender. He was the intercessor unrecognized by those who counted Him an enemy. He sought to erase the curse they had brought upon themselves with His final blessing, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do."

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Our Weakness, His Strength

Even Christ did not trust His own strength, choosing rather to submit to His Father's will in Gethsemane. Perhaps this is why the cross has become such a symbol of hope for Christians through the ages. In order to prove our own weakness, God allows that to come to us which we cannot bear in our own strength. Christ, though perfect in every respect, was helpless to drink the cup. He could not see beyond the cross. An angel came from heaven, assigned to lift the bitter cup to His lips.

Often, in our spiritual development, God's will is obvious, but unbearable. Our eyes are often blinded with tears of bitterness, loneliness, or anger so that we cannot see the need for our trials. It is a difficult lesson to learn to trust that someday we will understand. It is in the valley that we must look to where we last saw the light and speak hope and faith to our brothers and sisters while we are in the trial. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of our testimony (Revelation 12:11).

A true survivor will speak words of hope into the sneer of adversity. Like Harry, we will look beyond our affliction and stand for the right, even when it looks wrong. Even when we stand alone.

"When perplexities arise, and difficulties confront you, look not for help to humanity. Trust all with God. The practice of telling our difficulties to others only makes us weak, and brings no strength to them.... Talk and act as if your faith was invincible" (Christ's Object Lessons, pp. 146, 147; emphasis supplied).

"Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on the merits of the Saviour. By prayer, by study of His word, by faith in His abiding presence, the weakest of human beings may live in contact with the living Christ, and He will hold them by a hand that will never let go" (The Ministry of Healing, p. 182; emphasis supplied).

We are told that we can strengthen each other when difficulties weaken us. *"If you cannot rely on your own faith, rely upon the faith of others. We believe and hope for you. God accepts our faith in your behalf"* (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 2, p. 319; emphasis supplied). God has helped others in times of trouble. After all, we only need just enough strength to become weak and weakness to stay strong. We grow by the things we choose to put under our feet. As we fall on the Rock, He begins to perfect His image within us. Sooner or later, His will becomes our will. If we allow ourselves to be fully broken, His love can completely heal.

"He is watching those who are climbing, ready, when the grasp re-

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laxes and the steps falter, to send help. Yes, tell it in words full of cheer, that no one who perseveringly climbs the ladder will fail of gaining an entrance into the heavenly city” (*Messages to Young People*, p. 95; emphasis supplied).

Young David rejected the armor Saul thought would help save his life from the giant Goliath. Why? Because David had not proved it. David altered his fear of the unknown enemy by allowing his trust to overpower his fear. He overcame the giant by that which he had proven of God’s care for him in his daily life. He simply grasped the familiar Rock, and claimed victory over the giant in the Valley of Elah. The Rock upon which we choose not to fall will be the one which crushes us at last. He can only save those who have chosen to trust Him through the breaking. What if no one else is falling—or standing—when they should?

What if everyone around us looks at us as if we are not quite “all there,” as if we are hearing voices they cannot hear? Is surrender too difficult?

Harry surely didn’t think so!

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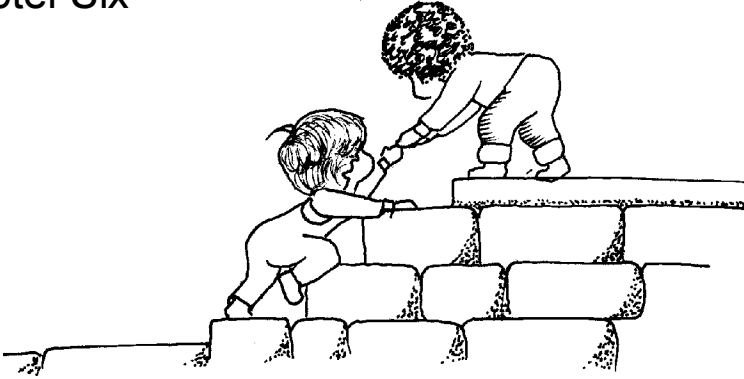
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Chapter Six



Intercession: Praying for Others Effectively

“Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

Arriving in an unfamiliar city early one cold winter morning, a man got off the train and entered the train station. The station was much like any other with the crowds milling about—except that everybody was barefoot. Even the cab driver he hailed was barefoot.

“Pardon me,” the man asked his driver, “I was just wondering why you don’t wear shoes. Don’t you believe in shoes?”

“Sure we do,” said the driver.

“Why don’t you wear them?”

“Ah, that’s the question,” came the reply. “Why don’t we wear shoes? Why don’t we?”

It was the same at the hotel. The clerk, the bell boys, everybody was barefoot. In the coffee shop he noticed a nice-looking fellow at a table opposite him who was also barefoot. He said, “I notice you aren’t wearing any shoes. I wonder why? Don’t you know about shoes?”

The man replied, “Of course I know about shoes.”

“Then why don’t you wear them?”

“Ah, that’s the question. Why don’t we? Why don’t we?”

After breakfast the man walked out on the street in the snow, but every person he saw was barefoot. He asked another man about it, and pointed out how shoes protect feet from the cold. The man said, “We know about shoes. See

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that building yonder? That is a shoe factory. We are proud of that plant, and every week we gather there to hear the man in charge tell about shoes and how wonderful they are.”

“Then why don’t you wear shoes?”

“Ah, that’s the question.”

Don’t we believe in prayer? Don’t we know what it could mean in our lives? Then why don’t we pray? Ah, that is the question. Why don’t we? (from City of Everywhere, by H. P. Hughes).

This little story sounds as ridiculous to our ears as our actions must appear to the angels who stand in awe at our lack of prayer and its practical application to our lives. This reference shows us clearly that God wants us to pray and ask things of Him.

“It is a part of God’s plan to grant us, in answer to the prayer of faith, that which he would not bestow did we not thus ask” (The Great Controversy, page 525).

It seems that there are packages in heaven, ready for delivery, including prayers answered for other people, that will not be delivered unless we ask. Yes, we believe in prayer, we know about it, we know it can protect us, we even meet once a week at prayer headquarters. But until we touch the throne of God with our petitions, we may be as ignorant of its worth as were the barefoot residents in the City of Everywhere, who wore no shoes. If we were to really grasp the concept of the power of prayer to change lives, we would be putting on not only our shoes, but our boots. We would be partakers of the divine nature by walking with God, empathizing prayer with and for others, and mending hearts as did Enoch, Dorcas, and Christ.

“The world in Enoch’s time was no more favorable to a growth in grace and holiness than it is now, but Enoch devoted time to prayer and communion with God, and this enabled him to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. It was his devotion to God that fitted him for translation.

“We are living among the perils of the last days, and we must receive our strength from the same source as did Enoch. We must walk with God. A separation from the world is required of us. ... But how many are slaves to the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life. This is the reason they are not partakers of the divine nature, and do not escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. They are serving and honoring self. ...

“If they were partakers of the divine nature, the same spirit that dwelt in their Lord would dwell in them. The same tenderness and love, the same pity and compassion, would be manifested in their lives. They would

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not then have to wait to have the needy and unfortunate come to them, and be entreated to feel their woes. It would be as natural for them to aid the needy and minister to their wants as it was for Christ to go about doing good.... If each would realize this, and take hold of the work, we should be as mighty as an army with banners” (Christ Triumphant, p. 44; emphasis supplied).

We learned in chapter 5 about how the experiences of life bring us to that place of brokenness where we let God reach down into the depths of our pain, and obtain healing. Our own experience then helps us empathize with those around us whom God puts in our path. Nothing comes to us but can be used to help someone else. Have you been helped by reading about or knowing someone who has had a similar experience to yours? Perhaps someone you know prayed for you while you were in the valley of despair. Perhaps they phoned you, or dropped you a note just to say, “I am praying for you.” If you have not had that experience, perhaps God is calling upon you to tread a little more closely in His steps and let someone who is despairing lean upon you. Your prayer could be crucial to their survival.

Sometimes we turn our backs on the very ones who most need help—those who reject or accuse us, or hurt a friend, or complain and murmur constantly. This type of commentary emerges from the lips of those whose hearts are filled with pain. Being able to understand another person’s pain is a special gift of the Holy Spirit referred to as the gift of intercession. The Holy Spirit can enable us to sense another’s pain even though we have not had their experience. Being human, Jesus deeply understood the needs of humanity, and now He is with the Father interceding for us.

The gift of intercession is available as a ministry. God calls us to pray for others rather than to accuse them or ignore them. Although He never experienced sin, Christ knows how much it hurts, because our sins were all laid upon Him as He suffered the crucifixion for us. As we open our hearts to His intercession for us, we are healed. As we begin our healing journey, He calls us to help heal others. The gift of intercession may mean allowing Jesus to use us to help heal another’s pain by praying for them and allowing Him to love them through us.

Mystery of Intercession—He Who Knew No Sin Became Sin for Us

In order for us to be effectual in our prayers for each other, we are going to have to know, as did Jesus, the pain of the other person. Jesus knows the pain of divorce—His people have divorced themselves from Him. Jesus knows the pain of third party relationships—we have left Him for another. The book of Hosea is a story illustrating how Christ feels about our separation from Him and His knowl-

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edge of our adulteries. Even though we may not feel the regret, He does. Hebrews 4:15 states, *“For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are... .”* What does it mean to feel? Was He a drug addict, was He an alcoholic, adulterous? How could He know the feeling of our infirmities? *“For He hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him”* (2 Corinthians 5:21). *“He, the sin-bearer, endures judicial punishment for iniquity and becomes sin itself for man”* (*The Story of Redemption*, p. 225).

“While the city was hushed in silence, and the disciples had returned to their homes to obtain refreshment in sleep, Jesus slept not. His divine pleadings were ascending to His Father from the Mount of Olives that His disciples might be kept from the evil influences which they would daily encounter in the world, and that His own soul might be strengthened and braced for the duties and trials of the coming day. All night, while His followers were sleeping, was their divine teacher praying. The dew and frost of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. His example is left for His followers” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 508; emphasis supplied). We are to follow Him as an example in being touched by the feelings of others and entering into intercessory prayer. *“We may expect to suffer; for it is those who are partakers with Him in His sufferings, who shall be partakers with Him in His glory”* (*Review and Herald*, June 9, 1896).

“In your association with others, put yourself in their place. Enter into their feelings, their difficulties, their disappointments, their joys and their sorrows. Identify yourself with them, and then do to them as, were you to exchange places with them, you would wish them to deal with you” (*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 136; emphasis supplied).

I have to feel the pain of my brother in order to properly pray for him. How can I feel the pain if I haven't actually experienced it? It is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

Entering In

There are several Bible texts that support the idea of entering into the feelings of others, both in joy and in pain as Jesus did. Galatians 6:2 tells us, *“Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”* *“Whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it”* (1 Corinthians 12:26). We rejoice with them, we suffer with them—we enter into their feelings. This is proper preparation for being an effective intercessor. Paul, strong, steadfast, and independent in Christ, who, though imprisoned, was appreciative of sympathy, *“Notwithstanding ye have well done,*

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that ye did communicate with my affliction” (Philippians 4:14).

Jesus, Himself sweating blood in Gethsemane, desired that someone would enter into His sufferings and understand His feelings and pray for Him. *“Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself.... The human heart longs for sympathy in suffering.... The One who had always had words of sympathy for them [the disciples] was now suffering superhuman agony, and He longed to know that they were praying for Him and for themselves.... If He could only know that His disciples understood and appreciated this, He would be strengthened”* (The Desire of Ages, pp. 686-688; emphasis supplied). None of His apostles, church leaders, or even His immediate family, shared His sorrow as the shadow of the cross loomed over Him. Jesus is still agonizing today, still longing for intercession from us.

Instead of accusing our leaders for their failures and shortcomings, we should enter into their burdens and their feelings. *“There must be by the church as a whole and by its individual members a spirit of intercession and wrestling with our covenant-keeping God in behalf of themselves and also for the watchmen on the walls of Zion and the workers in the cause of God.... God will answer the earnest supplications that are sent to Him in faith”* (Ellen G. White 1888 Materials, pp. 755, 756; emphasis supplied).

Jesus was encouraged by the understanding and compassion that the thief on the cross manifested. *“To Jesus in His agony on the cross, there came one gleam of comfort. It was the prayer of the penitent thief”* (The Desire of Ages, p. 749).

What potential we have to bear one another’s burdens and become an intercessor! We must learn not just to sympathize, but to empathize with others. *“Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep”* (Romans 12:15). How can we rejoice or weep when we don’t **feel** with the people who are rejoicing and weeping?

Moses had the gift of intercession when he prayed in Exodus 32:32: *“Lord, forgive their sin.” “As Moses interceded for Israel, his timidity was lost in his deep interest and love for those for whom he had, in the hands of God, been the means of doing so much. The Lord listened to his pleadings, and granted his unselfish prayer.... God was pleased with his faithfulness”* (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 319).

In Ezra 9, we read that Ezra pleaded for Israel in the same manner as did Moses. Jacob was an overcomer because he did not cease his intercession (see Genesis 32:24-30). In the example of Pentecost, we see the church gathered together and praying in one accord (Acts 2:1).

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Reconciliation

During the 1844 reform movement, people spent time interceding for each other, making things right, entering into one another's spiritual problems, not resting until their hearts were right with God. *"Often was heard the sound of earnest intercession. Everywhere were souls in deep anguish, pleading with God. Many wrestled all night in prayer for the assurance that their own sins were pardoned, or for the conversion of their relatives or neighbors. That earnest, determined faith gained its object.... Every morning they felt it was their first duty to secure evidence of their acceptance with God. Their hearts were closely united, and they prayed much with and for one another. They often met together in secluded places to commune with God, and the voice of intercession ascended to heaven from the fields and groves. The assurance of the Saviour's approval was more necessary to them than their daily food, and if a cloud darkened their minds, they did not rest until it was swept away"* (The Story of Redemption, pp. 359, 371; emphasis supplied).

Apparently history will be repeated when the Spirit returns in the power of Pentecost: *"In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people.... A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the Word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest.... Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God. I heard voices of thanksgiving and praise, and there seemed to be a reformation such as we witnessed in 1844"* (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 126; emphasis supplied).

"We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise.... Our perils are greater now than then. Souls are more hardened. We need now to be imbued with the spirit of Christ, and we should not rest until we receive it" (ibid., vol. 5, pp. 161, 162; emphasis supplied).

Are we concerned deeply enough to storm Heaven for each other? We are now closer to the end than we have ever been. We are to be more zealous than the early Christians were. We should express more concern and understanding, as we are called, again, into the spirit of intercession.

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How? This is nothing we can invent. We are not born with it. It does not naturally occur within our carnal heart. Again, it is a gift of the Holy Spirit. *“The Father has given His Son for us that through the Son the Holy Spirit might come to us, and lead us unto the Father. Through divine agency, we have the spirit of intercession, whereby we may plead with God, as a man pleadeth with his friend”* (*Signs of the Times*, Oct. 3, 1892; emphasis supplied). With the outpouring of this gift will come the ability to enter into, through Jesus, the hurts and joys of others—in the spirit of intercession.

Our calling is to care for one another, love one another, and enter into one another’s joys and sorrows as if they were our own. We would see more conversions to the truth if we could claim and receive this gift. *“If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one”* (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 189). To be pitiful means that we are able to enter into another’s disappointments, hopes, and joys. As we do this, we become effectual intercessors and soul winners through Jesus alone.

“As we see souls out of Christ, we are to put ourselves in their place, and in their behalf feel repentance before God, resting not until we bring them to repentance” (*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, E. G. White Comments, vol. 7, p. 960; emphasis supplied).

Oh, that we could care enough! One of the greatest gifts of the Holy Spirit is that we may be effectual servants of Christ through intercessory prayer, that we may care and love each other effectively. We must weep when others weep, rejoice when others rejoice, just as if we were in their shoes. Or, according to the little allegory at the beginning of this chapter, as if we were **wearing** shoes! Perhaps when they see the way the Lord protects our feet, **others** will wear shoes, too! When the Holy Spirit is poured out in a mighty measure, it will change us, it will change others. It is a gift; the promised Comforter.

“Would that there were today more earnest intercession with God, greater humility, greater purity, and greater faith” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 88; emphasis supplied).

“Satan is playing the game of life for every soul. He knows that practical sympathy is a test of the purity and unselfishness of the heart, and he will make every possible effort to close our hearts to the needs of others, that we may finally be unmoved by the sight of suffering. He will bring in many things to prevent the expression of love and sympathy” (*ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 264; emphasis supplied).

YOU CAN SURVIVE!

The Seeing Heart

*O God, cut eyes into my callous heart and brain
So I can see, along each street or road or lane
The broken hearts that form the human map of pain.
God, help me see!*

*O God, carve ears into my heart of stone, I plead,
That I may hear the anguished cries of human need,
And by my loving service verify my creed.
God, help me hear!*

*Dear God, since Thou didst love this world with love so kind,
Since Jesus came to show us how to seek and find,
How can our hearts be still so cold and hard and blind?
God, help me feel!*

*O God, give me a heart of flesh so I can feel,
Anoint my lips—these languid lips that sin doth seal—
That I may speak, in love and power, time's last appeal!
God, help me speak!*

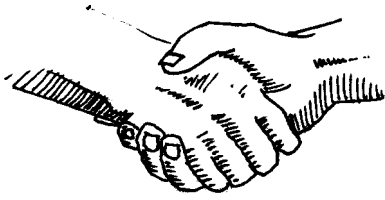
—Adlai Albert Esteb

We cannot learn the prayer of intercession without first receiving the gift of empathy. Neither can we pray for someone without learning to love them. The gift of unity will only be poured out upon those who have learned to pray for and love others. It is this spirit of unity by which the world will identify the true believers. It will be this spirit that marks potential survivors.

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Rees Howells: Intercessor, Norman P. Grubb, Christian Literature Crusade, Fort Washington, PA, 1952.

Chapter Seven



The Miracle of Unity: “That the World May Believe. . .”

“Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Psalm 133:1).

It was a small western town with the usual bickerings and feuds. Not everyone agreed with everyone else. One day a little girl named Susie was lost. Search parties with the family had looked everywhere, but she was not to be found. A large field was scanned, but not as thoroughly as could be done with a larger group. Someone suggested, “Let’s all hold hands and comb the field.” So they did. The field was one and a half miles long and a mile wide. About two-thirds of the way down the field, a cry went up, “Here she is!” But elation quickly turned to sorrow. The little girl would not respond to their calls.

At Susie’s funeral, a young person, one of the searchers, who had known her and whose heart had been broken by the suffering of the family stood up and said, “If only we had joined hands sooner.”

Are there any members in our own family and circle of friends who are suffering because we, who are concerned for their spiritual welfare, have not yet joined hands, uniting our forces, in the search to secure their soul for heaven? Maybe they will be lost because we do not have the power of unity Christ promised. Unity is essential to our witness for Christ. However good our sanitarium, hospital, school, church, or family may be, it is essential that we, its members or staff, be unified. It is even more essential that you and I know unity with Christ as our personal Saviour. Complete unity in Christ guarantees unity at organizational levels. *“As long as we hold to our own ideas and opinions with determined persistency, we cannot have the unity for which Christ prayed”* (Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers, p. 30).

With all the possibilities for misunderstanding, reactions, and disagreement, unity is a miracle. Do you know of someone with whom you are not in unity? Go to them and make it right. We all have some of this work to do, but, even at best, unity will require a miracle. Can we expect miracles in this day? Let’s explore this possibility.

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The Bible says, “... *endeavoring to keep the unity of spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:2, 3). The chapter also tells us to walk worthy of the vocation to which we are called; with all lowliness, meekness, long-suffering, and forbearance. Those traits of character are prerequisites to unity. Most of us have not developed these traits of character enough. Verse 13 says, “*Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.*” We must “endeavor,” or make an effort (verse 3) “till we all come into the unity of the faith” (verse 13).

Working Together

Reading between verses 3 and 13 of Ephesians 4, we discover many expressions of unity: one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, one body, one Spirit, one hope. Verse 7 points out our different gifts expressed in apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers. We’re all gifted differently, but as we come into the unity of the faith, these differing gifts will blend.

When our spiritual eyes are opened, the industrial worker is going to say that the medical work is as important as the industrial work, while a teacher will understand that the medical work is just as important as the educational work. The miracle begins to happen, triggering a chain reaction of blessings, and the Holy Spirit begins to be poured out without measure. Every one of these workers who claim that the work of others is as important to God as is his own, is working for unity. If we all come into unity of the faith, we will reflect Christ’s character.

One of the most beautiful verses in all the Bible is 1 John 3:2: “*Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.*”

In His life, Christ combined the educational work, the ministerial work, and the medical work in perfect unity. “*And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people” (Matthew 4:23).*

“*Those who disparage the ministry and try to conduct the medical missionary work independently are trying to separate the arm from the body. What would be the result should they succeed? We should see hands and arms flying about, dispensing means without the direction of the head. The work would become disproportionate and unbalanced. That which God designed should be the hand and arm would take the place of the whole body, and the ministry would be belittled or altogether ignored. This would unsettle minds and bring in confusion, and many portions of the Lord’s*

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vineyard would be left unworked” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 288, 289; emphasis supplied).

John 17:18-23 read, “*As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: ... That the world may know that thou hast sent me*” (emphasis supplied). If we are one with God the Father, one with Jesus Christ, and with each other, the world will believe that we have been sent by heaven.

Let’s look at some evidence calling for unity among all departments of church work. The Spirit of Prophecy says John 17, Christ’s prayer for unity, comprehends more than any other chapter in the New Testament. “*God’s family on the earth have many lessons to learn in order to answer the prayer of Christ—His last prayer with His disciples before His humiliation. The seventeenth chapter of John, which contains this prayer, comprehends more than any other chapter in the New Testament*” (*Spalding Magan Collection*, p. 387).

Gossip or Unity?

In Jesus’ prayer of John 17, we have evidence that we are sent from Christ if we are one in Him and one with each other. Unity cannot be neglected. Though we are all different, we must be together. The ability to be one is the significant difference between the beast and God’s remnant. True unity is based on Christ and the love that we have for one another. Union through conformity, as found in the beast is a misrepresentation of unity.

“*Even as we are one*” (verse 22). Who is we? God the Father, God the Son. Can we have unity like that? It will take a miracle! Think about that—unity like God the Father and God the Son. How often would tales be told about someone in a gossipy way if we had this kind of unity? How often would we speak disrespectfully or purposely provoke one another?

The Father and the Son don’t gossip about us? But could They? Would They see anything that needs to be changed in our closets at home, the ones with the skeletons in them? Do They gossip? No. Yet they know all about us! If we are one with Christ, neither will we gossip about each other.

The love of Christ cannot be counterfeited. When we love as He loves, the character traits that are unlike Him will fall away. We cannot cherish His love without losing gossip.

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Unity is Evidence of Christianity

In His mercy, the Lord sent us the gift of unity at a personal level. *“This unity of the believers is to be as a testimony to the world that He has sent us, and that we bear the evidence of His grace”* (My Life Today, p. 252; emphasis supplied). The testimony that Jesus has sent us is that we should love one another as He loved us, and in that we have unity. What an evangelistic tool this is!

“Unity existing among the followers of Christ is an evidence that the Father has sent His Son to save sinners. It is a witness to His power, for nothing short of the miraculous power of God can bring human beings with their different temperaments together in harmonious action their one aim being to speak the truth in love” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 9, p. 194; emphasis supplied). If we don’t have unity in Christ, then there is no evidence of our Christianity.

“If you who have engaged in this work of bruising and condemning have not heartily repented, then light, and peace, and joy will not come into your souls. When you are careful, kind, and tender to your brethren in the same degree that you have been hard, unforgiving, and oppressive you will confess your faults and make restitution as far as possible; and when you have done all on your part you may ask the Lord to do that which it is impossible for you to do—heal the wounds you have made, forgive you, and blot out your transgression” (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 5, p 343; emphasis supplied).

We are to expect miracles of healing through our love relationship with Jesus and the application of God’s plan. We can expect an even greater miracle as we allow God to manifest His power through us, not only for healing the body but for healing the soul. Wouldn’t it be wonderful to assist the breeze of the Holy Spirit into the window of the soul, blowing all the trash out the other side; the trash of differences that keep us apart? At the time of the miraculous outpouring of the Holy Spirit we will have unity. But we must specifically seek Him. We must plead for Him. He is vital to our survival!

Power for Churchgoing Unity

Imagine being able to come to church and go home a better person than you were before you came. Then, there is evidence that Christ came to save us. What a tremendous challenge and calling we have. *“Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!”* (Psalm 133:1). When you have that experience, you will be a powerful witness. How important is it to have harmony among brothers and sisters?

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“As we approach the last crisis, it is of vital moment that harmony and unity exist among the Lord’s instrumentalities” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 182; emphasis supplied).

What are vital signs? Respiration rate, blood pressure, stimulus response, temperature; these are indications of life. So is unity a vital sign of spiritual life among the Lord’s instrumentalities. We are either dead or alive. The difference is unity. What if we don’t have it? What are our vital signs?

“The world is filled with storm and war and variance. Yet under one head—the papal power—the people will unite to oppose God in the person of His witnesses. This union is cemented by the great apostate. While he seeks to unite his agents in warring against the truth he will work to divide and scatter its advocates” (*ibid.*). The enemy’s strategy is to divide and scatter its advocates, leaving them with the attitude that they do not need each other, that they are the proverbial island unto themselves. Have we experienced Satan’s diversionary tactics at church? It is our responsibility to experience the comfort everyone needs when in unity with their church family?

The apostate will use the tools of disunity against the people of God: *“Jealousy, evil surmising, evilspeaking, are instigated by him [Satan] to produce discord and dissension. The members of Christ’s church have the power to thwart the purpose of the adversary of souls”* (*ibid.*; emphasis supplied).

Power to thwart Satan? Picture the last crisis; the enemy uniting his forces to set you and me at variance. But we have the power to wage war against the effects of the enemy—with unity, which is a gift from God. What if we don’t have the unity that gives us the power to thwart the devil’s tools?

“At such a time as this let them not be found at variance with one another or with any of the Lord’s workers. Amidst the general discord let there be one place where harmony and unity exist because the Bible is made the guide of life” (*ibid.*; emphasis supplied). The prophet pleads here for just one place of unity. *“Let the people of God feel that the responsibility rests upon them to build up His instrumentalities”* (*ibid.*).

If we don’t have unity, then the devil’s tools are going to be applied to us—they are going to be applied successfully and we will be defeated. Unity is a vital sign that we are alive and not dead. Our survival depends on having unity. We cannot accuse each other, we do not repeat gossip, we don’t attend church to display the latest fashions, and we sing from a committed heart. We go to church, seeking that experience of oneness with the Father, the Son, and each other. The church family is designed like a body; members accomplishing a common goal. If someone is hurting, the family needs to know and send support. Are we really listening? Unity of heart and

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mind will help us see and hear the heart cries of those in need. Church friends are not just acquaintances, they are the body of Christ. It is our duty to make our church home a haven where the wounded spirits of our brothers and sisters can cry, and be comforted with Christ's words and the acts of His children. We must make the church home, that one place, that safe place where we can all, as family members, love and be loved, not because of, but in spite of, who or what we are. Church is one place where we need never be reluctant to lend a helping hand, speak a word of encouragement, or take time to listen to the heart cry of a friend or family member.

Angels Are Waiting

*The angels are waiting with longing desire,
Waiting to work with your hands.
A soul who is dying might soon live again,
With just the touch of your hands.
No other hands can ever restore;
What if they fail to be true?
He'll miss all the glories of heaven's fair shore—
Angels are waiting for you.*

*Angels are waiting to speak through your lips,
Waiting with longing desire.
A soul is just waiting the message to hear
From lips touched with heavenly fire.
Only your voice can speak to his heart;
Tell him of Jesus, I pray.
For angels are longing to speak through your lips—
Why do you longer delay?*

*Angels are waiting with longing desire;
Heaven is waiting for you.
Jesus bows low on His glorious throne,
Watching to see what you do.
Please go to work with the angels, my friend.
Lend them your hands and be true.
Angels are waiting with longing desire;
Angels are waiting for you.*

—Warren C. Wilson

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“One of Christ’s last commands to His disciples was, ‘Love one another as I have loved you’ (John 13:34). Do we obey this command, or are we indulging sharp, unchristlike traits of character? If we have in any way grieved or wounded others, it is our duty to confess our fault and seek for reconciliation. This is an essential preparation that we may come before God in faith, to ask His blessing” (Christ’s Object Lessons, p. 144; emphasis supplied).

Our Offerings—A Sign of Unity

“Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee, leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift” (Matthew 5:23, 24).

A Biblical study of this aspect of church service would reveal that our offerings are a sign of our unity. The Bible says if we have an offering and yet have aught against someone, we are not to give it until we have made things right. Go and be reconciled first. When we give our offering to God’s cause, we are telling Him and everyone that we are in unity!

When we give an offering but are not in unity, we have violated one of Christ’s commands. The offering in the 11 o’clock service symbolizes our unity in Christ, and that testifies that we have been sent by Him: that we are going to have an impact on the world and that the work is soon going to be finished. Are our offerings beneficial if we are not in unity? Worship is not a simple, superficial “fix” for the week, not like a doctor’s appointment where we can request: “Give me a pill, give me a shot, but don’t ask me to humble my own ideas!” The plan is *“Press together; press together; press together”* (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 293). Let us make our offerings a greater blessing by being in unity.

The Witness of Disunity

“If there is disunion among those who claim to believe the truth, the world will conclude that this people cannot be of God because they are working against one another. When we are one with Christ, we shall be united among ourselves. Those who are not yoked up with Christ always pull the wrong way. They possess a temperament that belongs to man’s carnal nature, and at the least excuse passion is wide awake to meet passion. This causes a collision; and loud voices are heard in committee meetings, in board meetings, and in public assemblies, opposing reform methods. Obedience to every word of God is another condition of success” (ibid., p. 139; emphasis supplied).

What is our witness in disunity? Our witness is that we cannot be of God.

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Unity is not something we just keep praying for and never experience in the working laboratory of life. We must work to answer our own prayers. We need to welcome Christ's divine intervention. God is in charge. He doesn't need our ideas. He needs for us to be willing to be in unity, not pulling against each other. No team of horses can plow effectively if they pull against each other.

Allegory of the Tools

Someone has imagined the Carpenter's tools holding a conference. Brother Hammer presided. Several suggested he leave the meeting because he was too forceful. Replied the Hammer, "If I have to leave this shop, Brother Screw must go also. You always have to turn him to get him to accomplish anything."

Brother Screw then spoke up, "If you wish, I'll leave, but Brother Plane must leave too. All his work is on the surface. His efforts have no depth."

To this, Brother Plane responded, "Brother Rule will also have to withdraw, he is always measuring folks as though he were the only one who is right."

Brother Rule then complained against Brother Sandpaper, "You ought to leave too because you are so rough and always rubbing people the wrong way."

In the midst of all this discussion, in walked the Carpenter of Nazareth. He had arrived to start His day's work. Putting on His apron, He went to the bench to make a pulpit from which to proclaim the Gospel. He employed the hammer, screw, plane, rule, sandpaper and all the other tools.

After many days of work, when the pulpit was finished, Brother Saw remarked, "Brethren, I observe that all of us are workers together with the Lord" (Gleanings From Thomas Watson, p. 87 [Morgan, PA: Soli Deo Gloria Publications, 1995]).

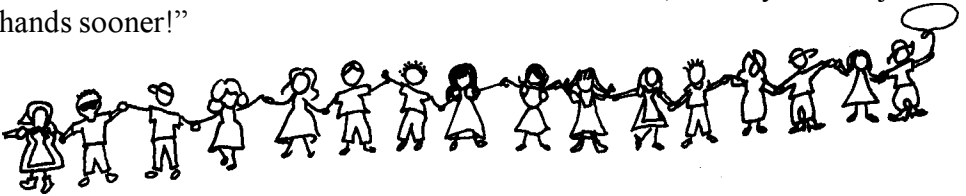
Disunity Affects the School

"Until the spirit of criticism and suspicion is banished from the heart the Lord cannot do for the church that which He longs to do for the establishment of schools; until there is unity, He will not move upon those to whom He has entrusted means and ability for the carrying forward of this work" (Testimonies for the Church, vol 6, p. 202).

Is it possible that parents could stand in the way of their children's education, even while paying a church school to educate them in the ways of the Lord? Who has not shaken their head in shame at the immature behavior of parents of Little Leaguers? The young players often get along with each other just fine, while their parents yell obscenities at the officials, the coach, even their children. I wonder if the Lord might not look down upon His church, the apple of His eye, and shake His head in shame and disappointment when they are bickering.

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Testimonies for the Church, volume 8, page 212 explains the urgency of this matter, “*Behold, the Bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet Him*” (Matthew 25:6). *Lose no time now in rising and trimming your lamps. Lose no time in seeking perfect unity with one another.*” How much time can we afford to lose? Not one more day. Do you know of anyone in your experience with whom you have a hard time getting along? If there is someone like that, please realize that the experience of disunity is affecting your witness. Christ says, “Come now and lose no more time.” Unity is vital to our survival, now and forever. When we join hands and sweep the world for the lost, they will see, by our unity, that we belong to Christ. There will be no regrets, as there was at little Susie’s funeral when her friend lamented, “If only we had joined hands sooner!”



Maybe we could join our prayer with the little four-year-old who put the preacher’s sermon into his own words, “And forgive us our trash as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets.”

Our unity demonstrates to others that God is restoring us, physically and spiritually, into His image. “... *we shall be like him for we shall see him; as he is*” (1 John 3:2).

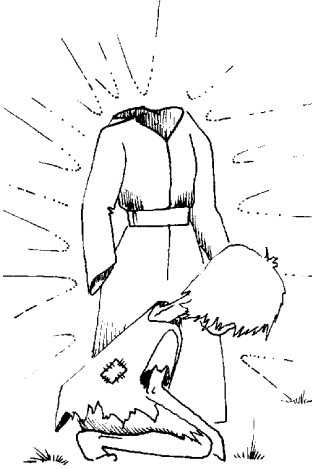
FOR FURTHER STUDY

God’s plea for unity is for all departments of the church work:

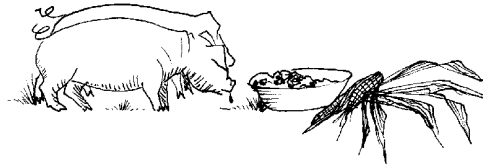
1. People with varied dispositions (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, pp. 242, 243).
2. Ministers with ministers (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 50).
3. Church members with each other (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 292, 293).
4. Medical missionaries with other Christian workers (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 235-242).

5. Medical Missionaries with gospel ministry (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, p. 46; Selected Messages, book 1, p. 199).
6. Physicians and ministers (Medical Ministry, pp. 46, 47).
7. Publishing house to publishing house (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 7, p. 171).
8. Sanitariums and schools (Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students, p. 522).
9. Teachers and students (Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, p. 139).

Chapter Eight



Restoration: God's Answer for Hopeless Problems



“Christ’s character stands in the place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned” (Steps to Christ, p. 62).

I remember when I was about 9 years old when I had gone by myself to a little corner grocery store. While I was in there, I saw a candy bar that just looked too good. I decided to take it. No one would know. This was back when candy bars were a nickel, and I hadn’t had a nickel for some time.

When I got home, my mother asked, “Where did you get the candy bar?” I stammered and stuttered until she finally asked the ultimate question, “Did you take it without paying for it?” That was the day I began to realize that she, as my mother, had the gift of insight that enabled her to see right into my guilty soul. How else could she know that I had stolen the candy? I, of course, was unaware of the chocolate bordering my lips.

Mom took me by the hand, and we went back down to the corner store. It was one of the longest trips of my young life. I knew I would have to confess my sin of theft and make arrangements to pay for the candy bar. The store manager was very nice, and accepted my mother’s offer of having me work to make amends for the stolen sweets. She paid the nickel that I owed the store manager, then I worked for a few days sweeping floors and lifting boxes. Finally, the store manager said, “Okay, Jere, that’s enough. You can go home now.” My lesson was learned. My debt was paid. My restitution was accomplished.

Accepted, Just as if I Had Never Sinned

Restitution for some things is relatively easy. However, such things as wasted time, divorce, sexual misconduct, loss of purity, angry words, accusa-

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tions, drug abuse, physical and verbal abuse, gossip, judging, bad influences, and broken promises, cannot be paid for as easily as my stolen candy bar. Have you ever made a mistake in any of these areas? We have all done something in our past that we wish we had not done. They linger in our subconscious, those skeletons in our closet, weighing us down with guilt. Can we get rid of them? Unless we have God's intervention we will never recover from these kinds of hopeless mistakes. The good news of the gospel is that Christ has made provision even for incurable wounds!

Even if we are victims of accusations, or worse, if we have victimized others by our words, we can still have restoration as though we had never sinned: "*Christ's character stands in place of your character, and you are accepted before God just as if you had not sinned*" (Steps to Christ, p. 62; emphasis supplied).

"It was Satan's purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen" (The Desire of Ages, p. 25; emphasis supplied). This reference in The Desire of Ages was difficult for me to understand. How could we be more closely united with God than Adam was when he was perfect? Then I had a very special insight as the result of an experience with my young son, Jed, who brought the deeper understanding home to my heart.

Jed had gotten himself into trouble. As his father, I had to apply discipline. But before I did, he hugged me and said, "Dad, I'm sorry for what I did." At that moment, I realized the truth of the mystery. As I enjoyed Jed's embrace and apology, I realized that we were closer than if he had just been playing outside and had not made a mistake. So it is with our heavenly Father. We will be closer to Him because of our errors and His mercy toward us than if we had never fallen. Errors do not earn this relationship, but God's love overrules our mistakes. Our guilt and His mercy draws us nearer than before.

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

This verse contains two promises. The first promise is God's forgiveness to the repentant sinner. The second promise, "to cleanse us from all unrighteousness," contains the generous offer by our loving God to re-create us in His image, to purify, to perfect, to sanctify, and to restore.

Many people stop with the first promise of forgiveness, glad to have "the peace of heaven," forgetting that heaven will not be populated by sinners who are just forgiven, but inhabited by those who have been cleansed and restored.

The thief on the cross did not have time to complete the process of restoration on this earth, but he had the desire to be like Jesus. That thief was, at the last

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possible moment, forgiven and accepted as if he had never sinned! His restoration will take place at the second coming of Jesus and in heaven.

Wasted Years

Throughout the Bible, there are many promises that indicate God is willing and able to restore our non-repairable lives. In Joel 2:25, God says, “*I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten.*” How is it possible that God can restore the time we have wasted? In *The Desire of Ages*, page 330, we are told, “*Our Heavenly Father has a thousand ways to provide for us, of which we know nothing.*”

Let me tell how God was able to demonstrate to me, personally, His power to restore my own wasted years. When I was 13 years old, I was heavily involved in athletics. For the next 20 years or so, sports were an integral part of my life: they helped keep me off the street, out of jail, and may have even saved my life. But as I began to study what the Lord had in mind for me, the Holy Spirit convicted me that I needed to give up sports because they had such a grip on me. A recovering alcoholic must stay away from taverns. I began to understand that this was the way it had to be with me and my involvement in ball games.

But how could God restore the years I had wasted in sports? Some time ago, an evangelist and I were on stage in dialogue before 3,000 young people in some youth meetings in Hope, British Columbia, Canada. We discussed how sports can become an addiction. To be so focussed on pitching a great game can “shut out” God.

After the meeting, a mother and her son came walking down the center aisle. “May we talk with you, Brother Franklin?” asked the mother. She told me that her son, much taller than she and obviously very strong, even at 13 years of age, was already an all-star on the local baseball team. “My boy and I have been discussing sports and athletics recently. He is right now trying to make a choice between serving God as a minister or pursuing an athletic career.”

We sat down and I began telling about some of my experiences in baseball; some things that I had been told to do by my coaches, some of what I had seen, and what he might expect if he chose a career in sports.

At the conclusion of our discussion he said, “You know, Mr. Franklin, it doesn’t sound like Jesus enjoys competitive sports, does it?”

I admitted to him that I didn’t think so either. After we had talked a little longer, he said, “I really feel that maybe the Lord wants me to plan for the ministry.” We had prayer together and it was a wonderful experience. I believe Scott left with a deeper commitment to God.

RESTORATION

What does this have to do with wasted time and restoration? Just this—every year that Scott remains faithful to his commitment restores one of my years! As we become involved in witnessing from our own experience, we can restore, “the years the locust hath eaten.” No experience will be wasted, for God will send us those who are struggling just as we once struggled. Our victory is a witness to others of God’s power to restore wasted years.

Impurity

It is never too late. But what about impurity of all kinds that does irreparable damage to one’s life? Virtue is gone because of immorality. How does the gospel deal with such a condition? Part of the answer is found in Jeremiah 2:20: “*For of old time I have broken thy yoke, and burst thy bands; and thou saidst, I will not transgress; when upon every high hill and under every green tree thou wanderest, playing the harlot.*” Shortly after God called Israel a harlot, there was a period of spiritual revival in Israel, and God calls His same people, through the same prophet, a virgin; “*Turn again, O virgin of Israel*” (Jeremiah 31:21). How can a person go from a harlot to a virgin? Will there be harlots in heaven? Oh, yes. But only harlots that have experienced God’s generous offer of restoration. How can purity be restored?

About 6,000 years ago, the Lord stooped over a pile of dirt. He was creating a man. God created a man who was pure and undefiled. If the Lord can do that with a pile of dirt, what can He do with you, a living person? You are much better than any pile of dirt! Harlot to virgin? Those who have struggled with this problem, take courage! The Lord can restore you if you desire restoration, just as though you had never sinned (see *Steps to Christ*, p. 62). Only God can do this!

Notice this reference in *The Desire of Ages*: “*None but Christ can fashion anew the character that has been ruined by sin*” (p. 38). If something is ruined, can you fix it? No. By definition, if something is ruined, you can’t fix it. Only God can fashion anew something that has been ruined. When we repent and give God all the pieces, He works a miracle and makes us a clean and usable vessel. And our reformation can become the means of rescuing others.

Health

The same is true for broken health caused either by living a sin-damaged life or living in a sin-damaged world. In Jeremiah 30:12-17, we find this spiritual diagnosis: “*For thus saith the Lord, Thy bruise is incurable, and thy wound is grievous*” (verse 12). Here we find a description of our condition: incurable bruises and wounds from which we are dying: “*There is none to plead thy cause, that thou mayest be bound up: thou hast no healing medicines*” (verse 13). No

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one will stand with us to be our attorney and there are no healing medicines for this type of worldly wound: “*All thy lovers have forgotten thee... because thy sins were increased*” (verse 14). Those that we thought loved us, love us no longer. The reason for all of these hopeless conditions is our many sins which have caused non-repairable damage to ourselves and others. “*Thy sorrow is incurable*” (verse 15). Our sorrow is incurable; we weep because of our hopeless mistakes.

Now let’s look at the good news from God that promises to heal all of the incurable bruises and sorrows. “*For I will restore health unto thee, and I will heal thee of thy wounds, saith the Lord*” (verse 17). Those same wounds that were incurable, grievous, the wounds from which we were dying, no physician could cure, will be healed. No pharmacist could issue us a medicine. No attorney would take our case or plead our cause. Everybody who loved us was gone. But the Lord says, “I will restore health unto thee.”

Entanglements

Have you ever been embarrassed by a social situation, and were sure the results would last a lifetime? Have you been involved in business deals in which you were so entangled you felt helpless and hopeless to improve the situation? Have you done anything of which you were later ashamed? Have you said words you would give anything to retract? What about your mountain of debts that look so impossible to pay? Is there help for the “impossible,” even for you?

Listen again to the gospel’s response expressed in the chapter “The Invitation” in *The Desire of Ages*, page 329: “*Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty*” (emphasis supplied).

Expanding on this idea of release from personal, permanent entanglements, the same book says, “*Those who decide to do nothing in any line that will displease God, will know, after presenting their case before Him, just what course to pursue*” (p. 668; emphasis supplied).

If we have been involved in accusing others, creating dissension, gossiping, leading an impure life, or been subject to dependencies, we must take courage! Though we recognize mistakes that cannot, humanly, be made right, God can take all the sins that have done irreparable damage and not only repair, but make life better than it was.

“*It was Satan’s purpose to bring about an eternal separation between God and man; but in Christ we become more closely united to God than if we had never fallen. ... By love’s sacrifice, the inhabitants of earth and heaven are bound to their Creator in bonds of indissoluble union*” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25-26).

RESTORATION

Restoration is God's most generous offer to all who desire to be made whole. Accusing, criticizing, condemning, and gossiping will require a special plea for victory, but He desires for us to be victorious even more than we do! "*He desires to restore you to Himself, to see His own purity and holiness reflected in you*" (*Steps to Christ*, p. 64).

There is a special promise in *The Ministry of Healing*, page 516, which will cover any and all impossible circumstances that stem from the mistakes and failures of our past. "*Whatever the mistakes or failures of the past, we may, with the help of God, rise above them.*"

Skeletons in the Closet

For those of us who have experienced forgiveness and continue to live out our lives on this earth, it is imperative that we move on to the "cleansing from all unrighteousness." What about those proverbial skeletons in your upstairs hall closet? True, no one else may know about them. They are well hidden. We have locked the door. Yet their bones rattle in the night and the stench of their decay causes unacceptable Christian behavior: unprovoked defensiveness, angry words, unexplained fears, a dread of punishment to come, profound rebellion, and an embarrassing lack of self control. Those skeletons deaden the colors of happiness that our loving Father desires for us even in this life. Have you done something that you think cannot be forgiven? Begin your journey of restoration. God will complete it, in His time.

Ephesians 3:17, "*...Christ may dwell in our hearts by faith.*" But Christ will not cohabit with evil. "*We are to empty the heart of everything that defiles the soul temple, that Christ may dwell within*" (*That I May Know Him*, p. 153). To dwell means to live in our hearts, or to be at home. A home has many different rooms: a kitchen, living room, dining room, den, library, bedroom, bathroom and closets. I may have given all of the activities associated with these rooms to God: such as my diet in the kitchen, my choice of entertainment in the den, my wardrobe in the closet, even the more private functions of the bathroom and bedroom. Maybe I even went so far as to vow to meet him in the living room every morning and evening (Isaiah 50:4). Then comes that one fateful morning when I see Him walk right past me, as I wait upon His presence in the living room.

Leaving me to dread what He might uncover, He goes straight upstairs, right on up to the attic and stands in front of an old closet. Odors from the closet fill the attic with a horrid stench. He tries the door of the closet, but it is locked bolted, barred and chained. A sign, in bold red letters reads Do Not Enter! Breathlessly, I arrive in time to warn Him away. He turns to me with a look of sadness

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and leaves the house.

I wait in the living room the next day, but He does not come. Sometimes it looks as if He is coming, but He goes right on out the back door. He cannot dwell where evil is harbored (3 John 1: *“Beloved, follow not that which is evil, but that which is good. He that doeth good is of God: but he that doeth evil hath not seen God”*). Morning after morning it is the same: he goes up to the closet, asks that I let him in. Every morning I deny Him entrance. I tell Him that no one must know about the skeletons I am hiding there. It is just too awful for words.

“I already know what is in there,” He says kindly. “Please let me clean it up!”

“No!” I shout. “Absolutely not!”

For years we are at a standoff. Oh, He comes and visits on a regular basis, but my first love has waned. The relationship is no longer growing. Though I desire to have Him help me overcome my tendencies to defensiveness, anger, and depression, I still resist whenever He even looks toward my closet. I deny that there is any relationship between my actions today and the secrets of my past. “Besides, I believe they are all insoluble. There is no possibility of resolution. They can’t be made right!”

The sadness on his face is hard to look upon. I turn away, leaving Him standing there alone. As I leave, there is an awful emptiness in the pit of my being, as if I might be rejecting the Only One who can help me solve the unsolvable mysteries and problems in my life, but, surely I am not completely helpless! I still have some tricks up my sleeve that will help me forget my troubles, even if I can’t solve them. There are tricks that many of my friends are using. Sleep comes with difficulty, sometimes requiring a pill or two. I must keep some background noise around me all the time, lest the Voice of Truth break through to my guilty heart. Yet, try as I might, I cannot completely silence the voice of conscience. Gradually I am wearing out, my nerves are on edge, the burden is too great for me to carry.

I finally admit to myself that my agony of guilt and resistance to the truth has left me spiritually and physically weak. In the empty darkness of the midnight, I realize that I can no longer live the lie. Sooner or later I will face my Judge. If I consider Him an enemy in this life, how can I expect His friendship in the next life. I am guilty of His innocent blood. He was once my friend. He was only trying to help me when I pushed Him away. I remember His smile, His compassion, His love and patience. I sense He is just waiting for me to come to the end of myself that He might show me the way to healing. I am tired of resisting His friendship. I crave His smile of acceptance even more than my own will, my own selfish privacy.

“I can’t go on without You, Lord! Go ahead and open the doors of that

horrid closet!” I offer him the key, but he says He doesn’t need them. In a single bound he stands before the closet. At the touch of His nail-scarred hand, the bars fall off, the chains break, the lock falls open and the doors swing wide. The odor is overpowering. I turn from the sight, cover my face in shame, and sink to my knees.

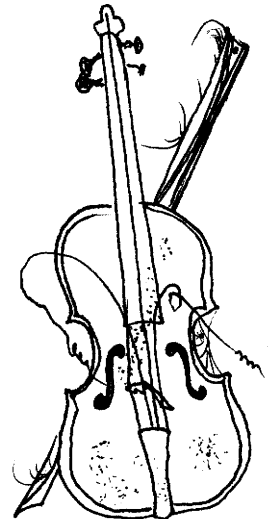
“Lord, this is so bad! What can be done? Please take it away!” I experience the hallowed joy of total surrender. Death and decay vanish at His touch. He gives me a promise about untangling the knots of my life and before I know it He lays His hand on my on shoulder and says, “It is done.”

I lift my tear-dimmed eyes to find that the skeletons have vanished. Conviction has lead me to repentance and forgiveness. My heart is softened, my spirit cleansed. Miracle of miracles, my heart is more full of joy than if the skeletons had never existed! My love returns with a train of blessings I had never dreamed possible. I am open to experiencing friendships with those whom I considered enemies. I am more patient. A spirit of hope dispels my gloomy attitude. Joyfully I take up the work He asks of me. Family problems appear to solve themselves.

Once again, I have the joy of togetherness, morning by morning. I can hardly wait to join Him in the living room day by day where the time with Him flies by. He shares with me from His word and His testimony what I need to do. I joyfully continue the work He has begun in me: conviction, forgiveness, and victory. I am now a friend of God.

The Great Controversy, p. 619, tells about the close of probation when God’s people are in prison or gathered together in small groups in desolate and solitary places. They are fearful that not every sin has been repented of. They are afraid there is some room in their life where they have not allowed Jesus entrance and granted permission to clean. Oh, the condescension of our Lord, waiting for us to allow Him entrance! We must not wait until it is too late! Thankfully, God’s people in the Time of Jacob’s Trouble have no wrongs to reveal. They have made everything right and allowed the Lord to heal them of their incurable wounds (Jeremiah 30:17).

We need nothing less than the touch of the Master’s hand. Myra Brooks Welch elegantly captures the essence of the gospel in her well-known ballad about a “worthless” violin. In 1921, although badly crippled with arthritis, Myra, by holding a pencil with both hands, captured the essence of the gospel in The Touch of the Master’s Hand. The poem was completed in 30 minutes!



The Touch of the Master's Hand

*'Twas battered and scarred, and the auctioneer
Thought it scarcely worth his while
To waste much time on the old violin,
But held it up with a smile:*

*"What am I bidden, good folks," he cried,
"Who'll start the bidding for me?"
"A dollar, a dollar"; then, "Two" "Only two?"
Two dollars, and who'll make it three?"*

*Three dollars, once; three dollars, twice;
Going for three—"But no,
From the room, far back, a gray-haired man
Came forward and picked up the bow;*

*Then, wiping the dust from the old violin,
And tightening the loose strings,
He played a melody pure and sweet
As sweet as an angel sings.*

*The music ceased, and the auctioneer,
With a voice that was quiet and low,
Said: "What am I bid for the old violin?"
And he held it up with the bow.*

*"A thousand dollars, and who'll make it two?
Two thousand. And who'll make it three?
Three thousand, once, three thousand, twice,
And going, and gone," said he.*

*The people cheered, but some of them cried,
"We do not quite understand
What changed its worth." Swift came the reply:
"The touch of a master's hand."*

*And many a man with life out of tune,
And battered and scarred with sin,
Is auctioned cheap to the thoughtless crowd,
Much like the old violin.*

*A "mess of pottage," a glass of wine;
A game—and he travels on.
He is "going" once, and "going" twice,
He's "going" and almost "gone."*

*But the Master comes, and the foolish crowd
Never can quite understand
The worth of a soul and the change that's wrought
By the touch of the Master's hand.*

“The very essence of the gospel is restoration, and the Saviour would have us bid the sick, the hopeless, and the afflicted take hold upon His strength” (The Desire of Ages, pp. 824, 825; emphasis supplied).

FOR FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, page 17

“It was His mission to bring men to complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character.”

The Ministry of Healing, page 451

“As the sacrifice in our behalf was complete, so our restoration from the defilement of sin is to be complete.”

The Desire of Ages, page 568

“Freely will He pardon all who will come to Him for forgiveness and restoration.”

1 Corinthians 15:51-58: Promise of complete restoration to all who persevere.

