



The Reformation
Messenger

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Are You Afraid of the Wolves?

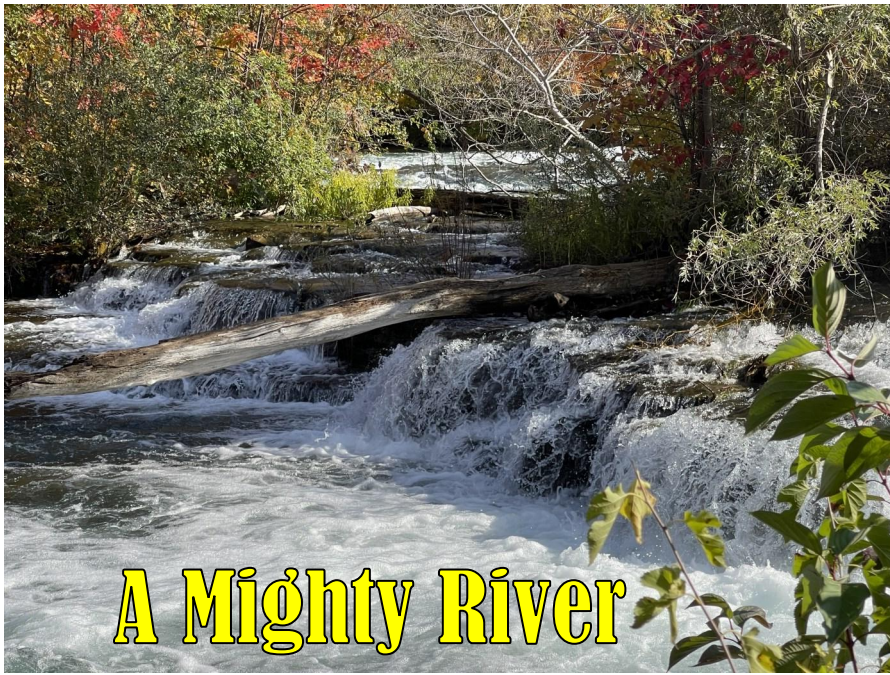
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A Mighty River

“Happy is the man that findeth wisdom.’ He shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit.’ [Proverbs 3:13; Jeremiah 17:8.]”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 602

“We all need a guide through the many strait places in life as much as the sailor needs a pilot over the sandy bar or up the rocky river, and where is this guide to be found? We point you, dear brethren, to the Bible. Inspired of God, written by holy men, it points out with great clearness and precision the duties of both old and young. It elevates the mind, softens the heart, and imparts gladness and holy joy to the spirit. The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life. Take it as the man of your counsel, the rule of your daily life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 264

“The springs of heavenly peace and joy, unsealed in the soul. . . by the words of Inspiration, will become a mighty river of influence to bless all who connect with him. The Bible will not become a tiresome book . . . It will be as the bread of life, and will never grow old. Its freshness and beauty will attract and charm the children and youth. It is like the sun shining upon the earth, perpetually imparting brightness and warmth, yet never exhausted.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 132

“The heart that receives the word of God is not as a pool that evaporates. . . It is like a river constantly flowing

and, as it advances, becoming deeper and wider, until its life-giving waters are spread over all the earth. . . So it is with the true child of God. The religion of Christ reveals itself as a vitalizing, pervading principle, a living, working, spiritual energy. When the heart is opened to the heavenly influence of truth and love, these principles will flow forth again like streams in the desert, causing fruitfulness to appear where now are barrenness and dearth.” —*Counsels for the Church*, p. 224

“The springs of heavenly peace and joy unsealed in the soul by the words of Inspiration will become a mighty river of influence to bless all who come within its reach.” —*Education*, p. 192

“All this springs from mistaken conceptions of usefulness and honor. The wide, deep rivers are admired and valued, while the hundreds of little rills that help to form these broad and noble streams, are unnoticed. Yet the humble brook that makes its noiseless way through grove and meadow, bringing health and fertility and beauty, is as useful in its way as the broad river.” —*Gospel Workers*, p. 381

“The Giver expects returns corresponding to the gifts. The humblest gift is not to be despised or left inactive. The little rivulet does not say, I will not flow along my narrow channel because I am not a mighty river. The spires of grass do not refuse to grow because they are not forest trees. The lamp does not refuse to give its little light because it is not a star. The moon and stars do not refuse to shine because they have not the brilliant light of the sun. Every person has his own peculiar sphere and vocation. Those who make the most of their God-given opportunities will return to the Giver, in their improvement, an interest proportionate to the intrusted capital.” —*Fundamentals on Christian Education*, p. 48

“Oh, for a clear perception of what we might accomplish if we would learn of Jesus! The springs of heavenly peace and joy, unsealed . . . will become a mighty river of influence, to bless all who connect with Him.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 141

“Then the soul is ready to listen to words of divine instruction. Jesus will give you to drink of the water which flows from the river of God.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 218

Ellen G. White

Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness.

The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform. His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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A Sense of Humour

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We hunger for different things. A hungry person is not happy. A satisfied person is relaxed, smiling, and happy. We have a body that gets hungry easily. Every few hours we have to eat. We also have a soul that gets hungry—soul hunger.

A body needs food, drink, clothing, washing, and constant attention. Also our body needs rest, after a day's work, our body demands it. If you do not give it rest, it will not function properly but will be sick. The body also needs exercise, or it will suffer. It needs variety. The same old thing will become boring, and dull. It often turns to junk food, ice cream, cookies, or hot dogs.

"And the mixed multitude that was among them fell a lusting: and the children of Israel also wept again, and said, Who shall give us flesh to eat? We remember the flesh, which we did eat in Egypt freely; the cucumbers, and the melons, and the leeks, and the onions, and the garlick: But now our soul is dried away: there is nothing at all, beside this manna, before our eyes." Numbers 11:4-6

Hunger is a warning signal that something is needed. Just a few hours after eating you feel hungry again. As more time goes on, you get more and more hungry. If you do not satisfy your hunger in a timely fashion, you are willing to eat almost anything.

Without proper food, people have eaten their leather belts or shoes. In prison, the prisoners even ate the insects on the walls. Hunger is a strong desire that demands satisfaction.

Regarding the hunger of our soul, it can be as strong or even stronger and even more demanding. If you do not supply this soul hunger, you may lose your appetite for what is good. Drinking mental or physical food, satisfies the hunger that is within our inner man.

There are many needs, desires, and appetites, within our body. All this can be compared to a hunger or a thirst. Our eye can also be hungry, our ears also. People can be hungry for certain company, for friends, for entertainment, for certain reading, or hungry for television shows, for traveling, parties, money.

To satisfy all these needs keeps us busy, always looking for something and often failing to satisfy our desires. Then one is unhappy, depressed, and sad.

In prison, many of these things are denied to the inmates, and it causes them suffering. This is the punishment meted out to them for their crimes. They get food, water, rest, but not all their needs are satisfied, and they suffer. Their mental and social needs are not supplied. Emotional suffering can be far greater than physical needs.

"But He answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." Matthew 4:4. Bread is not enough for us, we have other needs. Some supply the need with junk food for the mind, a perverted appetite.

"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the

children of wrath, even as others." Ephesians 2:3. We have unsanctified desires, such as hunger, that demand satisfaction.

"And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat." Genesis 3:6

In search of greater happiness and satisfaction, Eve desired the forbidden fruit. It was not to satisfy body hunger. No, they had plenty of other food to eat. But, a desire for something better or different than what God had given them. And in the end, they lost their happy lives in paradise.

"For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." 1 Timothy 6:10. Many people have a hunger for money and this hunger never seems to be satisfied. They want more and more. To obtain money satisfies their hunger, and after a while they want more again to be happy. If they would not have this hunger, they would be happier. For the love of money, people give up their social life, they have no time to eat, they work, plan and execute to make money. This one desire can become overbearing. All other desires will be neglected and will die. To satisfy their hunger for money, people commit fraud, rob banks, and even commit murder.

Without this hunger, they would be happier. Hunger demands satisfaction, or a person suffers. A person addicted to drugs suffers greatly if he does not get another dose of his drug. But a person who does not have a hunger for drugs feels well and happy without drugs. This is the same with the hunger for money. If one does not have this hunger, they are satisfied with what they have. Judas had this hunger and was willing to betray Jesus for 30 pieces of silver.

"The desire of the slothful killeth him; for his hands refuse to labour." Proverbs 21:25. A lazy person has a hunger for idleness. This hunger and desire will kill him. A worker does not suffer from this hunger. He is satisfied when he is working hard, he is happy.

"Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another." Galatians 5:26. When someone hungers for glory, it can provoke others, causing jealousy. This jealousy leads to hatred, and hatred leads to revenge. Vainglory can also be spiritual pride, we see how good we are, how much we pray, read the

Bible, do missionary work, how much we give to others. All this is hunger that demands satisfaction. If we do not satisfy it, it grows stronger and we suffer. We try to draw attention to ourselves, to be noticed and appreciated. This can lead to an exaggeration of one's deeds, and dramatizing.

"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. for all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world." 1 John 2:15-16. Hunger for the world, hunger of the eyes, this also demands satisfaction. We can be addicted to the world, and if not satisfied, we suffer. And so we could go on and on, hundreds of desires, or hungers that people have.

If you go onto Yonge Street in Toronto, late at night, you see hungry people. They are not hungry for food, but they crave satisfaction for their lusts and addictions. After spending their time and money, they go home, only to be hungry again a few days later, and the next time a greater dose is needed, something more exciting to satisfy their hunger. The business world is full of hungry people, not for food but for profit. Many divorces are as a result of soul hunger that was not satisfied.

There are even people who are craving for something but do not know exactly what they are craving for. Unsatisfied craving leads to depression, and to unhappiness, even to suicide. Life can become unbearable. The mind that is hungry for worldly things is called carnal and it is enmity towards God. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." Romans 8:7

"But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire." 2 Peter 2:22. These carnal desires and hungers may remain dormant for a while when we join the church, because love for Christ is stronger and it satisfies us. But if love towards Christ and to one's fellow man dies, the old unsanctified hunger can bother us again. With a little provocation and temptation, they may awaken in us, and lead us into sin. The knowledge of sin creates desires, lusts, and hunger for sinful practices. If we never had smoked, we would have no desire or hunger for it. It is the same with other sins, knowledge creates a hunger for it.

Now, there is a terrible battle going on in our body, mind, and spirit. The unnatural desires and hungers for sin and vanity must be overcome. If you stop supplying

the cravings of your mind and soul, the hunger becomes greater and greater, until in a weak moment you may give in, and sin again. We must substitute the hunger for sin with the hunger for righteousness. A stronger desire overcomes a weaker desire. Desire can be satisfied with the world or by God. The desire to do evil can be replaced with the desire to do good.

“For My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken Me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.” Jeremiah 2:13. The broken cisterns of this world will never satisfy the hunger of the soul permanently. They are like alcohol to a drinker, he receives only a moment of relief, then the desire soon returns, stronger than ever.

The evil angels are catering to our addictions, knowing that every time we gratify our cravings, our hunger grows stronger and more permanent. We cry out as Paul, O wretched man that I am, who shall save me from this body of death.

Is there a remedy? What can we do to overcome? We are not able to control our hunger for vanity and vain-glory, our lusts, passions, hatred, jealousy, pride, covetousness, and thousands of other desires.

“Thy openest Thine hand, and satisfies the desire of every living thing.” Psalm 145:16. God can satisfy every desire, every need. We do not need the world. Satan and his inventions are not necessary, and they will never satisfy us.

“Jesus answered and said unto her, If thou knowest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would

have given thee living water. . . . Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The woman saith

unto Him, Sir, give me this water, that I thirst not, neither come hither to draw.” John 4:10, 13–15. This woman had had five husbands, and she was now living with another man that was not her husband. She had tried to satisfy her soul thirst, but in vain. Now Jesus offered her living water so that she would never thirst again, she would be fully satisfied.



Homesickness is a strong desire. People can lose interest in all other things, even eating and drinking. But homesickness for heaven can be stronger and overcome homesickness for an earthly home. A boy may find a girl and have a great desire for her. Then he finds another one, more beautiful than the first, and the desire for the first one dies out. In the same way, heavenly treasures can overcome and kill the desire for earthly treasures. Paul had a hunger for Christ, and he counted all things loss for it, to gain Him.

The fountain of life is still open for all. Jesus is still crying, If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink the words of life freely. It is not enough to drink of this fountain sometimes. Daily we can visit this fountain and not only drink but plunge in completely into the healing waters. It is a new experience for many. All other hungers and desires, and temptations lose their power and healing takes place in the body, soul, and spirit. Children and teenagers, adults, are all invited to the fountain of life.

In the gospel song we sing, “There is a place of quiet rest, near to the heart of God. A place where sin cannot molest, near to the heart of God. There is a place of comfort sweet, near to the heart of God, a place where we our Saviour meet, near to the heart of God. There is a place of full release, near to the heart of God. A place where all is joy and peace, near to the heart of God.”

When your soul is hungry and thirsty, you feel tired and depressed. When temptations surround you, and you feel you are not able to resist them, when you have unsatisfied soul hunger that makes you suffer, then come to the fountain of living water, and you find rest to your soul, a full release, fully satisfied, comforted. And again you will sing for joy, and your countenance will light up. New hope will spring up in your heart. Things that were so important before for your happiness become meaningless, and useless, because you have complete satisfaction for all your needs, both mental and spiritual.

Jesus said, My grace is sufficient unto you. Nothing else needs to be added. And only one soul hunger remains—more of Jesus, more of His love, more of His spirit, until you and Jesus become one, and you have found the secret of a perfect, happy, satisfied life. Amen.

Adapted from a sermon by Timo Martin





Are You Afraid of the Wolves?

Fear of wolves is called Lupophobia. Wolves scare people because they are powerful predators that live in intimidating packs out in the wild. They are a wild carnivorous mammal belonging to the dog family. Do we *really* need to be afraid of them? Although wolves are very shy and wary of humans and do not identify humans as prey and even have been known to run away from them, occasionally they have attacked humans if the opportunity has presented itself. Thus, it is wise to avoid them if possible as they can be unpredictable.

Wolves prefer to eat large, hooved mammals such as deer, elk, bison, and moose. They also hunt smaller mammals such as beavers, rodents, and hares. An easy prey for them, though, is domestic livestock—sheep being a favourite as they are “easy prey.” They are easier than other prey to catch and kill. And so, sheep should be very afraid of wolves.

To understand the fear of wolves better, we will contrast them with the sheep.

Sheep on the other hand are quite the opposite. They are very docile. They also are social animals, living in flocks and find it stressful to be isolated from their flock. They feed by grazing on low-growing vegetation. By nature, they are gentle, loyal, sensitive, and sweet. They learn to love their owners, actively seeking human company and affection when they have known safety and love. They are also highly intelligent.

In the Bible, God’s people are often compared to sheep. “Know ye that the LORD He is God: it is He that hath made us, and not we ourselves; we are His people, and the sheep of His pasture.” Psalm 100:3 “For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand.” Psalm 95:7

While we are called sheep (adults of the species), Jesus is the Lamb of God (the young of the species, that is less than one year old). John the Baptist introduced Jesus by saying, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” John 1:29

Why are we a sheep and Jesus a Lamb? When is a sheep slain? When is a lamb slain? Sheep are the ones that are more commonly slain for food. A Lamb is slain throughout the Bible as a sacrificial offering. A lamb was presented as a sin offering, when a person sinned. During the daily service in the temple, a lamb was slain in the morning and evening sacrifice. Thus, in the Bible, a Lamb is a sacrificial animal—not for food, but for religious services.

Of Jesus it is written, “He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth.” Isaiah 53:7. In this verse Jesus is compared to a sheep going to the shearers and as a lamb to the slaughter.

Lambs are normally not shorn, only full-grown sheep. Although it can be a bit stressful it is good in the end.



Sheep shearing keeps the sheep happy and healthy. Shearing does not hurt the sheep if the shearer is good and does not cause cuts or injury to the sheep. While not actually enjoying the process, the sheep benefit from having the fleece removed once a year. Without shearing, the wool coat would become uncontrollably matted and tangled, and this can impact the sheep's health. A heavy, matted coat can restrict blood flow to the limbs resulting in sores and wounds that can prevent the sheep from enjoying full mobility. Thus, Jesus went willingly, not only as a Lamb to the slaughter, but as a sheep to the shearers. "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered." Hebrews 5:8. Jesus did suffer much, and we too may have to go through discomforts in order to have a healthy and happy Christian experience.

Sheep are totally lacking in protection from predators such as wolves, coyotes, eagles, bobcats, lions, bears, domestic dogs, etc. They are one of the few animals that do not have a defense system and are helpless on their own. When they are faced with danger such as a wolf, their natural instinct is to flee, not fight. It is the same in the spiritual flock of Christ. "But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." Matthew 9:36. Thus, to be safe, they need a good fence around their sheepfold and when out grazing, they need the constant watchful eye of the shepherd.

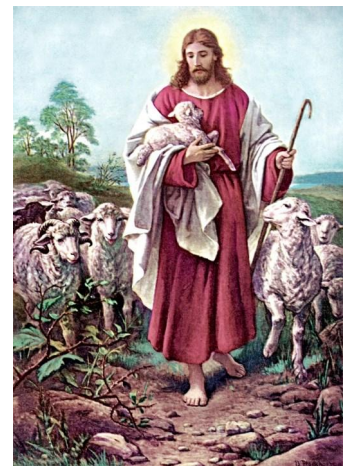
Sometimes while grazing, sheep have wandered from the flock unintentionally and have gone lost. Just like the sheep, we also can wander from the flock (church) unintentionally and lose sight of the watchful eye of the Shepherd. We get busy with what is in front of us, our own business and the cares of this world, and the sheepfold and Shepherd are less important than the green pastures in front of us. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek Thy servant; for I do not forget Thy commandments." Psalm 119:176. "All we like sheep

have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way." Isaiah 53:6. We are helpless without Christ—the Good Shepherd.

One of Jesus' most comforting parables is about a lamb that strayed so far it became lost. The wonderful truth is that Jesus is our true Shepherd (Read Psalm 23). He left the ninety-nine sheep in the fold and went in search of the one lost lamb (Luke 15:2-17). "He shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young." Isaiah 40:11

Good shepherds make many sacrifices to make sure their flocks are safe. Jesus has promised to take care of His flock of sheep. He said, "I am the good shepherd, and know My sheep, and am known of Mine." John 10:14. And also, "I am the Good Shepherd: the good shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." John 10:11. The Good Shepherd will do what it takes to protect the sheep, even if it means laying down His life for them. Jesus made a great sacrifice for you and I. He gave His life for our redemption. He died on the cross so that we can live with Him forever. "To Him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear His voice: and He calleth His own sheep by name, and leadeth them out." John 10:3

One of the most beautiful descriptions of the Shepherd and His sheep is written in the book, *The Desire of Ages*, under the title "The Divine Shepherd." Here is an excerpt. "As an earthly shepherd knows his sheep, so does the divine Shepherd know His flock that are scattered throughout the world.



"Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

"Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died. The distress of every one touches His heart. The cry for aid reaches His ear. He came to draw all men unto Himself. He bids them, 'Follow Me,' and His Spirit moves upon their hearts to draw them to come to Him. Many refuse

to be drawn. Jesus knows who they are. He also knows who will gladly hear His call, and are ready to come under His pastoral care. He says, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.' He cares for each as if there were not another on the face of the earth." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 479

There is a false shepherd, though, that we have to beware of. "But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and seeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling seeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep." John 10:12–13

The wolf will come. Without a good shepherd, in the face of a wolf, a sheep will be in great danger. If the wolf is so frightening that the hireling runs away, what chance do the sheep have when faced with the wolves? "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Matthew 26:31

Let us now read more about the wolf that we ought to be afraid of.

Wolves are mentioned in the Bible in several places, and they have a negative connotation—vicious. "Her princes in the midst thereof are like wolves ravaging the prey, to shed blood, and to destroy souls, to get dishonest gain." Ezekiel 22:27

"Benjamin shall ravine as a wolf: in the morning he shall devour the prey, and at night he shall divide the spoil." Genesis: 49:27. The tribe of Benjamin was known for its warlike character. They were expert archers and slingers.

The Apostle Paul said, "For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." Acts 20:29. Paul warned the leaders of the church to stand strong because false shepherds and hirelings will come to try to destroy the flock. The hireling is no match for the wolf, but the true shepherd stands his ground in defense of the helpless sheep. False prophets and false religious leaders are equated to wolves. They seek to devour the faithful sheep. The unconverted leaders do not protect the flock. They only protect themselves. When they see danger, they flee.

Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravaging wolves." Matthew 7:15. A wolf in sheep's clothing is



someone who comes in a very friendly, docile manner with the intent to deceive. Their likeness to sheep is only external. There is not a change in their hearts, but they only have the appearance of being a sheep, for the purpose of deceiving the sheep and lulling them into a false sense of security, in order to devour them with greater ease. These wolves are wicked at heart. It is their purpose to harm the sheep, in order to bring benefit to themselves—greedy for gain and for power.

Satan was very adept at that as he was successful in deceiving one third of the angels with a cloak of righteousness. Self-righteousness, that is. He then successfully deceived Eve into thinking that God did not have their best interest in mind when He forbade them to eat of the Tree of Knowledge. Today, he continues to deceive the masses of people in the Christian world who believe his two main lies of the immortality of the soul, and that you can sin and not pay, because the law of God has been done away with.

David describes these "wolves" like this, "The words of his mouth were smoother than butter, but war was in his heart: his words were softer than oil, yet were they drawn swords." Psalm 55:21. They are kind to your face, but have evil intent. Jesus was betrayed by one of them. "Jesus said unto him, Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Luke 22:48

These types of people who are wolves in sheep's clothing could be a good friend, a family member, a church member, or co-worker. Anyone who influences you in the wrong direction in a very subtle manner and tries to tell you that it is ok because it is only a small sin, or a small deviation from the straight and narrow pathway, is a wolf.

There are wolves all around us, ready to pounce on us. Thus we need the Good Shepherd at our side at all times. "Yea, for Thy sake are we killed all the day long;

we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.” Psalm 44:22. Sometimes the suffering we go through is not a result of our sin, but because we are the children of God. Jesus said, “If the world hate you, ye know that it hated Me before it hated you.” John 15:18

Jesus did not tell His disciples to flee from the wolves. He asked them to face the wolves. He said, “Go your ways: behold, I send you forth as lambs among wolves.” Luke 10:3. “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves.” Matthew 10:16. Luke wrote that we are sent as *lambs* among wolves and Matthew wrote as *sheep* among wolves. Jesus sends all, the lambs (the young ones, and those new in the faith) and the sheep (mature ones) regardless of your age or the length of time you have been in the church.

We are not sent as *humans* amongst wolves. That would be less frightening. No, we are sent as *sheep* amongst wolves. A sheep or lamb in their right mind would not dare to wander into a pack of wolves. It would mean instant death. The hungry wolves would pounce on the sheep in an instant and tear it to pieces. Why would Jesus then say we are to go as sheep among wolves? Is it so that we can be torn to pieces? Not necessarily. If we have the Good Shepherd with us, the wolves cannot hurt us. But some of them may cease their wicked and ferocious ways and repent of their sin.

When the Lord asks His servants to go as sheep among wolves, He is asking them to do difficult tasks. A task which may go against the grain of their nature. He asks them to come out of their comfort zone and do a task that may seem formidable. For example: Jonah was sent to Nineveh. I am sure that he likely felt that he was being sent as a sheep amongst wolves because the Ninevites had been cruel enemies of Israel. When the Lord asked him to go, he initially ran away. After spending several nights in the belly of a whale, he repented and went. The Lord blessed Him. He was not torn to pieces, but a great revival occurred in the city.

Elijah was sent to the palace of King Ahab, alone, with a message of doom. Moses was asked to go to the court of Pharaoh, the greatest monarch on earth at that time—to ask for the deliverance of his people. Daniel was in the King’s palace in Babylon and faced possible death when he rejected the king’s kind hospitality, refusing to eat his food. You can read many more instances where God sent His servants into dangerous places in the Bible.

Also, throughout history, you can read in books like *The Great Controversy*, of many sheep that were sent among wolves. For example: Martin Luther was called before

the Diet in Worms, Germany. He was a sheep sent among the wolves, and the wolves were thirsting for his blood, but the Good Shepherd was with him and protected him. He left the city alive. They could not touch him. The Waldenses were a peace-loving people who could have decided to stay in the safety of their mountain retreats and live a peaceful life, but no, they went as sheep amongst the wolves to spread the gospel. Sometimes the sheep were spared, but other times they fell a prey to the wolves, but the Good Shepherd was beside them at all times and their death was a witness to many others who decided to enter the fold of Jesus and become sheep in His pastures.

Today, we also are sent as sheep amongst wolves. A sheep detects a wolf as an enemy and fears them. Their natural instinct is to run away, as Jonah did. But we are not to run. We, as sheep, will be sent amongst wolves. We may be sent somewhere, or be asked to do something that we fear greatly, but we are called to face our fears and go. If the Lord sends us somewhere or asks us to do something, He will not leave us alone to face the wolves, the trials and troubles, alone. “I sought the LORD, and He heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.” Psalm 34:4. We are not to turn back in fear and say we cannot do it, or we are not qualified and someone else should do it who is more qualified. No, Jesus



will ask us to do more and more difficult tasks as we near the end of time. We will have to face our fears and go forward. The world is not a place to sit back and relax, not if you are a true follower of God. The wolves are on your track and you are asked to face them.

Thus if you are asked to do a duty you are not comfortable with, do not decline. The Good Shepherd will be with you. God will not call you into a position that He

will not help you to fulfil. On your own, you will fail, yes, but with Jesus by your side, all that you do will prosper spiritually. All that He asks of you will be successful and produce fruit.

Wolves see a sheep as food when hungry and they pounce on them. Evil people will be hungry for the blood of saints, especially in the time of the end. The Lord sends you among them. These are religious people, not the heathen. The heathen do not care so much. The religious people feel condemned and are the ones who will be ravening wolves. It was the religious leaders in the time of Christ, who were the most thirsty for His blood. It was the nominal Adventists who betrayed their fellow members to the government, those who would not join the military effort in World War I—many losing their lives as martyrs. It will happen again in the end of time. It may be our family, our former friends, or former church members who betray us to the wolves, but do not fear. The Good Shepherd will be with you.

Do not fear the wolves of this world. The Great Shepherd is with you. He will carry you through. "But now thus saith the LORD that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isaiah 43:1-2

Does that mean that we will have no trials? We will not die a martyr's death? Jesus has promised to be with us, and we will not be overwhelmed by the difficulties we may face. Although they may seem major, they are very minor in the grand scheme of things when you think of, and contemplate, the eternity beyond. We may lose our lives, but our faith, trust, and love to God will not be quenched. It will not be burned. "Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it." Song of Solomon 8:7. "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor prin-

cialities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." Romans 8:35-39

When we get to heaven, what will we see? "The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like the bullock: and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain, saith the LORD." Isaiah 65:25

"The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them." Isaiah 11:6

The animals will all be docile in heaven. The wolf as well as the lamb. Perhaps some angry wolves on this earth will be converted and become docile as lambs and thus be granted entrance into the kingdom of heaven. We are not to fear being sent to the wolves. Some have lost their lives, as did John the Baptist, but he was called the greatest of all prophets and will find his place in heaven with all the redeemed host.

Do you have Lupophobia? Are you afraid of the wolves? "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul." Matthew 10:28. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." Revelation 2:10. The Good Shepherd is with you and one day you will be able to witness the wolves and lambs feeding together in the new earth. May you and I be found there. Amen

Wendy Eaton





Dear reader, how old are you? What comes to your mind when asked this question? How many days do you have left to live? Many years ago Pharaoh asked the patriarch Jacob the same question. "And Pharaoh said unto Jacob, How old art thou? And Jacob said unto Pharaoh, The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage." Genesis 47:8-9. Jacob knew that life is short. He did not say "my age is...." But he said, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil."

Our life is only a pilgrimage on this planet. Why is it important to realize the shortness of life? Because it has a great impact on our character, thoughts, actions, and relationships with others. Life is a short journey and soon, very soon, we shall reach the destination. None of us knows when we shall depart, and sleep with our fathers.

Golden Story

I was very much touched by the following story. I found it on the Internet and I learned some valuable lessons from it that I wish to share with you.

"A young lady sat in a bus. At the next stop a loud and grumpy old lady came and sat by her. She squeezed into the seat and bumped her with her numerous bags. The person sitting on the other side of the young lady got upset, asked her why she did not speak up and say something. The young lady responded with a smile: "It is not necessary to be rude or argue over something so insignificant, the journey together is so short. I get off at the next stop."

This response deserves to be written in golden letters: "It is not necessary to argue over something so insignificant, our journey together is so short." If each one of us real-

ized that our time here is so short; that to darken it with quarrels, futile arguments, not forgiving others, discontentment and a fault-finding attitude, would be a waste of time and energy. (<https://www.ilovepsalms.com/2019/04/our-journey-together-is-so-short.html>)

Our life together is so short. No one of us knows the day when someone may depart by death. Why so much quarreling? If everyone could realize that our time here below is of such short duration, clouding it with futile disputes would be a waste of time and energy. "Satan is Christ's personal enemy. He knows that the time is short, and he seeks to gain the victory over every one possible" – *Educational Messenger* September 11, 1908

Vindicating your rights?

Has someone hurt your heart? Calm down, the journey is so short. Has anyone betrayed, bullied, or humiliated you? Calm down, the trip is so short. No matter what anyone does to us, let us remember that the journey together is short.

"We must give others an example of not stopping at every trifling offense in order to vindicate our rights. We may expect that false reports will circulate about us; but if we follow a straight course, if we remain indifferent to these things, others will also be indifferent. Let us leave to God the care of our reputation. And thus, like sons and daughters of God, we shall show that we have self-control. We shall show that we are led by the Spirit of God, and that we are slow to anger. Slander can be lived down by our manner of living; it is not lived down by words of indignation." – *The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1160-1161

If you are easily offended by someone, you will be the one who suffers the most. Sometimes when someone offends you, it is unintentional. Keep this in mind and it will reduce your stress. If we keep worrying or getting stressed out about what others have done to us, we will lose our peace and joy. Rather, we need to cultivate gen-

uine and divine love towards them. To be at peace, our thoughts and emotions must be pure. Our hearts must be fully open to forgiving people instead of receiving hurt or offense.

Try not to be among people who let little details upset them so much that life is always filled with problems and worries. How many people get divorced over all of the little things they kept hidden in their hearts that eventually became big mountains that they can no longer climb over? If we take no account of the evil done to us as 1 Corinthians 13 instructs us to do, we will have much better, and happier relationships.

"A man is called selfish not for pursuing his own good, but for neglecting his neighbour's." –Richard Whately. When we spend an excessive amount of time thinking about what people have done to us instead of what they have done for us we lose our joy. We develop a critical, murmuring, defensive attitude that displeases God. We have much more peace when we readily forgive. Good relationships are a gift we need to cultivate. Meekness is a virtue that is synonymous with greatness and not cowardice. Our journey together here below is very short and there is no return.

Because our journey is very short, let us remember that "the religion of Jesus Christ will hold the lines of control over every species of unlawful liberty; the moral powers will hold the lines of control over every thought, word, and action." –*Medical Ministry*, p. 142–143

"Self is the enemy we most need to fear. No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self." –*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 485

Many signs tell us that the end is near, that the journey is almost over. "The condition of things in the world shows that troublous times are right upon us. The daily papers are full of indications of a terrible conflict in the near future. Bold robberies are of frequent occurrence. Strikes are common. Thefts and murders are committed on every hand. Men possessed of demons are taking the lives of men, women, and little children. Men have become infatuated with vice, and every species of evil prevails." –*Christian Service*, p. 54

Considering how serious and short our time is, what should be our priority in life? How should we tell others

that our trip together is so short? How do we wish to be found when our Redeemer appears in glory?

Let us live peacefully with all men as if today was the last day of our life "We are to manifest at all times and in all places the meekness and lowliness of Christ." –*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 634. Whatever the problems someone brings to us, it is only a problem if we dwell on it; remember that our journey together is too short. Nobody knows when we will arrive at our stop.

Being Peacemakers

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matthew 5:9

Each morning millions of people of all ages arrive at their respective bus stops and get on. We all pray to live long but the journey is so short. Therefore, cherish and appreciate your friends, family, and the people around you. Be calm, respectful, kind, and thankful. Love God, His church, and serve Him. Be forgiving, holding no grudges. No matter what anyone has done to hurt you, always remember that: "it is so insignificant." In the Bible we

read that salt is good: "but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?" Matthew 5:13. Have salt in yourselves and live at peace, one with another.

Is it possible for someone to live peacefully, meekly, and humbly, each and every day? Yes. Very possible. The psalmist wrote "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for

brethren to dwell together in unity!" Psalm 133:1. Sweetness is a virtue that is associated with greatness, not cowardice. Our journey together down here is very short and cannot be reversed. We have to be joyful, always with meekness.

"Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate. . . . A meek and quiet spirit will not be ever looking out for happiness for itself, but will seek for self-forgetfulness and find sweet content and true satisfaction in making others happy." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 335, 536

Secrets of Victory

Here are some secrets to living a victorious life. Make them a part of your daily life now since life is so short. "Examine

"Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. . . . Will seek for self-forgetfulness and find sweet content and true satisfaction in making others happy." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 335, 536

yourselves, whether ye be in the faith." 2 Corinthians 13:5. "When a man's ways please the LORD, he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Proverbs 16:7

Do not focus on the past: "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forging those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:13-14

In order to have peace in your heart, do not remember the former things: neither consider the things of old.

Give your past to God. He is able to turn your mistakes into something good if you trust Him to do so. Every day is a new day containing new possibilities. There is new life, new hopes, and new dreams. We cannot see the possibilities of today if we remain entangled in the mistakes and disappointments of yesterday. Let go of what is behind and move forward.

Lift up your eyes on high and see the wonderful future that God has prepared for you. Do not spend time mourning over what you have lost. Appreciate what you do have and keep going, one step of faith at a time. Remember, God is on your side and the trip is so short. The next stop may be yours.

Live in peace, avoiding strife and conflict. Has someone provoked you, or hurt you? Are you facing opposition? Are you depressed? Do you want to take revenge on people who did you wrong in the past? "It is an honour for a man to cease from strife." Proverbs 20:3

Strife refers to bickering, heated arguments, and murmuring. Strife can be with friends, family, and coworkers. Will a true Christian be found with these types of people? "But foolish and unlearned questions avoid, knowing that they do gender strifes. And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient." 2 Timothy 2:23-24

To keep conflict and strife out of our lives, we must avoid conversations that lead to distress and turmoil. Human nature always wants to be right and this often leads to a great deal of strife. However, in order to avoid dissention, one must accept the fact that even though they think they are right, it is possible they are wrong. All kinds of problems arise just from constantly trying to prove we are right. But God has called us to peace. This is why *The young lady, when provoked by her fellow passenger, responded with a smile: "It is not necessary to be rude or argue over something so insignificantly, the journey together is so short. I get off at the next stop."*

Peace is simple and sweet. Strife closes the door to bless-

ings and opens the door for all kinds of trouble, it weakens us while peaceful agreement increases our power. As the old saying goes, "United we stand, divided we fall." The next time you are having an argument with someone, stop and ask yourself if what you are discussing is actually worth losing your peace over.

Be Positive "A pessimist sees the difficulty in every opportunity; an optimist sees the opportunity in every difficulty." -Sir Winston Churchill

The Apostle Paul tells us, "And be renewed in the spirit of your mind." Ephesians 4:23. In other words, have a fresh mental and spiritual attitude. Being positive is a choice. It is an attitude we decide to have, and it opens the door for God to work in our lives. On the other hand, we can choose to be negative and open a door that allows the devil to work. When faced with negative situations, being negative will not solve the problem. The problem is not the problem, the problem is your attitude.

As soon as you allow a negative attitude to distort your viewpoint, it becomes a filter for everything and you lose your joy and peace. A negative person is not going to get answers from God, so they feel confused about what to do and everything goes from bad to worse. Why not help yourself and everyone around you by deciding to look on the bright side?

You can change the atmosphere you live in from negative to positive beginning right now. Pray and ask the Lord to change your outlook on the situation. Being negative is a waste of time. Ask for help to concentrate on the bright side of life and count your blessings.

Learn to forgive: If each one of us realized that our time here is so short we would not waste our time and energy to darken our lives with quarrels, futile arguments, and an unforgiving spirit. Did someone betray, bully, cheat or humiliate you? Be calm, forgive, the journey is so short. . . . Whatever troubles anyone brings us, let us remember that our journey together is so short. Let us cherish friends and family, being respectful, kind and forgiving because we do not know when our journey will end. Let us make this a principle of our lives: "If I have ever hurt you, I ask for your forgiveness . . . If you have ever hurt me, You already have my forgiveness..."

Strive to make every moment that you have remaining, valuable. Be loving, caring, sharing and forgiving in this blessed journey, smiling forever.

"Forgiveness doesn't make the other person right, it makes you free." -Stormie Omartian. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses [their reckless and willful sins, leaving them, letting them go, and giving up resentment], your heavenly Father will also forgive you." Matthew 6:14. One of the

surest ways to bring distress into your life is to be easily offended and hold grudges. The Lord wants us to enjoy peace, and that is impossible if we are bitter, resentful, and angry. Refusing to forgive is like an acid that destroys the container it is in.

“Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.” Romans 12:19. God will vindicate us in His time. He promises to deal with our enemies if we trust Him to do so. We should pray for those who hurt us instead of being angry at them. When we do so, we have freedom in our spirit and the Lord will take care of the issue. When we forgive we are released from a prison of inner turmoil.

The sooner you forgive a person after they hurt you, the easier it is to do the next time. Do not allow anger to fester in your heart and become a root of bitterness which will contaminate not only you but others around you.

By allowing ourselves to remain angry, we end up taking our anger out on people who have nothing to do with the original offense. God forgives us for all our sins on a regular basis, and He expects us to do the same for others.

By choosing to forgive, your feelings toward the individual who hurt you will not necessarily change immediately. Only God can change your heart. While we choose to obey, God then releases us from all negative feelings, and we are free.

Be humble and patient: Many things are better left alone. Prayer and time changes a lot of things, and just waiting for awhile may save you a lot of grief. If you are confronted with a challenge, do not respond immediately. Give yourself time to think about it, and wait a couple of days before you say something. Take time to consider the situation and your options so you can make wise, solid decisions.

The Lord taught a great lesson to us when He told Jehoshaphat, “Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye [still], and see the salvation of the LORD with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the LORD will be with you.” 2 Chronicles 20:17. The Lord fought for them. Although there were other times He did instruct His people to fight, at this time He told Jehoshaphat to worship, to sing, to praise, and to wait. As he obeyed God, the enemy became confused and destroyed each other.

When faced with challenges, we need to get into the habit of pausing to pray and think before acting. You may not

need to deal with everything that comes along. Some things work themselves out if you give them time. Ask God for the wisdom to know how to react in each challenging situation you find yourself in. Sometimes we have to “let go and let God.” “Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and He shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.” Psalm 27:14

Do not be Judgmental: “If you judge people, you have no time to love them.” –*Mother Teresa*. “My brethren, do not speak evil about or accuse one another.” James 4:11. Only God is the Judge. Only He can judge righteously.

Think Before You Speak: “Before you speak ask yourself if what you are going to say is true, is kind, is necessary, is helpful. If the answer is no, maybe what you are about to say should be left unsaid.” –*Bernard Melier*. “He who guards his mouth keeps his life, but he who opens wide his lips comes to ruin.” Proverbs 13:3. “Even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise: and he that shuteth his lips is esteemed a man of understanding.” Proverbs 17:28.

Be better to keep quiet than to speak foolishly.

Let us learn to think before we speak as it can avoid many unnecessary conflicts. Whenever you are tempted to speak negatively, ask yourself what the benefit of those words will be to the person they are intended for. Think and ponder

your words, and bring positive words when tempted to bring negative words.

Conclusion

The year 2023 has come to a close. We are one year closer to the end of this world. The trip is getting shorter. Live as though this were your last day on earth.

The trip together is too short. Please consider daily what Paul recommended in Philippians 4:8. “Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.” Amen.

Victor Shumbusho, DR Congo





David the Courageous



*“My son, take these cheeses to the captain of their thousand
 To the camp now from my hand,
 And ten loaves, parched corn, go, look for your brothers how they fare,
 And tell them of their father’s care.*

*Early then next morning, David left the sheep into the keeper’s hand,
 And off he went with the presents on his errand, as his father did command,
 To the three sons of Jesse, Soldiers in the army of King Saul,
 Search and greeting them to find all well and whole.*

.....

*The Philistines had invaded Judah, gathering for battle
 Upon a mountain,
 Saul and his army stood across on a mountain,
 And there was a valley in between, where they would gather
 To war against each other.*

*The Philistine army had a champion - Goliath of Gath -
 A giant of great strength and height,
 He daily challenged Israel to give a man with him to fight,
 To the intent, that who gets killed, the nation of the loser -
 The servant to the winner shall be ever.
 But no one dared with Goliath to compete,
 Fighting his mighty stature - would only bring defeat -
 Saul and all Israel greatly were dismayed,
 Brought low in spirit, were very much afraid.*

.....

*As usual both armies gathered for battle in array,
 Army against army once more for another day.*

.....

*David nearing, heard the shout for battle,
 Leaving with a keeper his supply,
 Runs hither to seek his brothers in the army
 To greet and chat with them, when oh -
 Goliath came out, disputing for a man again to fight with him.
 By him Israel’s armies daily have been mocked, derided,
 But no solution was in sight, for there was no equal
 In this combat to face this giant Goliath!
 Then David’s zeal for God and Israel arose now on the spot,
 Against this uncircumcised Philistine, because
 He dared to mock, disdain the army of the living God!
 And he inquired of the men what should be done for him,*



who would kill that Philistine.
But Eliab his older brother did rebuke him sharply, accusing him of pride,
Curiosity and naughtiness,
And David answered: "Is there not a cause?"
Soldiers told King Saul of David's bold intention,
But when he saw him, he did mention, he would not be strong enough,
For he is just a youth.

Then David spoke of killing once a lion and a bear,
And God delivered him, so God would also save him
From this giant, who mocks the armies of the living God!
Saul armed him with his armour, helmet, sword,
But David did feel awkward, very heavy in this gear.
He took it off, just took his staff,
Out of the nearby brook, five smooth stones he took,
In his shepherd bag them put,
His sling then in the hand to meet that giant now he went.
As Goliath sees the youth approaching him - thinking -
"Is this boy mad?"

He shouts ill-tempered, angrily: "Am I a dog to come to me with staves?"
And cursed him by his gods, "Come on, that vultures, beasts shall have a feast,
To eat your flesh today, for you are very foolish, this I say."

"You come to me with sword and shield and spear,
To make me fear, but I come in the name of the God of Israel,
The LORD of hosts, whose armies you defied,
I will smite you by His might, take off your head,
Instead me - you will be dead!
For the battle is the LORD's, and all
Will know without fail - there is a God in Israel."

And David hastened toward Goliath of Gath,
Took one stone, slung it swiftly, and with one strong swoop
Smote the giant in his forehead, and Goliath sank down dead.
Then David ran and took the sword of Goliath,
Cut off his head, and all the Philistines now fled. . . .
Then the men of Israel and Judah pursued the Philistines
And fought them in the valley all the way along
Till they came to the gates Ekron. . .

Thus God through one courageous, God-fearing boy gave Israel great victory!

Amen.

To be continued. . . .

Edda Tedford, Canada





Romantic God

When you think about God, what is your idea about Him? For a long time, God had been someone I needed to be terrified of. Though I knew He loved me, God was still someone strict and scary, only caring about principles and laws. I knew His love by theory, but not from the heart. However, when I saw how romantic God is, I could finally feel His love in my heart.

What is Romance?

What does it mean to be romantic? The Britannica Dictionary defines the word “romantic” as “thinking about love and doing and saying things to show that you love someone.” In other words, romantic means a unique way of expressing love so that the subject can feel it. And often, the key characteristic of romance comes from repetition and emphasis on shared memories and unique keywords.

To explain these concepts easily, I would like to give an example from my personal experience with my wife. As I grew up, I always lived on hills that were close to water. Houses where I lived in Korea and Japan were surrounded by green hills, and I could walk to either a river or the beach. Sometimes, I would go for a walk to the beach and look into the water, listening to the sound of its waves. There, I would spend time thinking and reflecting on my life. Thus, many personal memories and emotions were connected to hills and beaches. My wife grew up in a very similar environment. Her house in Italy was at the top of a hill; but, it was only ten minutes away from the beach where she made many memories.

It was at the same beach in Italy where I met my wife for the first time. We shared our first memories on the beach near the hills. In this way, the beach became an even more important place for us. The concept of the sea kept repeating among us, as we were separated by seas and oceans between Japan and Italy. During long-distance relationships, we often found encouragement in the Song of Solomon 8:7, which says

“Many waters cannot quench love, Neither can the floods drown it.” Later, when I proposed to her, I chose the Scarborough Bluffs—a beach with a hill right next to it. At that moment, I did not need to tell her about what the beach meant for her or me. I did not need to go through the time we spent as a long-distance couple. It is because as soon as we entered the beach, all these memories returned to us both. And hopefully, she found the proposal romantic.

Thus, one of the central features of romance comes from repetition and emphasis on memories and a keyword. For me and my wife, in the example that I used, it was a beach close to hills.

In this sense, romance is not limited to something only between a man and a woman. This kind of romance can happen in every kind of relationship. It can happen to family, friends, church members, and others. Romance can exist with any kind of love, to show how we love each other and cherish the memories we share together.

Romance has one more interesting characteristic to remember. These memories are unique to specific individuals and do not have a significant meaning for others. For example, if I had brought my roommate at that time to the beach, he would not have found it meaningful in his friendship with me. Instead, he would have found meaning between himself and me in other memories. Therefore, we can see that romance is a very personal attribute.

And now, did you know that our God is also very romantic? Among many different romances between God and humans, the example we will learn from today is with Jesus and Peter.

The Call by the Sea

Let us read the story of how Jesus called Peter for the first time.

“...He said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let

down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto Him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at Thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and lled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed Him." Luke 5:4-11

For Peter, fishing was not merely a job but his love and passion. From *The Desire of Ages*, we can read about his love for his profession even after Jesus' resurrection: "The evening was pleasant, and Peter, who still had much of his old love for boats and fishing, proposed that they should go out upon the sea and cast their nets." -*The Desire of Ages*, p. 810

Until Jesus called Peter, he had been spending all his life on the Sea of Galilee. He spent most of his day fishing here. There were so many memories made here. It was a place that Peter could not imagine living without. For this reason, Jesus chose the Sea of Galilee as the first place to call Peter. Jesus could have chosen a market, street or synagogue. However, Jesus did not call Peter from a place where it was easier for Himself. Jesus knew the place that was meaningful for Peter. And so, Jesus walked into Peter's life and met him there. It is the same for us. Jesus knows what is important to us and meets us there.

The same principle applies to missionary work too. We should not sit and wait in the church or in a place that is comfortable for us. We should go out and show our interest in people's lives. We should care about what is important to them. That is how Jesus wants to meet souls through us and start His relationships and stories with them.

Jesus chose where to start His story with Peter. Now He needed to choose how. And His choice was the miracle of catching many fishes. Jesus told Peter "Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." This command could have sounded like a joke to Peter. In human eyes, Jesus was merely a carpenter who also preached. He would have no knowledge about fishing. Meanwhile, Peter was a professional fisherman who had been fishing for many years. If Peter had failed to catch fish overnight, how can an amateur even dare to give suggestions?

After all, daytime was not a good moment to fish. "Night was the only favorable time for fishing with nets in the clear waters of the lake. After toiling all night without success, it seemed hopeless to cast the net by day" (-*The Desire of Ages*,

p.246). Therefore, Jesus' command should have sounded like it was from a lack of knowledge about fishing. However, Peter obeyed and that day, he witnessed a larger amount of fish than he had ever seen before.

Why did Jesus choose this miracle? Jesus was planning to make Peter a pillar of the early church, and the influence of his work was to continue upon the church for over two thousand years that were to follow. Jesus planned for Peter to be one of the "fishers of men" (Matthew 4:19) and bring many souls to Jesus.

However, Peter had a weakness that could be an obstacle to this high calling. It was self-reliance. Peter tended to rely upon his own strength, knowledge, judgement and experience. One of many examples where we can see his weakness is when "Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He shall presently give Me more than twelve legions of angels?" (John 18:10; Matthew 26:52-53)

Even though Peter knew well of Jesus' power, his hand immediately grabbed his sword, trusting in his own strength. As long as Peter had this tendency to trust his own strength, he could never be a true missionary. It is because our king's business is never done by human strength, but by divine power. Peter needed to learn how to look upon Jesus' strength, not his own.

This is why Jesus chose the miracle of catching many fishes. In human eyes, Peter seemed to be more experienced and knowledgeable about fishing than Jesus. However, when he trusted and obeyed Jesus' command, he caught so much fish that it almost made his and his fellow's boats sink into the water. When Peter put a net down, the divine power worked with him. It was a lesson for him to remember as he catches men. As he tries to win a soul, he should never trust his own strength, knowledge, judgement and experience. He should always rely on Jesus, listening to His command. Only when he does so, he could be a true missionary of Jesus—the fisher of men.

Walking on the Sea

However, it was not a lesson that Peter could learn in just one day. Therefore, Jesus called Peter to follow Him. They spent many days together, sharing many memories. During these times, Jesus tried to teach the same lesson to Peter. One of the most significant events related to this lesson happened one night when there was a great storm at sea.

"But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But



straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered Him and said, Lord, if it be Thou, bid me come unto Thee on the water. And He said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus. But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. And immediately Jesus stretched forth His hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?" *Matthew 14:24-31*

Does it not take significant faith to walk on the sea? Peter did walk on the sea. It was a great experience for him. But what made him sink into the water despite his faith? Why did Jesus tell him that he had little faith?

"Looking unto Jesus, Peter walks securely; but as in self-satisfaction he glances back toward his companions in the boat, his eyes are turned from the Saviour. The wind is boisterous. The waves roll high, and come directly between him and the Master; and he is afraid. For a moment Christ is hidden from his view, and his faith gives way. He begins to sink. But while the billows talk with death, Peter lifts his eyes from the angry waters, and fixing them upon Jesus, cries, 'Lord, save me.' Immediately Jesus grasps the outstretched hand, saying, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?'" *—The Desire of Ages, p. 381*

Why did Peter turn his eyes away from Jesus? It is because he was proud. He wanted to see the other disciples and boast about his faith. His eyes stopped looking at Jesus. The subject of his faith turned from Jesus. And ironically, his faith was looking upon his faith itself. He trusted his faith, not Jesus. That's when his faith lost its power. He was relying on Jesus when he walked on the water. But as he became proud, he relied on his strength—his faith—not Jesus.

Unfortunately, many Christians repeat the same mistake. They trust in their faith, not Jesus. As they rely on their spiritual experience and become proud of it, they lose sight of Jesus. Peter walked on the water. It was a great spiritual experience and a miracle—there is nothing against this fact. However, as soon as he relied on his own experience and faith, ironically the subject of his trust switched from Jesus to his own spiritual strength.

"Jesus read the character of His disciples. He knew how sorely their faith was to be tried. In this incident on the sea He desired to reveal to Peter his own weakness,—to show that his safety was in constant dependence upon divine power. Amid the storms of temptation he could walk safely only as in utter self-distrust he should rely upon the Saviour. It was on the point where he thought himself strong that Peter was weak; and not until he discerned his weakness could he realize his need of dependence upon Christ. Had he learned the lesson that Jesus sought to teach him in that experience on the sea, he would not have failed when the great test came upon him." *—The Desire of Ages, p.382*

Again, this lesson was repeated at the place where it is significant for Peter. If Peter had learned the lesson here, he could have avoided the bitter experience. Unfortunately, due to his lack of wisdom, Peter had to learn it in a harder way.

Three Denials

Time passed, more memories and lessons were given, and now it was time for Jesus to sacrifice Himself on the cross. So He gathered His disciples and told them about what was going to happen now.

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto Him, Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny Me thrice. Peter said unto Him, Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee. Likewise also said all the disciples." *—Matthew 26:31-35*

Peter made a very beautiful confession of his love for Jesus. "Though I should die with Thee, yet will I not deny Thee." What can be stronger love than being willing to die for someone? Did not Jesus say, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (John 15:13)? Was it not the same love that Jesus showed us? Is it not the same promises we make as the remnant church? At baptism, we promise God that we will not deny Him even unto death, by keeping the Sabbath under the threat of Sunday Law. We made an oath, that even if the whole world stands against the truth, we will stand on Jesus' side, just as Peter said: "Though all men shall be offended because of Thee, yet will I never be offended." Then what is wrong with Peter's confession? Why did Jesus not accept Peter's confession? Why did Peter eventually deny Jesus three times?

It was because of the same weakness of Peter we have talked about. He relied on himself, but not on Jesus. When he confessed this love, he relied on his love. He did not know that perfect love can be imputed and imparted only from Jesus.

He did not learn that he needs to ask Jesus to give him this love. He did not realize that the power of divine love can exist in him only when he keeps receiving it from Jesus.

Are not our confessions of love and faith as Peter's? We might sometimes say "How can Peter be so foolish?" or "How can the ancient Israelites complain so many times? How can people in the Bible be so faithless witnessing all these miracles? I am not like them." In this way, we are repeating Peter's words: "Though all men shall be o ended because of Thee, yet will I never be o ended."

Peter did not know his faith was built on the sand. He relied on his own love, his own faith, his own judgement, own knowledge, own experience and own strength. His source of power was himself—a weak human. Thus when the time of trial came, he immediately fell.

"While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter's lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges, and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter's eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

"The sight of that pale, su ering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. Conscience was aroused. Memory was active. Peter called to mind his promise of a few short hours before that he would go with his Lord to prison and to death. He remembered his grief when the Saviour told him in the upper chamber that he would deny his Lord thrice that same night. Peter had just declared that he knew not Jesus, but he now realized with bitter grief how well his Lord knew him, and how accurately He had read his heart, the falseness of which was unknown even to himself.

"A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour's tender mercy, His kindness and long-su ering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples,—all was remembered. He recalled the caution, 'Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.' Luke 22:31, 32. He re ected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, his perjury. Once more he looked at his Master, and saw a sacrilegious hand raised to smite Him in the face. Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall.

"He pressed on in solitude and darkness, he knew not and cared not whither. At last he found himself in Gethsemane. The scene of a few hours before came vividly to his mind. The su ering face of his Lord, stained with bloody sweat and convulsed with anguish, rose before him. He remembered with bitter remorse that Jesus had wept and agonized in prayer alone, while those who should have united with Him in that trying hour were sleeping. He remembered His solemn charge, 'Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.' Matthew 26:41. He witnessed again the scene in the judgment hall. It was torture to his bleeding heart to know

that he had added the heaviest burden to the Saviour's humiliation and grief. On the very spot where Jesus had poured out His soul in agony to His Father, Peter fell upon his face, and wished that he might die." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 712–713

Peter found himself in Gethsemane. Contrary to his three denials, here in this place, Jesus prayed for Peter and the human race three times. Peter deeply realized how weak he is. He saw what his weakness was, and how terrifying the result it brings. He felt his need.

However, Jesus has never forgo en Peter, even when he said he did not know Jesus. It was Jesus' promise that gave him the assurance of forgiveness and strength in the midst of his deep sorrow: "But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee."

When Jesus was risen, He remembered Peter. On the day of resurrection, an angel met the women at the tomb and sent them to the disciples, mentioning Peter's name particularly. "But go your way, tell His disciples and Peter that He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see Him, as He said unto you." Mark 16:7. The promise that Jesus would meet them at Galilee was repeated. Following this command, the disciples headed to the Sea of Galilee.

By the Sea Once More

As they arrived in Galilee, their hearts were lled with memories. The Sea of Galilee was not only where they grew up, but also where they were called by Jesus. This was the place where their stories with Christ started.

"Much of the time of Christ's ministry had been passed near the Sea of Galilee. As the disciples gathered in a place where they were not likely to be disturbed, they found themselves surrounded by reminders of Jesus and His mighty works. On this sea, when their hearts were lled with terror, and the erce storm was hurrying them to destruction, Jesus had walked upon the billows to their rescue. Here the tempest had been hushed by His word. Within sight was the beach where above ten thousand persons had been fed from a few small loaves and shes. Not far distant was Capernaum, the scene of so many miracles. As the disciples looked upon the scene, their minds were full of the words and deeds of their Saviour." —*Ibid.*, p. 809

Soon, Peter suggested shing due to his old love for it and also to earn money for food and clothing.

"Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a shing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And He said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall nd. They cast therefore, and now they



were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes." John 21:3-6

It was not the first time they, especially Peter, witnessed this miracle. It was the same miracle that Jesus performed when He called them for the first time. The miracle was to give a lesson that they should not trust themselves but the Creator. Peter did not learn the lesson when this miracle was given at the beginning of his walk with Jesus. However, after all those memories, lessons, and failures, he finally understood the meaning of this miracle.

At the same place, with the same miracle and the same lesson, Jesus called Peter to be a shepherd of men once again. How romantic is Jesus in His relationship with Peter?

"Vividly they recalled the scene beside the sea when Jesus had bidden them follow Him. They remembered how, at His command, they had launched out into the deep, and had let down their net, and the catch had been so abundant as to fill the net, even to breaking. Then Jesus had called them to leave their fishing boats, and had promised to make them shepherds of men. It was to bring this scene to their minds, and to deepen its impression, that He had again performed the miracle. His act was a renewal of the commission to the disciples. It showed them that the death of their Master had not lessened their obligation to do the work He had assigned them. Though they were to be deprived of His personal companionship, and of the means of support by their former employment, the risen Saviour would still have a care for them. While they were doing His work, He would provide for their needs. And Jesus had a purpose in bidding them cast their net on the right side of the ship. On that side He stood upon the shore. That was the side of faith. If they labored in connection with Him,—His divine power combining with their human effort,—they could not fail of success." —*Ibid.*, p. 810

However, there was something to be solved before this invitation. "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" John 21:15. Why did Jesus ask Peter such a question? Was Jesus mocking Peter's confession before Jesus' cross that he will love Jesus to death? Was Jesus giving a hard time to Peter because Peter denied Him three times? Not at all. Rather,

Jesus did so for Peter's sake.

"Peter's denial of his Lord had been in shameful contrast to his former professions of loyalty. He had dishonored Christ, and had incurred the distrust of his brethren. They thought he would not be allowed to take his former position among them, and he himself felt that he had forfeited his trust. Before being called to take up again his apostolic work, he must before them all give evidence of his repentance. Without this, his sin, though repented of, might have destroyed his influence as a minister of Christ. The Saviour gave him opportunity to regain the confidence of his brethren, and, so far as possible, to remove the reproach he had brought upon the gospel. . . .

"Three times Peter had openly denied his Lord, and three times Jesus drew from him the assurance of his love and loyalty, pressing home that pointed question, like a barbed arrow to his wounded heart. Before the assembled disciples Jesus revealed the depth of Peter's repentance, and showed how thoroughly humbled was the once boasting disciple." —*Ibid.*, p. 811-812

Now, let us see how Jesus worded His questions. In Greek, which is the original language of the New Testament, there are mainly four words used to describe "love." The first one is *Agape*. It means divine love—the love of God that is perfect and immortal. The second one is *Philia*, which describes the love between friends and brethren. The third one is *Storge*, it means love among family. The last one is *Eros*. It is used to describe love between a man and a woman. Except for *Agape*, any other form of love is imperfect unless it is sanctified by adding *Agape* to it. Any kind of human love is changeable. Many unfortunate stories show how love between couples, families, and friends can break down and even lead to hatred. However, the love of God never changes.

When Jesus asked Peter the first question, "So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me more than these?" (John 21:15), He used the word *Agape*. In this way, Jesus was asking: "Peter, you confessed before that you love Me with unchangeable love that even death cannot stop. Do you still think the same?" To this question, Peter answers as following: "He saith unto Him,



Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee." In this answer, Peter used *Philia*. What does it mean? It meant: "Lord, I do love you. However, my love is not perfect. My love is weak and changeable. Therefore, I need to receive love from You. I need the divine love that never changes, and I cannot have it unless You place it in my heart."

Jesus asked the second time with the word *Agape*. "He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou Me?" John 21:16. Peter, is your love for Me unchangeable and perfect as you confessed before? Peter answered, "He saith unto Him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love Thee." John 21:16. "You know my heart, Lord. I do love You, but it is not perfect or divine. I am merely human. I cannot rely on my love. However I want to love You perfectly. So please give me Your love, so that I can love You unchangeably."

In His third question, Jesus changed His word. "He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?" John 21:17. This time, Jesus did not use *Agape*, but He used *Philia*. In this way, Jesus showed that He accepted Peter's humble confession. And as He invites Peter to "Feed My sheep" (John 21:15–17), He prophesied how Peter will die. "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, When thou wast young, thou girded thyself, and walkedst whither thou wouldst: but when thou shalt be old, thou shalt stretch forth thy hands, and another shall gird thee, and carry thee whither thou wouldst not. This spake He, signifying by what death he should glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He saith unto him, Follow Me." John 21:18–19

These words seemed to be out of context. Why would Jesus talk about how Peter dies, when they were talking about love? However, these were the perfect words Peter needed to hear from Jesus. Jesus said, "Verily, Verily, I say unto thee." When you were young, you trusted yourselves. So far, you relied on your wisdom, experience, knowledge, judgement, love, faith, and strength. However, in your old age, you would be weak. Firstly, it would be fulfilled literally in your future. However, there is a double meaning. In your old age (now as you have spiritually matured), you would be weak (you know that you are weak and need to trust Me). You have finally learned what it means to trust Me. Therefore, now I promise you. You will die for Me. You have asked for a love that will stand even unto death. You confessed loving Me to death, but you failed. That made you learn that you need to receive it from Me. And indeed, you asked Me for it. Therefore, I will give you what you asked—you will die for Me. You will love Me with *Agape*, to your death, glorying God. I give you *Agape*—the perfect, unchangeable, and immortal love.

"Now he was prepared to share in his Lord's mission of sacrifice. When at last brought to the cross, he was, at his own request, crucified with his head downward. He thought it too great an honor to suffer in the same way as his Master did.

"To Peter the words 'Follow Me' were full of instruction. Not only for his death, but for every step of his life, was the lesson given. Hitherto Peter had been inclined to act independently. He had tried to plan for the work of God, instead of waiting to follow out God's plan. But he could gain nothing by rushing on before the Lord. Jesus bids him, 'Follow Me.. Do not run ahead of Me. Then you will not have the hosts of Satan to meet alone. Let Me go before you, and you will not be overcome by the enemy.'" *-Ibid.*, p. 815–816

Jesus came into Peter's life and met Him at a place that was significant to him. They shared so many memories together. And at the end, He repeated their first memory again, calling Peter, who is finally ready to be a shepherd of men. The same place, the same miracle and the same lesson. The only difference was that Peter finally learned the lesson and received what Jesus had prepared for him. Is not our Lord so romantic? This is the kind of relationship Jesus would like to build with you.

Many human romances, including romantic stories, movies, and novels, are in vain. Many romantic relationships that a man and a woman build today are mere sentimentalism and nothing more than emotions that do not last. However, Jesus' romance is different. It reaches the deepest of hearts, changing our lives in this world and coming world. He knows our weaknesses and secrets, His romance turns them into strengths. His romance removes the human love in us and plants *Agape* love.

Jesus is inviting you to build this relationship with Him. No one else can build this relationship and story in your stead. Even though we today know the stories of Jesus and Peter, there are so many memories, conversations, and experiences that are not written in the Bible. They had spent more than three years together, and we do not have recordings of every single conversation and experience that they shared. Only Peter knows those memories. As we learned at the beginning, romance has a personal attribute. It is the same for us. Knowing our romantic God through Peter's story is not enough. You have to start your relationship with Jesus today. There are many memories to build. There are concerns about your life that only you and Jesus know. There are spiritual experiences that only you and Jesus know. There are answered prayers that only you and Jesus know.

Jesus has a plan for you and would like to start it by walking into your life at the place that is important for you. Dear reader, where is your Galilee? Are you sharing memories with Jesus in your heart and life? Are you spending every day with Jesus? Are you building memories with Jesus? Have you met Jesus already? Is Jesus a romantic God for you? Amen

Makoto Matsumoto



THE STUDY OF DANIEL CHAPTER EIGHT AND NINE—Part 2

A 2300-DAY PROPHETIC TIMETABLE

We have since completed part one of the study of Daniel Chapters 8 and 9. We recall that in chapter 8 that there were four figures that were brought to view, namely: the ram, the he-goat, the little horn, and 2300 days.

An explanation was given to Daniel regarding the three beasts; however, there was no further explanation given as to the meaning of the 2300 days.

The question is, are we left with a line of prophecy that was never completed or explained? It cannot be! The old of the prophecy covers all four. Why then was it not immediately explained? It is because of prophet Daniel's momentary faint, and so, Angel Gabriel had to adjourn the meeting—by so doing the explanation was stayed.

Is there any reference to it in Chapter 8? The only apparent reference to it is in verses 13 and 14, namely:

“Then I heard one saint speaking, and another saint said unto that certain saint which spake, how long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot. And he said unto me, Unto two thousand and three hundred days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed.” Daniel 8:13–14

Note that this fourth character is not as the foregoing-beastly powers, but a period. In addition, in keeping with the three previous elements, we saw that they started off being figurative, therefore there is no reason that this fourth element would deviate from the characteristic of the others in this vision. The 2300-day element is also figurative and must also have a literal fulfillment.

While we are seeking to find the meaning of the period in question, we must also deeply consider the question that was asked by one heavenly saint to the other, namely: “... how long shall be the vision concerning the daily sacrifice, and the transgression of desolation, to

give both the sanctuary and the host to be trodden under foot”? The nature of the question appears to be quite troubling, enough to warrant an answer as to when it is to be dealt with, thus prompting the answer, “unto two thousand three hundred days.” Notice the answer did not stop at the 2300-day period, it states, “then”, meaning, that afterwards, the Sanctuary will be cleansed. This speaks volumes and will be studied in another study as it carries with it a most solemn, a most serious outcome of highest consequence,

We continue: “And it came to pass, when I, even I Daniel, had seen the vision, and sought for the meaning, then, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man. And I heard a man's voice between the banks of Ulai, which called, and said, Gabriel, make this man to understand the vision. . . . And I Daniel fainted and was sick certain days; afterward I rose up and did the king's business; and I was astonished at the vision, but none understood it.” Daniel 8:15–16, 27

Gabriel could not follow this directive of the voice at this time, that said “make this man to understand the vision” due to Daniel fainting. Why? Maybe, on seeing in this vision, all the atrocities that was to befall God's commandment-keeping people, like what was described in chapter 7:25, and perhaps, on being shown the real perpetrators and desolators, that they were sheer professors he fainted, and was sick certain days. Thus chapter 8 concluded with no further development. “The vision was shut up for many days.”

Seventy Years

We now move to chapter 9. Will we find an answering chord that links chapter 8 and 9? From all accounts from verse 1–19 it tells only of Daniel now taken up with his fasting. Namely: “And this whole land shall be a desolation, and an astonishment; and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. And it shall come to pass, when seventy years are accomplished, . . .

For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years are accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform My good word toward you, causing you to return..." Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10

Daniel, while among his displaced, now se led people, maintained his allegiance to God and was a keen studier of the prophecies, and on reading the book of Jeremiah, saw that they were on the verge of the termination of their seventy-year captivity, henceforth his humbling words:

"...I Daniel understood by books the number of the years, whereof the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem. And I set my face unto the Lord God, to seek by prayer and supplications, with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes: And I prayed unto the LORD my God, and made my confession, and said, O Lord, the great and dreadful God, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His Commandments." Daniel 9:2-4

Return of Angel Gabriel

"And whiles I was speaking, and praying, and confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy mountain of my God; Yea, whiles I was speaking in prayer, even the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the beginning, being caused to fly swiftly, touched me about the time of the evening oblation. And he informed me, and talked with me, and said, O Daniel, I am now come forth to give thee skill and understanding. At the beginning of thy supplications the commandment came forth, and I am come to shew thee; . . . therefore understand the matter, and consider the vision." Daniel 9:20-24

Daniel knew that the land was still in ruins and on listening to Gabriel, thought that he was referring to the devastated Sanctuary. We will see that he was under a misunderstanding. Angel Gabriel, knowing where he had left off, went straight to the point. Said he: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Daniel 9:24

Could this be the beginning of the explanation of the fourth element that was deferred, due to Daniel's fainting? Can we undoubtedly link it to verses 13 and 14 of

Chapter 8? Will it begin to satisfy the period of the 2300 days? I believe we can. Says the angel: "I am come to shew thee; for thou art greatly beloved: therefore, understand the matter, and consider the vision." It is obvious that Gabriel had something more to say, and, that Daniel in his situation, did not understand the matter that was shown to him by Gabriel "...whom he had seen at the beginning of the vision." What vision? The vision of Chapter 8. And so, without a doubt that it was a continuation of what Gabriel wanted to convey, he therefore went directly to where he left off, the opening of the 2300-day element.

Seventy Weeks

We have before us 70 weeks. The question may be asked, what does seventy weeks have to do with the 2300 days? The 70 weeks are part of the whole process. It is the period that God has allowed, as it were, cut off from the 2300-day period for the Jews, as a distinct peculiar people. The Angel made it clear as to what would happen within that allowed time. We again read: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Daniel 9:24

To effectively comprehend the prophecy, we must now seek to grasp what is meant by "determined upon thy people". If we can decipher this, then the rest of the prophecy will follow in its train. According to Uriah Smith: "The word determined. . . based on a primitive root word defined by Strong as meaning 'to cut off' . . . It must be from some whole larger than itself.... It may be added that Genesis gives the same definition as Strong, 'to cut off . . . to divide, and so to determine, to decree.'" -Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 203

This statement then can be read as: Seventy weeks are cut off for thy people. The question now is, cut off from what? Since there is no other time in question, it must be from the 2300-day prophetic time. We can now see that this is opening to view little by little, the full spectrum of the 2300-day prophetic period in question.

Let us go one step further. We now look at the 2300 days and the 70 weeks. Are they literal? We are now to understand that these are prophetic numbering. So then, 2300 days becomes 2300 years and 70 weeks, 490 years. Can this numbering be supported in scripture? Most definitely.

Two clear examples of this are found in the Old Testament. Namely: Numbers 14:34 and Ezekiel 4:6. "After the number of the days in which ye searched the land, even forty days, each day for a year, shall ye bear your iniquities, even forty years, and ye shall know My breach of promise." "And when thou hast accomplished them, lie again on thy right side, and thou shalt bear the iniquity of the house of Judah forty days: I have appointed thee each day for a year."

Hence 2300 prophetic days become 2300 literal years. In keeping with the text before us, 70 weeks (490 days), translates to 490 years. In connecting it now to the 2300 years, it simply means 490 years are cut off, as it were, allotted to the Jewish people. This could not have happened in four hundred and ninety literal days. The proof is really in the fact that this year-day principle is substantiated, so to speak, validated by the fact that the prophecies are exactly fulfilled as per this proven biblical reckoning.

Remarks Uriah Smith: "By the events which were to occur in the seventy weeks, the prophecy is tested. By this the application of the whole vision is determined. If the events of this period are accurately fulfilled, the prophecy is of God, and will all be accomplished. If these prophecies are fulfilled as weeks of years, then the 2300 days, of which these are a part, are so many years." -*Ibid.*, p. 204

We continue: Daniel was not left to figure out when all this would begin. Truly this is an awe-inspiring moment. Indeed, "God does nothing until He reveals it to His servants the prophets." In His permissive will, and His grace and mercy for His people, began to prepare the way, thus Gabriel told it to Daniel how it would come to pass as set out below.

"Know therefore and understand, that from the going

forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times." Daniel 9:26

Seven Weeks

The seven weeks then are prophetic weeks of years, literally 49 years. It is proven that it took this length of time which would include more than just the building. Says Smith: "There was to be a restoration." He continues: "By this we must understand all the forms and regulations of civil, political, and judicial society." -*Ibid.*, p. 208

In this restoration, we note that it took three attempts to bring this to fruition:

The decree of Cyrus to rebuild the house of God. B.C. 536 (see Ezra 1:1-4)

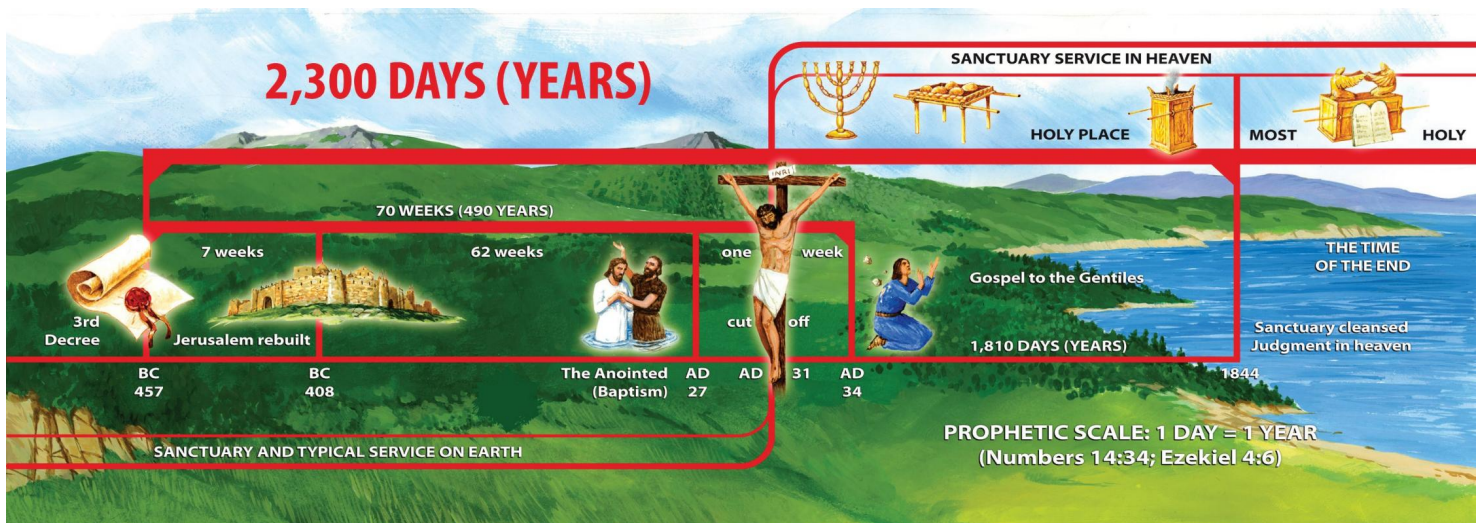
The decree of Darius. B.C. 519 (See Ezra 6:12)

The decree of Artaxerxes the Persian. B.C. 457 (see Ezra 7)

It is a known fact by many respected Bible historians that the first two did not fulfill the specification of the prophecy, they were too early to match up with the dating, according to the prophecy. The third commission by Artaxerxes the Persian king, from B.C. 457 to B.C. 408, perfectly met the period of seven weeks or 49 years as the starting date. Says Isaac Newton, an early historian: "The years of Artaxerxes reign are among the most easily established dates of history. . . all combine to make the seventh year of Artaxerxes at B.C. 457." -*Upon the Prophecies of Daniel*, p. 154-157

Sixty-Two Weeks

We move on to the 62 weeks, (threescore and two



weeks) or 434 years, that is, from B.C. 408 to A.D. 27. This is a marked period when the Jewish economy was at its nest, their Sanctuary services, in all its functions were actively being performed and so, for 483 years inclusive of the 49 years the people began again to enjoy their unique lifestyle. They had one week remaining however, to determine their destiny, as stated "Seventy weeks (490 years) are determined upon thy people."

One Week

Let us return to the running narrative as it most amazingly gives us the full inescapable truth of what happened in this one week, so to speak, seven years. We read:

"And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for Himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined. And He shall confirm the covenant with many for one week: and in the midst of the week, He shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease, and for the overspreading of abominations He shall make it desolate, even until the consummation, and that determined shall be poured upon the desolate." Daniel 9:26-27

According to the narrative, as well as the preceding 49 years, this period of 483 years reached Messiah the Prince. That is from B.C. 457, ending in A.D. 27. We know that at that precise time, Jesus the Messiah was baptized and immediately anointed with the Holy Spirit. As reads Luke: "Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also being baptized, and praying, the heaven was opened, And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a Dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, Thou art My beloved Son; in Thee I am well pleased." Luke 3:21-22

We also have a most profound statement and confirmation as to the time when this was to take place. Says the word of God: After this, "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God, and saying, The time is fulfilled." Mark 1:14-15. Awe-inspiring, Jesus himself said those words!

What time was He referring to? "The time here mentioned must have been some specific, definite, and predicted period; but no prophetic period can be found then terminating, except the sixty-nine weeks of the prophecy of Daniel, which were to extend to the Messiah the Prince. The Messiah had now come; and with His own lips He announced the termination of that period

which was to be marked by His manifestation." –Uriah Smith, *Daniel and the Revelation*, p. 213

In His manifestation, for three- and one-half years He preached the gospel to the Jewish people. Yet the prophecy states that He would confirm the covenant with many for one week. So, pending therefore is the other three- and one-half years. How was that to be accomplished? The prophecy states that in the midst (middle) of the week He would be "cut off", as it were, crucified. If He was cut off in the middle of the week the prophecy would still require the next three- and one-half years to correctly fulfill the specification.

Many stumble and are critical at this point and ask, how does one harmonize this seeming contradiction, that He was to confirm the covenant with many for one week, and yet be cut off in the midst of the week? Note, After He was cut off, crucified, in the Spring of A.D. 31, His disciples preached in His name for the remaining three- and one-half years continuing their labour to the Jews as confirmed by this line of scripture: "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name among all nations beginning at Jerusalem." Luke 24:47. Thus, the total seven years were fulfilled. Let God be true. After the stoning of Stephen, in A.D. 34, true to prophecy, the time of the Jews, the 70 weeks, were terminated, and after that, the gospel was preached to the Gentiles.

Four hundred and ninety years (70 weeks) is now terminated, in keeping with Gabriel's first words to Daniel restated here: "Seventy weeks are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy." Daniel 9:24

Smith breaks it down well. Said he: "The events which were to be consummated within that period are briefly stated. The transgression was to be finished, that is, the Jewish people were to fill up the cup of their iniquity, which they did in the rejection and crucifixion of Christ. An end of sins, or of sin offerings, was to be made. This took place when the great offering was made on Calvary. Reconciliation for iniquity was to be provided. This was accomplished by the sacrificial death of the Son of God. Everlasting righteousness was to be brought in; the righteousness which our Lord manifested in His sinless life. The vision and the prophecy were to be sealed up, or made sure." –*Ibid.*, p. 203

Through Christ's death, on Calvary's Cross, everlasting

righteousness was then brought in. "...the grand work of reconciliation will go forward. Men will learn of the reconciliation for iniquity and of the everlasting righteousness which the Messiah has brought in through His sacrifice. The Cross of Calvary is the great center. . . this is that which Gabriel revealed to Daniel after his fervent prayer. . . He was to bring in everlasting deliverance to all who would walk after Him." -*Le er 201*, 1899

Marking this manifestation Paul wrote: "But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth His Son. . . To redeem them that were under the law." Galatians 4:4-5. Oh wondrous love!

The final question then is: When did the 2300 years come to the foretold end, and the cleansing of the Sanctuary begin? The solid answer! 1844.

To determine the date: "The seventy weeks are but the first 490 years of the 2300-year period. Take 490 from 2300, and there remains 1810. The 490, as we have seen, ended in the autumn of A.D. 34. If to this date we now add the remaining 1810 years, we shall have the termination of the whole period. So to A.D. 34, autumn, add 1810, and we have the autumn of A.D. 1844." -*Ibid.*, p. 218-219. The cleansing of the Heavenly sanctuary began at that time, fulfilling Daniel 8:14.

This opens an age-old question! How do you arrive at 1844 if it began in 457 B.C. as this adds up to 1843 years? Says Smith: "It takes 457 full years before Christ, and 1843 full years after, to make 2300." He remarks "If any part of the year 457 had passed away before the 2300 days began, just so much of the year 1844 must pass away before they would end. We therefore inquire, at what point in the year 457 are we to commence to reckon? ...we learn that the period is to be dated, not from the starting of Ezra from Babylon, but from the actual commencement of the work at Jerusalem. This beginning could hardly be earlier than the seventh month (autumn) of 457, as he did not arrive at Jerusalem until the fifth month of that year. Ezra 7:9. The whole period would therefore extend to the seventh month, autumn, Jewish time, of 1844." -*Ibid.*, p. 219

This concludes the prophecy of Daniel 8 and 9. We see that the 70 weeks reached up to A.D. 34, however we must remember that the prophecy was not only about the seventy weeks—that was what was "cut off" for the Jews, but for the entire period of 2300 days, (2300 years) in answer to the question: "When shall the Sanctuary be cleansed?" Whereupon the answer: "Unto two thousand three hundred days then shall the sanctuary be cleansed." We therefore have an additional 1810 years remaining in which time the gospel was preached to the Gentiles. Today this more sure word of prophecy, covering 2300 years, the longest prophecy in the Bible, where history confirms its accuracy, was

by and large fulfilled in our time. In 1844, a studying people recognized its significance, and while they had the destination where final events would occur incorrect, they saw it for what it was, and like Daniel, on seeing the urgency of a needful preparation, earnestly sought the Lord and prepared accordingly.

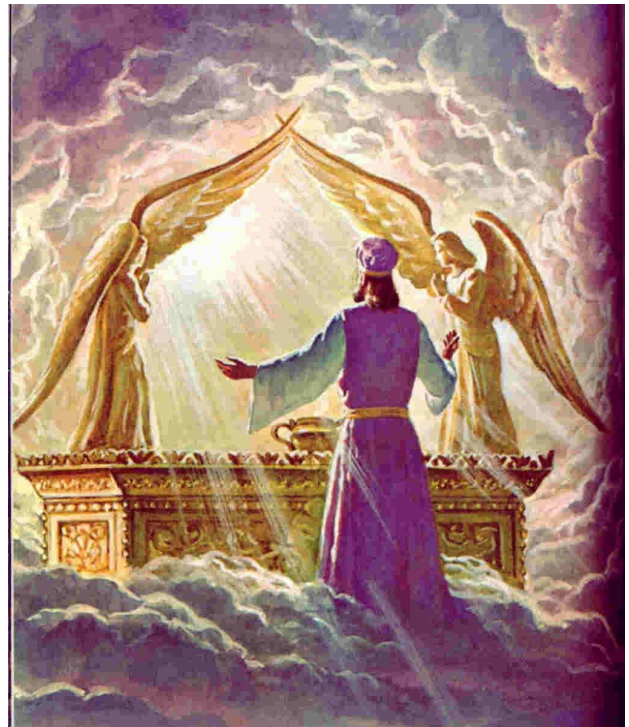
Dear Reader, it is now 180 years since the 2300 years terminated. The work is going forward in the Heavenly Sanctuary. We know not when it will be "cut off", so to speak, when probation will be forever closed, when time will turn into eternity.

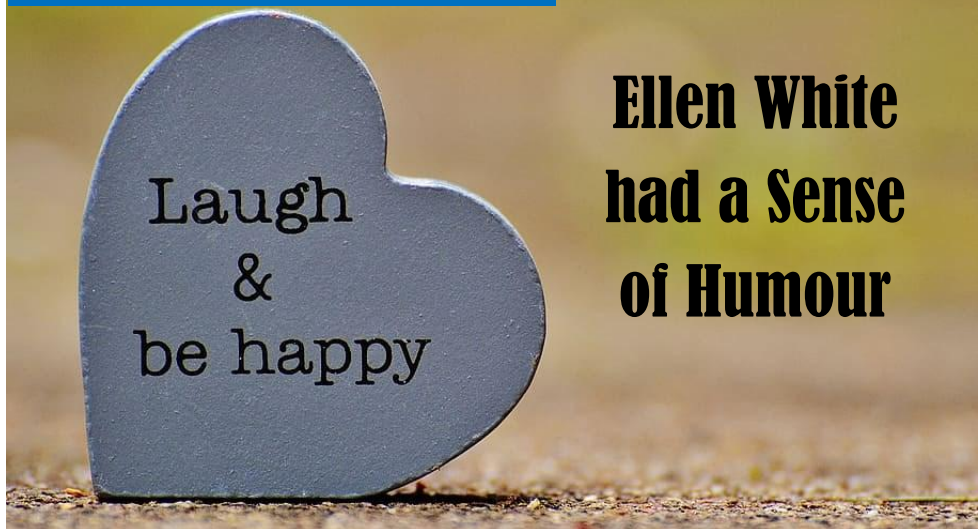
God is no respecter of persons, rank or organizations, and since the Jewish people were "cut off" on account of rejecting Christ, and will only be saved individually, so each one, Jew or Gentile, must stand before the judgment seat of Christ to give an account of his or her works.

How will you stand in this solemn time? Are you and I sending our sins beforehand? All signs about us indicates that Christ's return is imminent. We know not if the judgment of the dead is past, or the judgment of the living is in progress. When all is said and done, "he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still." Revelation 22:11

We close with this solemn statement: "The cleansing of the sanctuary. . . involves a work of investigation—a work of judgment. This work must be performed prior to the coming of Christ to redeem His people; for when He comes, His reward is with Him to give to every man according to his works. Revelation 22:12." -*The Great Controversy*, p. 421

Rose Powell





Ellen White had a Sense of Humour

Many think of Ellen White as a very serious and solemn person. Yes, she was serious, and she was solemn, but she also knew how to laugh. There is a time to be serious and a time to laugh. Good clean humour is good for the soul. As Solomon wrote: "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine." Proverbs 17:22

Here are a couple stories from the life of Ellen White showing the fact that she had a clean sense of humour.

1) Willie White, the son of Ellen G. White, was an avid sleeper in church even when sitting at the front. The story is told of a time when Willie was scheduled to have the closing prayer. The main speaker, wanting to make a point in the middle of the sermon, saw Willie sleeping so he exclaimed, "Elder White, isn't that so?" The slumbering Willie (as his mother always called him), thinking it was his cue for the prayer, jumped to the speaking podium and promptly gave the benediction, while it was only the middle of the sermon.

Willie even managed to fall asleep during his mother's presentations. One hot August Sabbath afternoon in St. Helen, California, Ellen White noticed a ripple of suppressed laughter in the audience as she preached.

Knowing that she had not made a humorous remark in her sermon, she turned around to see what was so amusing. Her son Willie was there fast asleep. Then she apologized with a bit of humour. "When Willie was a baby," she noted, "I had no baby sitter, so I had a Baile Creek carpenter make me a cradle on rocker-arms, just exactly the width of the pulpit in the Tabernacle. I would then place Willie in the cradle before the worship service began; and while I was preaching, I would use my right foot to rock the cradle, to keep him asleep, lest he awaken and disturb the service. So, don't blame Willie; blame me. I was the one who taught him to sleep in church... on Sabbath!" while

the congregation enjoyed a hearty chuckle, Sister White got on with her sermon. Willie, meanwhile, was oblivious to both his mother and the amused congregation (ALW, interview by RC, August 1968).

2) Some have stereotyped Ellen White as being devoid of humour, but that was far from the case. Dores E. Robinson (who later married her oldest granddaughter) remembers his first meal at her table when he went to work for her in the 1890's. "I was 20 years old and very bashful, and wondered how I could live and hold converse with such a saintly woman whose conversation I expected to be entirely on sacred things.

Miss McEnterfer [Mrs. White's companion and nurse in her later years] brought in a dish of greens which Mrs. White requested at every meal because she thought they were good for elderly people. Miss McEnterfer set the personal dish before Sister White with the joking remark, 'here is your horse feed, Mother.' I was horrified and was looking to see Sister White rebuke her for this levity. She glanced quickly over the table and with a humorous glint in her eye, and her mouth curved up slightly, she remarked, 'I don't know as my horse food is any worse than your cow's peas'" —the vegetable of choice for the others at the table. (DER to Ernest Lloyd, October 15, 1948).

3) Sister White not only enjoyed an hearty laugh at the predicaments of others, but she could smile at herself. A case in point involves a "hug-me-tight" (a warm vest for cold days) that she received in the mail in 1914 from an acquaintance in Japan. Her personal secretary reports that "she tried it on, and instead of going around her body, the edges went about to her sides. She told me to tell Sister DeVinney that she greatly appreciated the gift, but that there was a great deal more to her than some people thought." (DER to WCW, November 3, 1914)

4) At times she made picturesque remarks regarding clothing, as when she wrote that "sisters when about their work should not put on clothing which would make them look like images to frighten the crows from the corn." (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 464), or when she told her granddaughters not to dress as if they were going to a funeral or when the clothing of some tasteless individuals looks as if it flew and lit upon their persons." —*Child Guidance*, p. 415

*"A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance."
Proverbs 15:13*

Indonesia



Baptism in Nepal



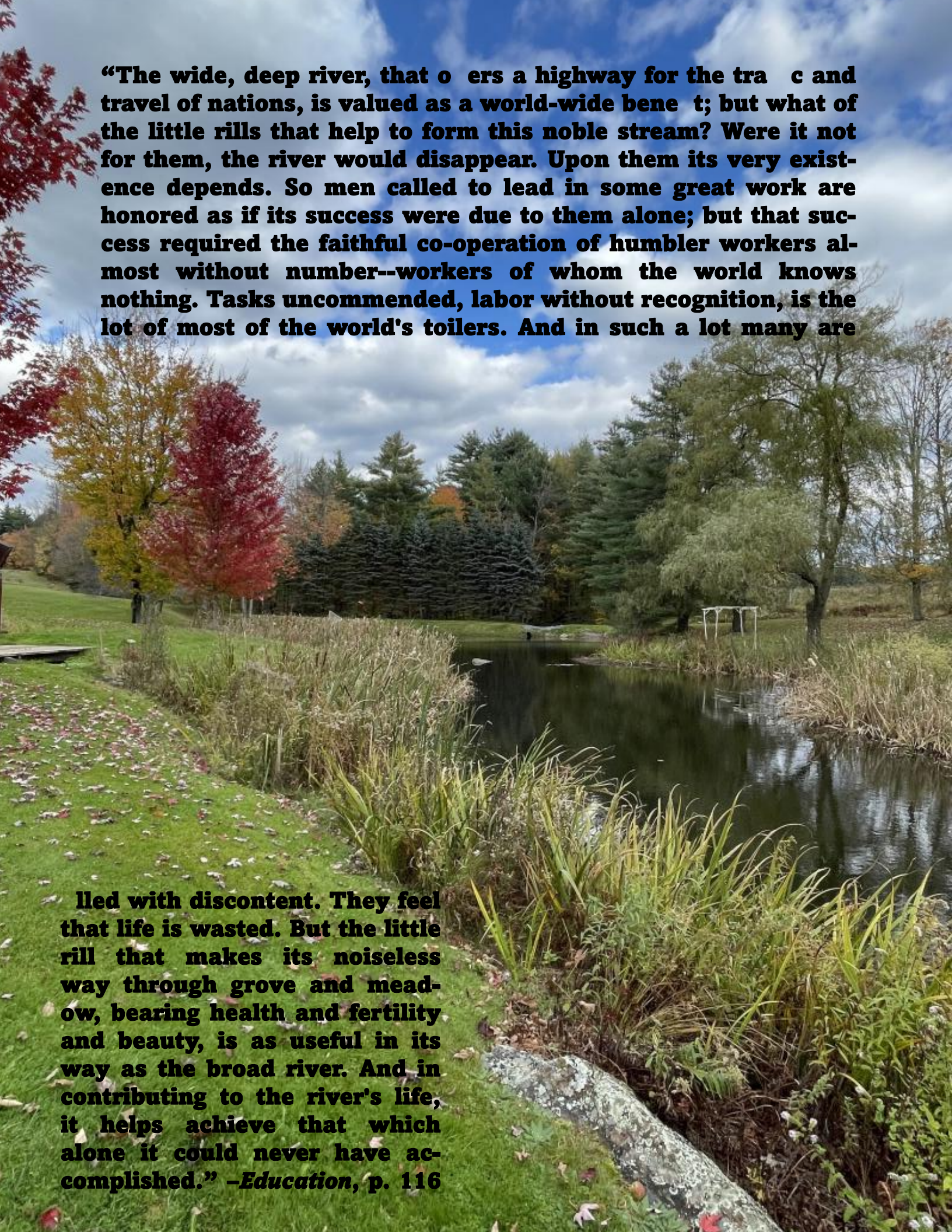
Baptism in Swaziland



American Union Conference

Norman College, USA. December 20-24, 2023





“The wide, deep river, that offers a highway for the traffic and travel of nations, is valued as a world-wide benefit; but what of the little rills that help to form this noble stream? Were it not for them, the river would disappear. Upon them its very existence depends. So men called to lead in some great work are honored as if its success were due to them alone; but that success required the faithful co-operation of humbler workers almost without number--workers of whom the world knows nothing. Tasks uncommended, labor without recognition, is the lot of most of the world's toilers. And in such a lot many are

lled with discontent. They feel that life is wasted. But the little rill that makes its noiseless way through grove and meadow, bearing health and fertility and beauty, is as useful in its way as the broad river. And in contributing to the river's life, it helps achieve that which alone it could never have accomplished.” *-Education, p. 116*