



THE TEST OF CHARACTER

Malachi 3:3 And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness.

Purifying silver is a delicate process. It is necessary to heat it just enough for the impurities to rise to the surface. But if heated too much it will become dull and blemished. A silversmith was once asked, "How do you know how much to heat the silver?" He replied, "Well, I heat it till I can see my face reflected in the silver."

It's the same with us. We have to be tested, our characters refined, until we reflect the image of the Divine Silversmith. He would have us shine as a light to the world. The world may not read the Bible and study our truth, but they should be able to see Christ in us. If we truly reflect the image of the Creator, we will show them what Christianity is about. It is about living a better life. Reflecting Christ in everything we do.

Many people have the idea that to believe is all that is necessary to be saved. This is true, but it is also necessary to prepare our character to be fit for the society of heaven. If we were to come into heaven with impurities in our character, we wouldn't be happy. We have to refine our characters before we are fit for heaven.

Ellen White saw a vision in which a group of people were traveling up a path. They

were professed Christians, a big group. Some had carriages with them, others rode on horses; all were traveling with a great number of possessions. As they traveled, the path became narrower, until they had to leave the carriages behind. Here a great number turned around rather than leave their goods behind. Many kept on, riding on horses or walking. Again, the path became narrower, until the horses had to be left. More turned around, cherishing their goods above eternal life. Some continued on, taking only a few things with them. The path became narrower; more and more people turned back, not willing to pay the price. As they went along, ropes appeared above them, lending them extra support as they went. The path steadily dwindled until it disappeared. Now those continuing on had to hold only onto the ropes for support. The ropes became larger until they could swing across a large gulf into heaven.

The test of our character is revealed in this vision. People were unwilling to leave their things or habits behind. They cherish their goods above eternal life. Our character will be tested in the same way. We have to take hold of the ropes of faith if we want to get into heaven. We won't reach heaven if we cherish even one thing above heaven. We will turn back before we get there. We must willingly endure hardships to enter heaven for an eternal holiday.

There is only one way we can endure the tests on our character. We can only do it with the continual help of God.

2 Chronicles 14:11 And Asa cried unto the LORD his God, and said, LORD, [it is] nothing with thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O LORD our God; for we rest on thee, and in thy name we go against this multitude. O LORD, thou [art] our God; let not man prevail against thee.

Asa cried to the Lord. He was in a hopeless situation in the fight against his enemies. Because he trusted the Lord, and served the Lord, he knew that God would help him. He prayed to God and received the help he required.

Ephesians 6:12 For we wrestle not against



flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high [places].

We too are fighting an innumerable host.

By ourselves, we may as well give up. The situation is hopeless without the help of the Lord. But the Lord has promised us all the help we need. We only have to go to him for help. He has promised to give us all the help we need.

our way through life Satan will get us like a wolf will get an unsuspecting sheep when it leaves the shepherd. The Good Shepherd will never forsake us, but we may run ahead of Him, or away from Him.



Proverbs 18:10 The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.

The Lord is a fortress of strength for us. But we have to run into this fortress to be safe. If we stand outside we will surely be destroyed. There are two options. Stand outside, and get destroyed, or run to the protection of God and be saved.

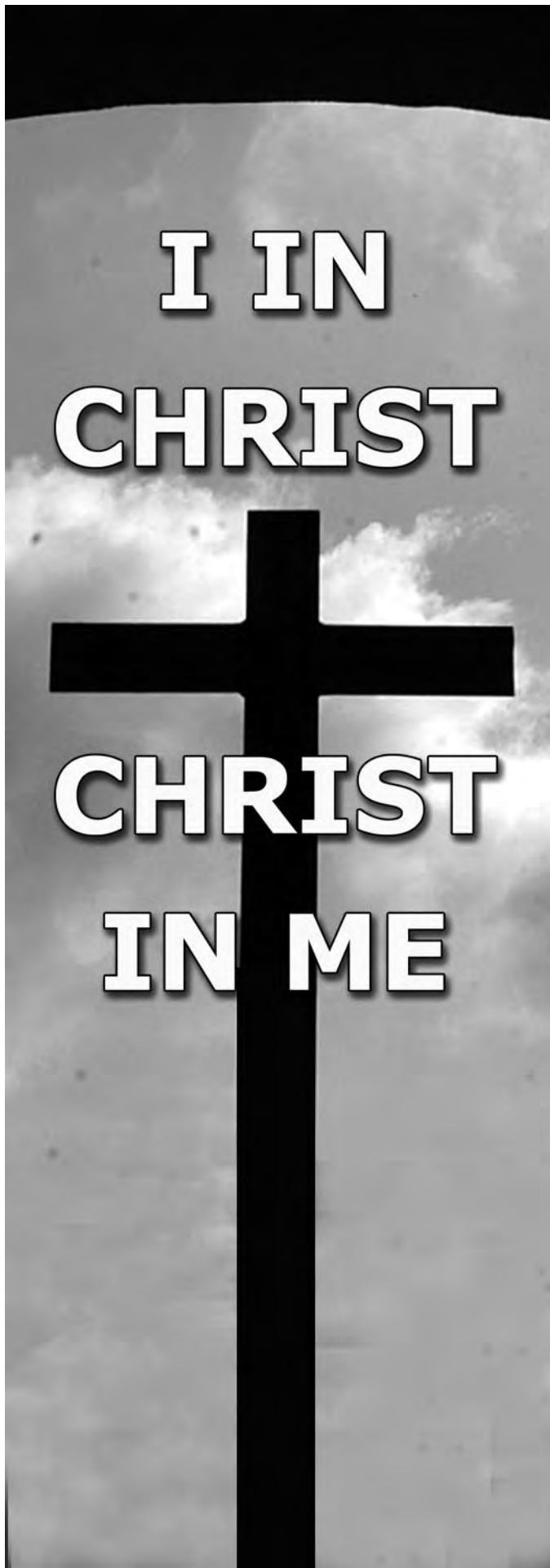
An interesting thought is that Satan's host is outnumbered 2 to 1. Satan, as you may remember, only took one third of the angels with him in rebellion. So we may be sure that for every evil angel Satan sends, God can send two. But we have to realize our danger and ask God for help. If we just dream

“So we may resist temptation, and force Satan to depart from us. Jesus gained the victory through submission and faith in God, and by the apostle He says to us, ‘Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and He will draw nigh to you.’ James 4:7, 8. We cannot save ourselves from the tempter's power; he has conquered humanity, and when we try to stand in our own strength, we shall become a prey to his devices; but ‘the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.’ Prov. 18:10. Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name.” {Desire of Ages p. 130}

“Christ will never abandon the soul for whom He has died. The soul may leave Him and be overwhelmed with temptation, but Christ can never turn from one for whom He has paid the ransom of His own life. Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encompass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend.” {Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing p.118}

Let us look to Christ for the help we need. Without Him we are lost, eternally lost. But through Him we can have eternal life. An eternity to live. An eternity to enjoy. An eternity to spend worshipping Christ. Ask God to forgive you, to help you to live a better life, and to help you overcome the forces of darkness. **AMEN.**

***Ben Dammasch
Queensland, Australia.***



“Therefore if **any man [be] in Christ**, [he is] a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

“I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but **Christ liveth in me**: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” (Galatians 2:20)


Success in our Christian life depends on the fulfillment of these two verses. They refer to two different conditions, which are actually complementary; one is the consequence of the other one: I in Christ and Christ in me. They are two stages of our Christian life. In the first stage, the person who is in Christ has become a new creation, has experienced the new birth, a great change has taken place in his heart. This inner change can be seen outside, both in his appearance and in his attitude. When we have had such an experience with the Lord, our habits are not the same, our interests are others; our concentration is fixed only on Jesus and everlasting life and not on this world. Even if we can still appreciate beauty here, our longing is the fulfillment of the promise that says: “But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” (1 Corinthians 2:9). When we have become a new creature we have no desire to exalt ourselves, but there is a constant need to be hidden in Christ. God’s law has been written in our hearts and we have the privilege of seeing things like God sees them and we have to be very watchful so that we may not lose the freedom that has been offered to us.

The old man has not died, it was only crucified by the love of God and it is our task to keep him on the cross. That is only possible if we constantly concentrate on God’s love and mercy for us. When we have had this great experience with the Lord, we desire with all our heart to be more and more like Him and we find no excuses for our transgressions, on the contrary, we can be quite depressed when we can still see the old man trying to get his own way through us.

The old man does not want to remain on the cross, has no fun in hiding behind Jesus, and will always try to appear on the scene, to show either a hand or a foot so that people may know that he is still alive. That is the reason why we should constantly feed the newly born child with God’s word so that it may grow and have no fear of the old crucified man.

The newly born child has no knowledge, no life experience, no position in society to boast of; he has no past, only a bright future before him and wants to learn always more from Him who is Wisdom Himself. A newly born person does not boast of his knowledge of God’s word, but suffers when even in little things he cannot reveal the Spirit of the Lord. There is a great desire to walk in Jesus’ steps, to be approved by Him in everything one thinks, says or does. One does not want to do one’s own work but to be an instrument in God’s hands and one always comes too short of it! This new creature follows his Master wherever He leads without asking where, how or why. He wants with his whole heart to learn from Him humbleness and meekness and to reach the point in which there is no more trace of self, in which there is a complete identification with his Master, in which the same spirit of self-sacrifice Jesus Christ revealed on this earth may be seen in him.

A newly born person looks for the things from above, sees that everything in this world passes by and it is just a shadow of what is to come. One wishes to have wings to be able to fly and reach a higher level; but before one can fly and be a completely free man,



one must have patience until the process of metamorphosis is over. One must remain wrapped in the cocoon of Jesus' arms, hidden in Him, quiet, silent, waiting patiently in prayer until that wonder takes place in one's life, that mystery of God's love that can change an ugly caterpillar into a beautiful butterfly.

The wonderful promise in Isaiah 10:27 is the highest goal of any new creature: "And it shall come to pass in that day, [that] his burden shall be taken away from off thy shoulder, and his yoke from off thy neck, and the yoke shall be destroyed because of the anointing."

As we learn to walk daily with the Lord, surrendering our will to His, we pass from the first stage: **I in Christ**, to the second one, **Christ in me**. One has learned to remain hidden in Christ, to walk with Him, to carry His yoke with joy, without pulling or remaining back, but to follow the Master in everything. There is a perfect identification of one's will with God's will. What freedom! Then there is no more yoke, because Jesus makes of our heart His dwelling place; "the yoke shall be destroyed **because of the anointing.**" We shall be anointed with His Spirit and He will do His work through us. No more effort to imitate Him, to hide behind Him. Now, He who abandoned heaven and the worship of the angels to come to this earth, who lowered Himself and became a man, will come to live in our heart and make us rooted and grounded in His love. (Ephesians 3:17-19). Christ in us, as the result of our obedience and faith, is our only hope of glorification. (Colossians 1:27)

May the Lord help us to understand the great wonder that has to take place in our mind and heart before we may be with Him in eternity. May He be still patient and merciful with us until we reach the sacred goal. **AMEN.**

Teresa Corti



"OUTPOURING OF THE SPIRIT"

"If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living waters."

"We are going to learn an important lesson from rivers." (Ed 116-117). As a matter of fact, "God's thoughts are expressed by rivers." (Ed 120) So, it's "important for us, therefore, to understand the significance of rivers, but for persons who can fully appreciate it." (Ed 120) Also, for those who can relate to it, and experience its hidden uplifting power.

Well, at long last we have come to Jesus, and drank from the living stream. Our thirst was nicely quenched and lo, we were made alive in Him. That's all!?

First came, "if any man thirst, come unto me and drink." (v.38) The church, consequently, was advanced. But, what next? "He that believeth in me out of his belly (heart) flows rivers of living water." (v. 38). "For the righteous God tests the hearts and minds." (Ps. 7:9) Sad, however, only here or there some have reached that point.

That is, they have reached the point where their thirst was quenched, they believe, and Jesus is in them. But, there's no health, or vigour. There's no energy or zeal. They merely live and survive, but do not flourish. There is just no energy and little life to act on others. There is no energy or zeal "streaming out like rivers." Let us, go therefore, and get all that God will give us.

Not just a "sip" that saves, but a baptism which buries the flesh, and raises us to the likeness and perfection of Jesus. Do "rivers of living water" flow out of you?

Notice, first, that it's an inward work. Rivers flow out of the midst of man. Out of his belly-heart-soul-inner life! No, not talent, ability, show, glitter, glare. It's an inward work! Many, unfortunately, neglect this and don't seem to understand it. So, in order to be useful to others, begin with yourself. Out of your soul blessings come. But, it cannot come out if it's not in you. In fact, it cannot be in you unless God and the Holy Spirit puts it there! This takes obedience and prayer.

Secondly, or next, it's a life giving work. Out of the heart of man, the heart or the center of his life flows rivers of living water. This means to communicate to others when speaking, praying, acting. "Out of his belly-heart shall flow rivers of living water." This is an exercise unto Godliness. Out of man comes grace, godliness... light, for others to see. They see an affectionate, selfless, servant.

Next, we see an abundance. We can see here, too, not a river only, but rivers of water. Have you ever seen a stream, a bubbling stream? Water runs down mountains and hills, and end in the sea; but, all flowing down in one direction. So, first we start with a small stream, which ultimately swells into a grand flowing river. Imagine, for a moment, many rivers, "each one dependent on thousands of rivulets and rills." (SD 253) Oh, if we Christians could be "fountains of living water."

Next, we see that this flow of "waters" is spontaneous. There are no machines, or hydraulics. It quietly flows from man. It's much like the morning sun. As it



majestically rises there is no noise, or crying out, “look, the sun is rising.” No! The sun shines brilliantly. The real Christian floods the world with blessings, and he is unconscious of it. “He prospers, like the tree planted by the river that bears fruit in its season!” (Ps 1:3) Fruit is the result of a vigorous, healthy life. He eats, sleeps, drinks, breathes, eternal life. Do you feel this way?

Next, we see further, that this flow of “waters” is perpetual. Not like a sudden storm, when the springs burst forth, and flow in torrents. Or, like a tsunami which rises quickly and unexpectedly, in a ferocious wall of raging destruction. No, it’s not like this, but this steady flow of “waters” are gushing out, summer, fall winter, spring... day, and night. Wherever man is, there shall be a blessing when he breathes (benedictions), thinks (generous things, planning), acts (as the hand of God--a working man).

I hope I hear sighs, and hope and hear,

“Oh, if only I could do that!” I pray we all get it, here and now. Because Jesus Christ is glorified, therefore, the Holy Spirit is poured out this way. We have more of His Spirit now in the Kingdom of Heaven here, now as sons on Earth, than with all the holy men before the Lord rose to Heaven. Jesus Christ is glorified above in Heaven. And God wants Him glorified in the Church below, by baptism of the Holy Spirit to each and every one of us, here, again, and now.

All of these operations of the Holy Spirit are easily obtained by the Lord’s children. Did you say you haven’t received them? They can be had! At once! Now! How? First, by believing in Jesus Christ. “This spoke He of the Spirit which they that believe on Him should receive.” (v. 39)

Can you see now that it’s faith that gives us the first drink and causes us to live? Moreover, there is the more abundant blessing of being ourselves made fountains from which rivers flow. This comes in the same way. How? Believe, again, that Christ’s blessing is obtained; not by the works of the Law only, not by fasting, not by striving, not by effort, but belief in the Lord Jesus Christ for... this is faith!

He’s prepared, ready, waiting to give it to you... “who ask”... and “believe on His name.” He will not, of course, make all of you preachers. If He did, who would be the hearers? If all were preachers, other works of the church would be neglected.

But, He will give you this favour: that “out of you there shall be a stream, a divine influence all around you to bless your children, your employees, students, friends, the street you live on, the entire community.

As God gives you opportunities, these rivers of living water will flow in this channel and pour out from you at all times, if you believe in Jesus for the full blessing and can by faith receive it!

Ah! But, there is another thing to be done as well and that is to pray. “Every one that asketh receiveth, and he that seeketh, findeth; and to him that knocketh, it shall be opened.”(Mat 7:8) “If a son asks for bread do you give a stone, or a fish, a serpent, or an egg, a scorpion?” “If ye then being evil, know how to give good gifts

unto your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?” (Mat 7:11)

See? It’s a distinct promise to the children of God. But, He says, “How much more” shall He give the Holy Spirit to them that ask?” He makes a stronger case, here, than an ordinary parent. Let us ask at once, with all our hearts. Pray this: “Blessed Spirit (He is a person), visit me, lead me to Jesus.” Ask God to make you all that the Spirit of God can make you; not only a satisfied believer who has drunk for himself but a useful believer who overflows the neighborhood with blessings.

What a divine blessing if you all went back to your churches after reading this, overflowing, for there are many churches in need of “flooding”! They are as dry as a barn floor... dry, dry, dry! Not only this, but little “dew” falls on them.

What a wonderful thing a flood can be. It’s not bad at all. I arrived in Korea at Incheon Harbor many years ago. It has the highest tides in the world... 33 feet. When the tide flows out the barges and ships lie helpless in the mud. Nothing can move them! All the King’s horses and all the King’s men cannot budge them. What shall be done, then? Wait for the tide to come in!

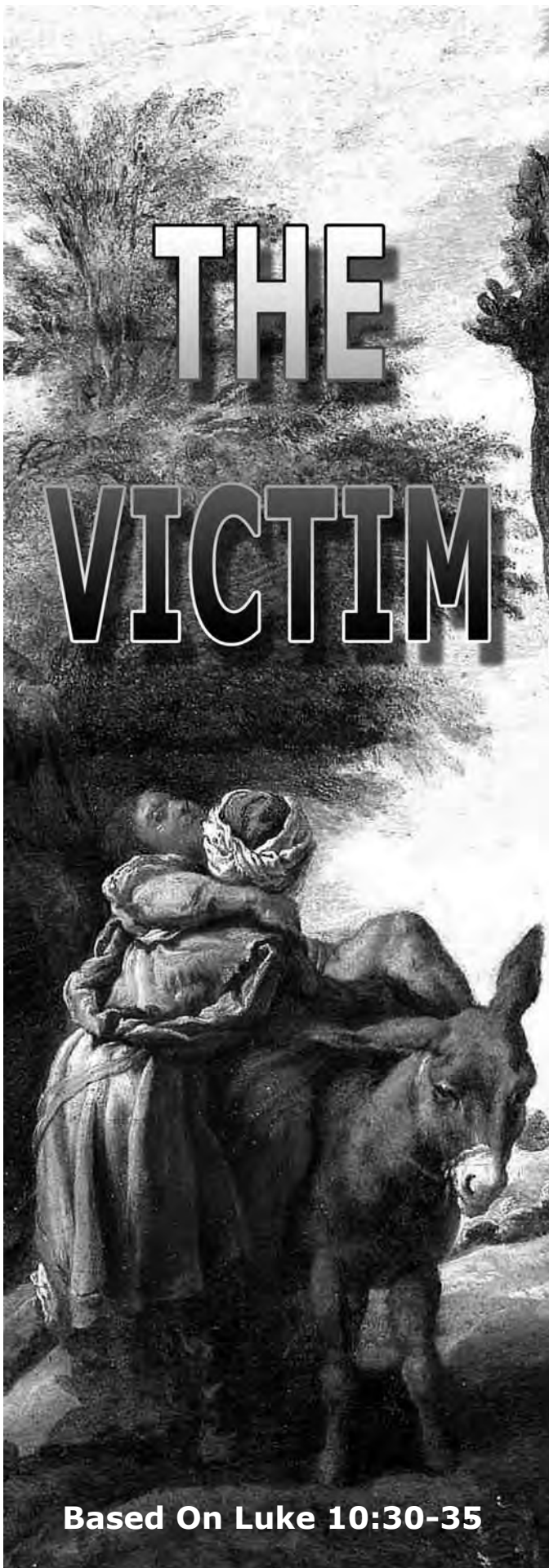
Oh! We need a flood of grace. That the Lord would send all our churches a great spring tide! Those that are one-half dead would generate profound energy, and would communicate rivers of life. I know that in this particular dock, many ships are lying flat that I would like to float again. Many are very capable if the flood came. They would become active, generous, abounding in every good work, and, springs would abundantly flow in our churches.

May the Lord fill you and send you home today carrying a flood of grace with you. Now, this sounds strange, a man carrying home a flood in him.

Yes, I hope it will be so, and “out of you shall flow rivers of living water.”

So, may God give you this for Jesus’ sake. **AMEN.**

John Theodorou, USA



Based On Luke 10:30-35

When Jesus taught in public, He often used parables to illustrate object lessons so that every one could understand. Many people followed Him when He journeyed with His disciples through hamlets, towns and villages, teaching matters not only of eternal interest, but also about conditions of character. There were the rich and poor alike, the high and lowly, the prejudiced and ignorant, the sophisticated as well as the rough, brute and illiterate among the throng who followed Jesus, the teacher from Galilee. Some came out of curiosity, listening only to find cause for accusation against Him, by twisting His words, bearing false witness to the leaders of the Sanhedrin, who hated this humble carpenter from Nazareth. For He dared at times to speak strong words against their bigotry and hypocrisy.

Some came to hear encouraging words, others needed comfort, hope and goodly words to soothe their wounded souls, calming their disquieted spirits. All classes of people mingled from far and near, from the humble to the proud and those of whom the prophets spoke centuries ago of which Jesus says: "Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand." – Matt. 13:13; Isa. 6:9; Eze, 12:2.

The following story about one of the most beautiful parables has inspired many an artist and writer ever since Jesus had uttered this precious chain of thought about an actual event. Numerous stories have been written about this particular tale of the Good Samaritan, every preacher and teacher of the Gospel used and still uses it in their messages.

The hero of the event is the Samaritan, the splendid example of compassion and self-denial and help in time of need to learn from. But what about the victim, the main object of the parable? Without him, there would be no lessons about the other three persons involved.

In this article we take a look at the victim. Jesus speaks about a "certain man" traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho.

The Journey

This certain man, an Israelite was not a common, or some base fellow, for then he would not have drawn the attention of the thieves. He was of noble stature, dressed in fine garments with a leather bag over the shoulder. He started out early in the morning, leaving Jerusalem while the air was yet cool and fresh. He was on an important errand, though not a pleasant one, nevertheless it must be done and quickly. His mood was not the best, for the anger troubling him for the last days flared up again and made him to press forward with urgency.

A few days ago he received the news, that the acquaintance of Jericho whom he is now going to meet, had cheated him in his last business deal. He gave that man a piece of property to sell for him and to get such and such percentage of the sale. He figured a certain amount of what the worth might be and the partner agreed. But then our traveler heard the property had sold for a much higher price than expected, and that the man had kept the extra sum besides his deserved percentage. This made our man very ill tempered, for he could not be cheated on like that, no not him!

He is trying hard to make his way up in society, dealing honestly, yet he was very exacting as well. He would not miss out a farthing to be gained, and has no sympathy for anyone who does not pay him his



due immediately. He wanted a name and the respect of the people, and to achieve this even more so, gives at times generous donations to the priests for the temple. Their friendship means much to him and sometimes invites the priests to his house for a sumptuous fare of exotic delicacies and rare wines. He considers himself a decent business man, but to be cheated on he will not tolerate. He was convinced the extra money was his; he must get it and that at once.

The wrath within him energized his steps and before the sun was too high, he was well on the way into the wilderness of Judea.

The Attack

A steep, rocky ravine lay ahead where at times robbers attacked the people who happened to travel through. Our businessman was so consumed by his thinking how he could get even with that scoundrel in Jericho, he gave no thought to any danger. He went on neither looking left nor right. Suddenly he felt a hard blow on his head. He heard the coarse shouting of excited voices, and to his total surprise was instantly surrounded by a horde of wild looking men, tearing the fine leather bag from his shoulder, stripping him of his garments and sandals, punching, beating him with rough, powerful fists from all

sides, so that he lost balance.

Before he could fully grasp what happened, one of the robbers hit him once more with something hard over the head with such force, that blood gushed out from above one eye on the forehead – then all was blackness.

The mob quickly disappeared. The gained treasure of fine clothes and the considerable sum in the bag left them satisfied for some days.

The Victim

Hours passed. By now the sun was beating down waves of heat upon land and creature. Our poor traveler was lying in a pool of blood, mangled and unconscious beside the path. He looked like one dead. After a while he awoke for a moment out of unconsciousness because of tremendous thirst. He could not move, pain ravaged his body everywhere, he tried to open his eyes, but one was shut tight because of the thick layer of dried blood from the gap on the forehead. But with the other eye he could recognize just for an instant the figure of a well known priest passing by. Then all was black again.

Time went on and the condition of the victim became very serious. Left unattended, he would not survive the night. He lost much blood and the heat began to

dehydrate his system. Meanwhile a Levite came along, but because of the blood, the distressing sight of the battered body before him caused him to shrink from getting involved (his nice clothes would become quite soiled) – though his conscience told him otherwise. – Hours passed.

The Samaritan

Then a happy singing voice and the steps of sure-footed ass broke the silence of the place. A Samaritan, riding on his beast was joyfully traveling to a far away friend, with whom he was going to set up some business.

Suddenly the cheerful singing stopped, as the Samaritan noticed the motionless, marred body below him. Immediately he lighted off the ass to look if the assassinated one was alive - he was, but barely.

By now the victim was in a most critical condition. The long exposure to the hot sun caused dehydration and fever. Flies had settled over his wounds. Instant help was the only means for survival. The Samaritan knew what to do. Hastily he took from the basket water, oil, wine (about the wine and oil, see note at end of article) and cloth; items he always carries with him when he travels. Then he kneels beside the victim.

A wave of compassion and pity came over him as he looked at the wounds, the





many bruises, the swellings, the mass of dried blood over face, body and ground. The swarms of flies, disturbed in their feasting, were now buzzing wildly round about. With the utmost tenderness he puts one hand underneath the injured head to drop some wine diluted with water into the cracked, parched lips of the victim. Gently he moistened the mouth and slowly, very carefully trickles drops between the lips, so no choking would occur, which happens, if the liquid would go down the throat too quickly. By doing this, a movement went through the limp body. The refreshing wine brought the victim out of his unconscious state. Eagerly he began to slurp the offered drink. Strengthened, the wounded man opened his eye and looked directly into the compassionate face of the Samaritan, whose eyes sparkled up as he beheld the response to his drink.

The victim wanted to say something, but could not utter a word, he was too weak, and delirious with fever he could not think clearly. He tried to move his lips for a whisper, but then all was black before him once more.

Now the Samaritan began to clean off with the oil the worst of the crusted blood on the face, and then mixed wine and oil together to tend to the terrible laceration on the head, bandaged it and moistened again with oil, so that it can easily be removed

for redressing. Then he took a piece from his own garments and wrapped it around the victim. After that he most carefully lifted the man to put him on his beast, to take him to the inn where he sometimes spends the night during his journeys.

It was a slow, difficult travel down the rocky steep. The Samaritan needed to support the limp body with his arms, to hold him up as he walked beside the animal. But at last they arrived at the familiar inn in the plain below. There he rented a room, "and took care of him." (Verse 34). He urged the innkeeper to provide him buckets with cool water from the well, extra sheets and towels for his patient.

The Samaritan put the victim into the bed. Then with a wet cloth began to wash the many wounds and bruises, dressing them carefully to avoid infection. This done the fever must be brought down. So he folded a sheet, soaked it in the bucket, pressed out the excess water and laid it on the body of the victim. The feet he wrapped in a wet towel. Upon the forehead he put a soaked cloth. Every so often he repeated the whole process to cool off the hot skin.

The night came on and the Samaritan could finally retire and take his rest. But he would not leave his patient, until he knew the man was out of greatest danger. The fever had dropped to a degree acceptable. The short and hasty breathing became more calm and relaxed, the racing heartbeat had slowed down to almost normal. Now covered with dry clean sheets, he would sleep well.

Early next morning, before leaving, the Samaritan once more looked at his patient, who was still asleep. The same looked much better and it was obvious, that after some days he would be fully restored. Still he needs care and attention. But he, the Samaritan must go on; he cannot wait any longer, his journey is yet far. So when he "departed, he took out two pence and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay you." (Verse 35).

With a happy heart, and an even more energetic, joyful singing the Samaritan went on, riding upon his ass content and grateful to God for the opportunity to have helped to save someone's life.

A Change of Heart

Back in the inn it was quiet. Other overnighters also left and the first hustle and bustle of the day was over. Now the innkeeper could put together what the Samaritan requested to provide for the patient. Meanwhile the victim had awakened. Astonished he noticed himself lying in a bed with a clean sheet covering him, one arm was wrapped in cloth, and on his aching head he felt a thick bandage round about. What is this? Where was he? What happened?

Just then the door opened and the innkeeper brought some light food and drink. At that sight the patient felt hunger, for he had not eaten since he left Jerusalem. And was he ever thirsty! The host was pleased to see the man so much better than last eve. He put a cup of fresh grape juice to his lips, which he drank with great eagerness, then another and another. Immensely strengthened by this refreshment, he asked the host where he was; and how come he ended up in this room?

With incredible amazement he listened to what the host was telling. Yes, he remembered of being attacked, but after the final blow on his head, he fell, and all became blurred and fuzzy before his eyes, than blackness. He tried to sit up to eat some food set before him, but this made him very dizzy; and the pain like a thousand needles in the head, soared by this movement to such unbearableness, he had to lay down again.

Then while alone once more, his mind went about the man who so marvelously intervened and cared. It was clear that he had saved his life from a horrible death. During the next few days while he was not yet able to get on his feet, he had much to think and ponder. And thinking he did about the Samaritan who was such a marvel to him he could not grasp. How could he care about a total stranger, even a Jew in such an awful state as he was, to help and even provide for the means when he left? Never in his entire life had the victim heard or seen such a thing.

What kind of person is that? While wondering and contemplating, he suddenly remembered the moment, when he looked into the face of the Samaritan, when he let trickles of cooling wine into his

parched throat. Now he held on to this brief gaze and the face of his benefactor was imprinted in his mind for ever. This benevolent expression of the face, that soft smile and those gently eyes – he will never forget. In fact, these were making their way into his heart so encased within a hard crust, and they penetrated right down to the very bottom of his soul. And to this stern, exacting businessman, those eyes of the stranger began to touch and melt that cold, pitiless heart. A wave of warmth arose from within and embraced him with such gentleness, that he let himself completely immerse in this wonder, so totally new to him – so strange, yet so soothing to his soul, and so incredibly irresistible.

Then a terrible shame came over him, but those eyes did not condemn, they had only pity and compassion. Now the victim realized the total failure of his life and as he looked on the works “of his hands,” it was all “vanity and vexation of spirit.” (Eccl. 2:11). He had lived only for himself, gratifying the desires of his covetous heart. He looked to people as a mere means to serve his benefit; it did not enter his mind to consider their need. To give them a smile, a kind word, an offering of help. This was altogether foreign to his character. Of course he had no real friends, people were more afraid of him than in trusting him. All this went through his mind while he was recuperating in those quiet days at the inn.

A new wonderful attitude now captivated this man – to become like this stranger, so kind, so helpful, so happy. He thought about the priest who passed him by after the attack, he was one of those coming to his feasts. Now he realizes they all only befriended him because of gifts, nothing more. Then there is that scoundrel in Jericho for whom he undertook this journey. But now he is a changed man and his interest and outlook on life is different. He will not go there, oh no, he has a much better, nobler goal before him. His only desire, as soon as he is well enough to travel, is to go and search for this Samaritan. To thank him for befriending him. The wall of prejudice against Samaritans is of no concern, for higher motives drive him, and he will not rest until he comes across the man, who not only saved his life, but changed him into another man.

So that traumatic, horrible encounter in the wilderness was actually the best thing, the

greatest blessing that could have happened to him.

Is Gratitude a Duty?

The point in the parable Jesus was making is: “Go and do thou likewise” (verse 37) to your “neighbour.” It is the obligation and opportunity of the Christian to do good to others (not only when in need), regardless of race or inconvenience. This is the policy of the heavenly kingdom and no one, who had not engaged himself in unselfish service, will ever have a right to dwell on this earth made new, because it is given to those for a possession who are “meek” and “merciful.”

The so-called children of Abraham in name only, like the priest and the Levite in the story, are strangers to the kingdom of God, but many who are considered “unworthy” of the privilege to be called children of Abraham, are in truth the real seed of Isaac.

Now another thought of no less weight: The one who in this life has once been helped, even saved by someone from a terrible calamity, be it financial, physical, or of a personal nature – is he not obligated to show gratitude in some way? Or does he think he had a “right” for the help, that he “deserved” it, and makes no effort to do any good in return? From the worldly standard we may expect this attitude...

But did Jesus have an “obligation” to come down from heaven to “seek and save that which was lost”? (Luke 19:10). Did we “deserve” His willingness to endure the fiercest assaults and temptations of Satan, the diabolic hatred of the religious leaders, the terrible agony in Gethsemane, and the shameful death as a criminal on the cross of Calvary? The pure, the innocent One?

In the view of the broken law of God, we deserved “death” not life. But, because of boundless, divine love and compassion, Jesus laid aside His crown and royal robe to garb Himself as a humble servant to minister unto the “dead in trespasses and sin” (Eph. 2:1). To deliver them from hell, that they might enter into a new life under His personal protection and power forever.

For such a gift, which cannot be estimated with many means, is it not the duty of one who received and accepted the gift of life,

to give himself and his time in gratitude to the Saviour? Getting to know Him truly as a personal Friend and Counselor and to serve Him by doing good?

“If we go not after Him and seek Him with all the heart, He will not be found of us.” (Jer. 29:13).

From birth we grow up “half-dead” because of sin, healing is freely offered through the grace of God, but if not taken up in earnest, one remains, “without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots.” (Jude 12). Then the sacrifice of Jesus was in vain and life itself a curse, with a terrible ending in the second death.

The whole content of this particular parable is full of rich and very deep thoughts to ponder on. May it be a spark for some to kindle a warm fire of genuine Christian love and service. To God be praise for ever! **AMEN.**

Now a quote about Luke 10:34 “Pouring in oil and wine:” “This was an external and medicinal application. The mixture of the two formed a healing ointment. Pliny mentions “oleum gleucinum,” which was compounded of oil and gleucus (sweet wine), as an excellent ointment for wounds.” Columella gives the recipe for making it. - Baptist Bible Commentary, pg. 297. Fresh grape juice in ancient times (and still is being done in the hot Middle East) was boiled down to about ¾ the amount, till thick. Then it was poured into new amphorae or other earthen vessels, lined inside and outside with pitch, sealed and stored. This method kept the air out and could be kept indefinitely. No fermentation would take place. Sometimes the vessels were immersed in water. If the temperature would be too high when grape juice was kept in skins or other containers, the liquid would become vinegar; this is the law of nature. The temperature for fermentation to become alcohol must be between 50-70 F. Below this the juice would keep fresh; when above 75F, it spoils, becomes acid – sour, vinegar. The wine the Bible recommends is the fresh juice of the grape, stored mostly as sweet wine, a thick syrup-like substance to be diluted. The wine the Bible condemns, is fermented juice – the alcoholic wine (Prov. 20:1; 23:30-32; Isa. 28:7; etc.). Distillation was not known until the 19th century.

Edda Tedford, Canada

THE MOST WONDERFUL GIFT



Nehemiah Rebuilds The Temple

While the world was revelling in paganism in the subtle guise of “Celebrating His Birth,” the Lord was granting a little group of believers the Most Wonderful Gift that He could ever give.

As the year end approached we all looked forward with eagerness to the yearly gathering at Toongabbie, Sydney. But this year there was extra anticipation and expectancy, for our regular conference was to be followed by a youth conference.

We all prayed fervently for both conferences and we can say with confidence, because God is faithful, that all the affairs of the conference, either good or seemingly bad were according to His providence. John 14:13, 14 “And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it.” These are the times we must trust God, when everything looks as though it is going wrong.

Truly the Holy Spirit was being poured out upon all of us including the youth. The first work of the Holy Spirit is to bring conviction of sin. John 16:8-15. Many of us can relate to the testimony, “It seemed the messages were directed just to me.”

His encouragement to us is; **AS MANY AS I LOVE, I REBUKE AND CHASTEN: BE ZEALOUS THEREFORE, AND REPENT.** What gracious mercy has God toward us in our hopeless condition!

The Israelites in the time of Nehemiah (Patriarchs and Prophets, Ch. 56) had the law read and explained to them. As they listened to the law day after day, they had been convicted of their transgressions and they mourned because of their transgressions. But because this was a day the Lord commanded them to keep with joy and gladness they were bidden to restrain their grief. So each afternoon they spent time in grateful recounting of the blessings of God. Then they prostrated themselves before the Lord, confessing their sins and pleading for pardon. Their leaders encouraged them to believe that God, according to His promise, heard their prayers. They must not only mourn and weep, and repent; they must believe that God pardoned them. They must show their faith by recounting His mercies and praising Him for His goodness.

What happened in the time of the Pentecost? “After Christ’s ascension, His disciples--men of varied talents and capabilities--assembled in an upper chamber to pray for the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this room ‘all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication.’ They made thorough work of repentance by confessing their own sins. Upon them was laid no burden to confess one another’s sins. Settling all differences and alienations, they were of one accord, and prayed with unity of purpose for ten days, at the end of which time ‘they were all filled with the Holy Ghost.’”

We should not be offended when the Lord shows us our sins. We need to rejoice and truly be thankful that we are being rebuked and chastened. We need to begin giving thanks for the Straight Testimony and put away humanism and feeling sorry for and comforting people in their self pity when it is God who is working amongst us. Let us all rise up and praise God for such a wonderful merciful gift of the Holy Spirit who brings to our attention our sins. What a privilege to find out our sins now so we can repent and be ready for His coming. What a privilege to be able to have our sins confessed and have a clean record in heaven before He says; “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and

he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still.” Revelation 22:11

God will not be mocked. If we ask for the Holy Spirit let us be truly prepared to receive Him as God sends Him, not in the way the world receives the so called “Spirit” through the deceptive and false love of humanism, indulgence and a wonderful feeling of ecstasy.

“From time to time the Lord has made known His manner of working... And when a crisis has come, He has revealed Himself, and has interposed the working of Satan’s plans. He has often permitted matters with nations, with families, and with individuals to come to a crisis, that



His interference might become marked. Then He has let the fact be known that there is a God in Israel who would sustain and vindicate His people.” SD p. 353

Let us begin praying with great fervency for another outpouring of the Spirit of God during our next conference at Easter 2005. Let us look forward with anticipation for a revelation of our sins through the straight testimony and seek earnestly for the ability through the power of God to be repentant and put away that which offends our God and Saviour. Let us rejoice in rebukes and chastening. Let us remember and practice Phil 2:3 “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Chapter 57 in Prophets and Kings entitled Reformation should be carefully studied by each one, considering that we call ourselves Reformers. It would be good to study these

principles and seek to support and uphold our ministers as they go forward as did Ezra and Nehemiah in the work of reform amongst God’s church today.

In fact Sr. White states; “In the work of reform to be carried forward today, there is need of men who, like Ezra and Nehemiah, will not palliate or excuse sin, nor shrink from vindicating the honour of God. Those upon whom rests the burden of this work will not hold their peace when wrong is done, neither will they cover evil with a cloak of false charity. They will remember that God is no respecter of persons, and that severity to a few may prove mercy to many. They will remember also that in the one who rebukes evil the spirit of Christ should ever be revealed.

“In their work, Ezra and Nehemiah humbled themselves before God, confessing their sins and the sins of their people, and entreating pardon as if they themselves were the offenders. Patiently they toiled and prayed and suffered. That which made their work most difficult was not the open hostility of the heathen, but the secret opposition of pretended friends, who, by lending their influence to the service of evil, increased tenfold the burden of God’s servants. These traitors furnished the Lord’s enemies with material to use in their warfare upon His people. Their evil passions and rebellious wills were ever at war with the plain requirements of God.

“The success attending Nehemiah’s efforts shows what prayer, faith, and wise, energetic action will accomplish. Nehemiah was not a priest; he was not a prophet; he made no pretension to high title. He was a reformer raised up for an important time. It was his aim to set his people right with God. Inspired with a great purpose, he bent every energy of his being to its accomplishment. High, unbending integrity marked his efforts. As he came into contact with evil and opposition to right he took so determined a stand that the people were roused to labour with fresh zeal and courage. They could not but recognize his loyalty, his patriotism, and his deep love for God; and, seeing this, they were willing to follow where he led..... The work of restoration and reform carried on by the returned exiles, under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra, and Nehemiah, presents a picture of a work of spiritual restoration that is to be wrought in the closing days

of this earth’s history. The remnant of Israel were a feeble people, exposed to the ravages of their enemies; but through them God purposed to preserve in the earth a knowledge of Himself and of His law. They were the guardians of the true worship, the keepers of the holy oracles... The spiritual restoration of which the work carried forward in Nehemiah’s day was a symbol, is outlined in the words of Isaiah: ‘They shall build the old wastes, they shall raise up the former desolations, and they shall repair the waste cities.’ ‘They that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in.’ Isaiah 61:4; 58:12.

“The prophet here describes a people who, in a time of general departure from truth and righteousness, are seeking to restore the principles that are the foundation of the kingdom of God. They are repairers of a breach that has been made in God’s law--the wall that He has placed around His chosen ones for their protection, and obedience to whose precepts of justice, truth, and purity is to be their perpetual safeguard... In words of unmistakable meaning the prophet points out the specific work of this remnant people who build the wall... In the time of the end every divine institution is to be restored... God’s remnant people, standing before the world as reformers, are to show that the law of God is the foundation of all enduring reform... In clear, distinct lines they are to present the necessity of obedience to all the precepts of the Decalogue. Constrained by the love of Christ, they are to co-operate with Him in building up the waste places. They are to be repairers of the breach, restorers of paths to dwell in...” PK 675-678

May we determine with all our hearts to stand behind the men God has raised up here in Australia to lead us all, young and old into true reform with one mind, one accord, in meekness, humility and tender compassion one for another.

We are in the time of the harvest; let’s choose today the bundle of the obedient. Let’s pray and begin heart preparations to be ready for another deeper outpouring of His Spirit during our next church conference March 24-28th 2005. *Amen*

Sr. Chris Godfrey



WE CHANGE DAILY

Today we are not the same persons as yesterday, and tomorrow we will be different again; and this change applies to every human being. We change for better or for worse, because no one can stand still without changing.

It is easy to change for the worse, because this is human nature. It is very natural for us to become more selfish, more covetous, more proud as the time goes on. Our habits are formed by our practices. As in the country road; every time you pass it with your wagon the ruts become deeper.

Jesus chose for His disciples, faulty men, trusting that they can change under His guidance. John and James were called the sons of thunder because of their quick temper, but they changed to be loving and patient as their Master.

Peter, who for fear denied his Lord three times became very fearless and faithful to the end of his life. But one of the disciples did not change and that was Judas. After three and a half years in the company of Christ, listening to the greatest Teacher, he remained covetous, selfish and world-loving.

The life story of Judas reflects the life story of millions of Christians. They go to a church, they read the Bible, they pray, they even may keep the Sabbath, but their characters have not changed. Eventually the Holy Spirit leaves them alone to their unsanctified condition.

This is what makes the difference between the wise and the foolish virgins. This also makes the difference between Christians with Christ's righteousness and the ones with self-righteousness. Several books have been printed about Christ's righteousness but most of them have left out the part that we must do, and that is to cut the right hand off and to pluck the right eye out.

The change in a Christian life is a result of stern self-discipline, daily denying to ourselves the pleasures and comforts that naturally we would enjoy. And besides all this, in faith seeking the help of God, and daily Bible reading.

"We receive God's Word as food for the soul through the same evidence by which we receive bread as food for the body. Bread supplies the need of our nature; we know by experience that it produces blood, bone, and brain. Apply the same test to the Bible; when its principles have actually become the elements of character, what has been the result? What changes have been made in the life?—'Old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.' In its power men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have been transformed into the image of God. The change is itself the miracle of miracles. A change wrought by the Word, it is one of the deepest mysteries of the Word. We cannot understand it; we can only believe, that, as declared by the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory.' A knowledge of this mystery furnishes a key to every other. It opens to the soul the treasures of the universe, the possibilities of infinite development." ML, p. 26.

This miracle of change is seen clearly in the lives of the sons of Jacob. Earlier Judah was ready to kill his brother Joseph and later he offered himself as a prisoner and slave for his younger brother. Apostle

Paul changed from a persecutor to a great advocate of the newly established Christian church.

The End Result of the Change

Daily we need to keep our eyes directed to the goal that we are trying to reach. Jesus as the greatest reformer is our perfect example. Others like Enoch, Noah, Moses, Nehemiah and Elijah show us what standard human beings can reach.

After we reach this standard, the Lord can place upon us the finishing work of the gospel preaching. Then we will be reformers in reality and not only in name.

Humility

The first change in us is to make us humble. Moses was the meekest man on the earth and therefore he was chosen to lead the people of Israel out of Egypt.

Sister White writes that God is looking for humble men and women to finish His work on the earth. A humble person cannot be offended, he cannot be made angry. You can hurt him, spit on him, speak evil of him, even kill him and he still loves you. He will pray to God to forgive you, as did Jesus.

This first requirement already disqualifies many to be reformers. God has no use for a proud, self-important person, even that he may profess religion.

Nebuchadnezzar was made humble by God's providence, but it took seven years. Moses learned humility during the 40 years caring for the sheep in the wilderness. Joseph became humble in slavery and in prison.

Faithfulness

Daily we are to become more faithful to God and to our fellow men. Our life needs to be transparent as glass, that there is nothing to hide.

Moses learned this lesson; therefore the Lord gave a witness of him, "My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all Mine house." Num. 12:7.

We need to become faithful in Sabbath-keeping, or we will lose the Sabbath

blessing. Our words that we speak, and even our thoughts must be spiritual on the Sabbath day. Doctors and nurses need to care for the sick in our own sanitariums,



but in the worldly hospitals an unnecessary work is required of the nurses and doctors which leads to Sabbath breaking.

We must become faithful in tithes and offerings. Before we plan how to spend our income, tithes and offerings are to be separated and the rest of the money is for our living.

We need to practice faithfulness in health reform. What we eat and drink will surely determine our salvation. In order to practice healthful living we need to study and read books on it. We need to be faithful unto death, that we would rather die than commit the smallest sin.

Unselfishness

We have to learn the lesson of loving our neighbours as ourselves. Very few people practice this requirement, because it goes directly against their selfishness.

Paul writes, "Even as I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved." 1 Cor. 10:33. Paul did not say that he pleased all his friends only, but he pleased all men, including his enemies.

The Jews hated him and tried to kill him, yet Paul writes, "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh." Rom. 9:3. This is ultimate unselfishness, similar to Moses, who pleaded with God to take

his name out of His book, to forgive the people. To do voluntary work without wages in order to save souls is the best way to overcome selfishness. When we understand that God Himself is serving us with His angels without wages, 24 hours each day, then our service to Him seems very little in comparison.

Cheerfulness

This is another lesson that we learn in the school of Christ. The Lord wants us to be happy and smiling always. Our happiness must not depend on outward things. A true child of God is cheerful and full of joy, even in his dying moment.

Would we lose our life savings, our property and all our possessions, yet our joy and happiness would not change if we have learned the lesson that whatever we have is more than we deserve. We would say like Job, "The Lord gave, the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord." Job 1:21.

Missionary Minded

This is not a natural talent with us; we must acquire the missionary spirit daily in the company of Christ. Peter and John said, "For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20. The more we are involved in witnessing for Christ, the more we will enjoy missionary work. It will become our greatest joy that finally we cannot be silent but look for opportunities to tell the redemption story to the people.

Duty

When the voice of duty becomes stronger than the desire for ease and comfort, we have gained a great victory.

All the disciples, including Paul, changed their comfortable lives to a life of hardships, persecutions and finally to a martyr's death.

Moses had a life of luxury in the Pharaoh's palace but he changed it to a life of suffering with the people of God.

Peacemaker

Two kinds of Christians we find in the church; and they are peacemakers and

troublemakers. Jesus said, "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God." Matt. 5:9.

Abigail was a peacemaker. When Nabal had offended David and his men, Abigail went to meet David, and said, "Upon me, my Lord let this iniquity be." 1 Sam. 25: 24. To make peace, Abigail took the blame of her husband upon herself.

Also, to make peace with his brother, Jacob called him his Lord which helped to

reconcile the two brothers. Isaac was a peacemaker. He dug a well and when the herdsmen of Gerar fought over it, he moved on and dug another well, for which the herdsmen fought also. Instead of fighting for his rights, he moved on and dug a third well.

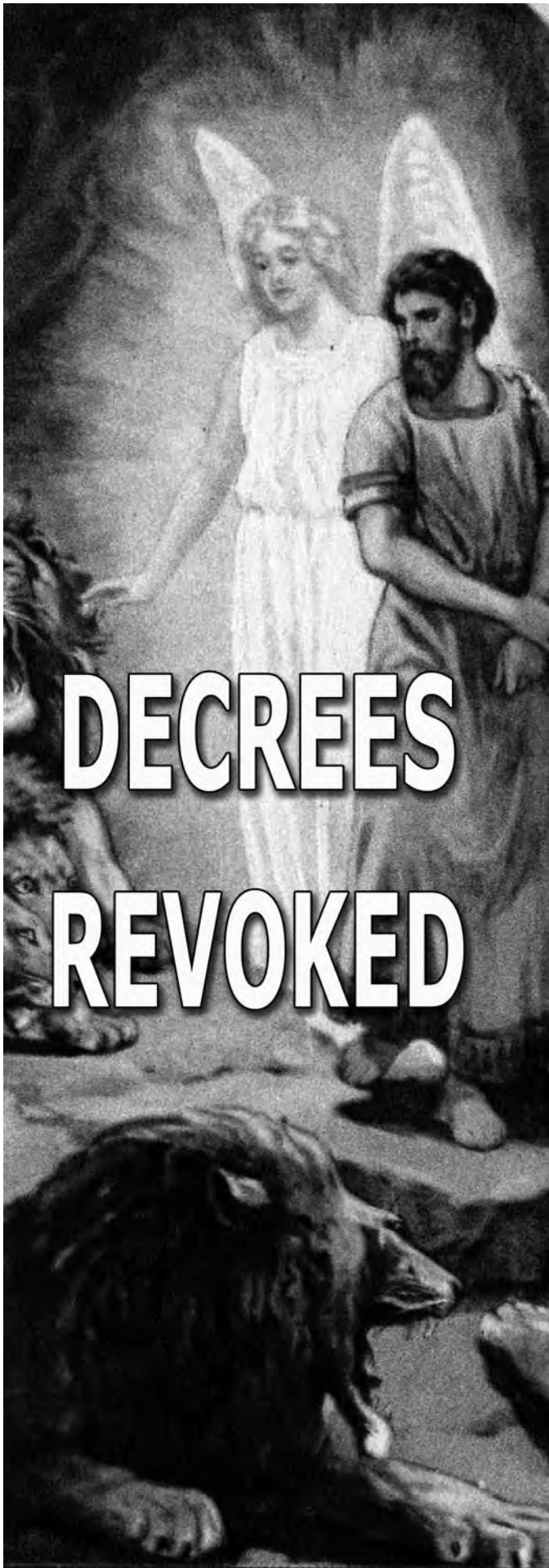
To change from a sinner to a saint is the most important work that we do in this

life. It guarantees us eternal life. But so many neglect this daily change for better and become more hardened in their sinful indulgences and neglected duties. Therefore it is of utmost importance to check our direction to see if we are advancing in holiness or backsliding further away from the goal. May the Lord help us to change daily for the better. *AMEN.*

Timo Martin, Canada



Abigail Before David



DECREES REVOKED

“Make a decree, that in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for He is the living God, and steadfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall even unto the end.” Daniel 6:26

THE IMMUTABLE GOD

The living God, the Creator of heaven and earth and all that is in them will for eternity be a unique God who is a present help to all that are honest and true in all His biddings. He never changes for He is the Alpha and the Omega. Rich tokens of His dealings with the children of men do testify to us His status and might, when the human part is done to open the door for the manifestation of divine accomplishments.

Traces of God’s faithfulness in honouring the claims of His faithful children in a perverse and wicked generation(s) stands as a marked contrast that God is not and will never be a Man who promises and for one reason or the other fails to make true His promise(s). Amid the agony of human woe, God has always stepped in mightily to prove that; “if God be for us, who can be against us?” Rom 3:31(b) “And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good? For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous and his ears are open unto their prayers.” Romans 8:13:12 (a).

“Throughout the history of God’s people, great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. The exercise of a living faith means an increase of spiritual strength and the development of unfaltering trust. It is thus that the soul becomes a conquering power. Before the demand of faith, the obstacles placed by Satan across the pathway of the Christian will disappear; for the power of heaven will come to his aid. ‘Nothing shall be impossible into you.’ Matthew 17:20” PK594 – 5

AHASURUS DEATH DECREE

The intervention of God against the plots of Satan in the form of Haman the Agagite to have the Jews slaughtered in the Medo-Persian realm are to remind us of what the Lord can do for His children when He is given full allegiance. “Through Haman the Agagite, an unscrupulous man high in authority in Medo-Persia, Satan worked at this time to counterwork the purposes of God. Haman cherished bitter malice against Mordecai, a Jew. Mordecai had done Haman no harm, but had simply refused to show him worshipful reference. Scorning to ‘lay hands on Mordecai alone,’ Haman plotted ‘to destroy all the Jews that were throughout the whole kingdom of Ahasuerus, even the people of Mordecai.’ Esther 3:6

“Misled by the false statements of Haman, Xerxes was induced to issue a decree providing for the massacre of all the Jews ‘scattered abroad and dispersed among the people in all the provinces’ of the Medo-Persian kingdom (verse 8). A certain day was appointed on which the Jews were to be destroyed and their property confiscated. Little did the king realize the far-reaching results that would have accompanied the complete carrying out of this decree. Satan himself, the hidden instigator of the scheme was trying to rid the earth of those who preserved the knowledge of the true God.” PK 600 – 01

“In every province whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, there was great mourning among the Jews, and fasting and weeping, and wailing, and many lay in sackcloth and ashes.” Esther 4:3. “And shall not God avenge His own elect, which cry day and night unto Him though He bear long with them?” Luke 18: 7. In this time of dire need for help, both Esther and Mordecai realized that unless God should work mightily in their behalf, their own efforts would be unavailing.

“The events that followed in rapid succession,—the appearance of Esther before the king, the marked favour shown her, the banquets of the king and the queen with Haman as the only guest, the troubled sleep of the king, the public honour shown Mordecai, and the humiliation and fall of Haman upon the discovery of his wicked plot,— all these are parts of a familiar story. God wrought marvelously for His penitent people; and a counter decree issued by the king, allowing them to fight for their lives, was rapidly communicated to every part of the realm by mounted couriers, who were ‘hastened and pressed on by the king’s commandment.’ ‘And in every province, and in every city whithersoever the king’s commandment and his decree came, the Jews had joy and gladness, a feast and a good day.’ Esther 8:14.” PK 602 “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose.” Romans 8:28

DECREE OF NEBUCHADNEZZAR

God is ever ready and waiting to vindicate His wonder-working power on behalf of His faithful children who in calmness wait patiently for His appointed time. When human strength, human wisdom and skill, perplexed to suffer hurt by the hands of the infidels, God watches with untold amusement and joy that His children, called to His salvation stand unmoved from their post of duty. Such a bold stand taken brings into remembrance His pledge to whoever will need His bidding. He says, “For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, Saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end.” Jeremiah 29:11. He is much displeased when we dishonor Him in not taking Him by His word and like the prophet Elijah flee from the sight of the threatening Jezebel.

Daniel and his friends lived to prove God’s pledge work as true amid the fury of an idolatrous king and all his subjects. For our records the king’s command: “That at what time ye hear the sound of the comet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye shall fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the King had set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall, the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace.” Daniel 3:5, 6. In this way, Satan, in the form of a king with authority and power confronts to challenge the authority of the true and living God who in afore time had commanded all the human race saying; ‘Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them for I the Lord thy Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” Exodus 20:3 – 5

Daniel well knew and treasured the command from the true God. Contrary to his treasured knowledge is a foreign injunction that carried the penalty of death should he fail to comply. Having a clear knowledge of the God that he worshiped, Daniel’s resolution remained unmoved, and declared to all that “we ought to obey God rather than men,” Acts 5:29. “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and saith to the king: O Nebuchadnezzar, we are

not careful to answer thee on this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand O King.” Their choice to choose who to obey was not by accident, but a deliberate one thus leaving the consequences with God. Was the choice respected? Never! At the fury and command of the king, the most mighty men were commanded to bind these ‘infidel Hebrews’ and cast them into the furnace that was prepared seven times more than it wont to be heated. Was the purpose of the enemy of saints done? Never was it and never will it be! Daniel and his friends had faithfully done the human part only to wait patiently for the divine part. Before the jubilant congregation, the expectation of all bounced back in reverence to the God of Daniel and his friends. The giver of the command against that of the living God had to retract from His preconceived ideas of what he witnessed. “Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste and spake, and said unto his counselors, did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O King. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God.” Daniel 3: 24, 25. Praise God that he was brought to know the form of the Son of God. How impressive it is that all the attention of the people was turned to what God does for His faithful servants in the fiery furnace, than the death of the men who cast them into the fire!



“Then Nebuchadnezzar spake, and said, blessed be the God of Shadrack, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent his angel, and delivered his servants that trusted in him, and have changed the king’s word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god; except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language which speak anything amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort.” Daniel 3:29. Amen!

“True success in any line of work is not the result of chance or accident or destiny. It is the outworking of God’s providences, the reward of faith and discretion, of virtue and perseverance. Fine mental qualities and a high moral tone are not the result of accident. God gives opportunities; success depends upon the use made of them.”

“While God was working in Daniel and his companions ‘to will and to do of His good pleasure,’ they were working out their own salvation. Philippians 2:13. Herein is revealed the outworking of the divine principle of co-operation, without which no true success can be attained. Human effort avails nothing without divine power, and without human endeavor, divine effort is with many of no avail. To make God’s grace our own, we must act our part. His grace is given to work in us to will and to do, but never as a substitute for our effort.” PK 486 – 7.

Hence in their being true to principle in the midst of a nation of idolaters they gave witness that God works in them to reveal His character. It is thus only then that even kings in their humanity have to acknowledge that the Lord is God. Have you given God the opportunity to work through your being so that all in your sphere may give honour and glory that is due to Him?

“Study the history of Joseph and of Daniel.

The Lord did not prevent plottings of men who sought to do them harm; but he caused all these devices to work for good to His servants, who amid trial and conflict preserved their faith and loyalty.” GW 477. Should we at our time?

DECREE OF THE SUNDAY LAW

The Lord has not kept to Himself what He intends to do in the near future and what His children are to be and expect. He plainly and to the point informs the inhabitants of



earth His divine plans that they may take caution of the impending conflict. “Surely the Lord God will do nothing but revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets.” “The secret things belong unto the Lord our God: but those things which are revealed belong unto us and our children for ever, that we may do all the words of this law.” Deuteronomy 29:29

To be sure of what to expect, a reflection of the past events and experiences of God’s

faithful and peculiar people, is an unerring index of the unfulfilled prophecies as Solomon informs us. “The thing that hath been, it is that which shall be, and that which is done is that which shall be done, and there is no new thing under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, see, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us.” Ecclesiastes 1:9, 10

“The trying experiences that came to God’s people in the days of Esther were not peculiar to that age alone.

The revelator, looking down to the close of time, has declared, “The dragon was wroth with the woman and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus Christ’ Revelation 12:17. Some who today are living on earth will see these words fulfilled. The same spirit that in ages past led men to persecute the true church, will in the future (now) lead to the pursuance of a similar course toward those who maintain their loyalty to God. Even now preparations are being made for this last great conflict.

“The decree which is to go forth against the remnant people of God will be very similar to that issued by Ahasuerus against the Jews in the time of Esther. Church and state are making preparations for the future conflict. Protestants are working in disguise to bring Sunday to the front, as did the Romanists. Throughout the land The papacy is piling up her lofty and massive structures, in the secret recesses of which her former persecutions are

to be repeated. And the way is preparing for the manifestation, on a grand scale, of those lying wonders by which, if it were possible, Satan would deceive even the elect.” 5T 449-50.

SATAN’S COUNTERFEITS

It has always been and is still the nature of Satan to disguise himself in various forms--serpent, an angel of light, a good conductor

of the train of God, etc., with a view of arresting the attention of God's people. As to Eve and Eden insinuations are directly opposed to that of God's bidding. When God says "... in the day thou eatest (the tree of knowledge) thereof thou shall surely die," Satan controverts that saying, "ye shall not surely die." Genesis 2:17, 2:4 similarly when God gives a threatening message "...if any man worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark in his forehead, or in hand. The same shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is poured out without mixture into the cup of his indignation; and he shall be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels, and in the presence of the lamb." Satan on the other hand roars saying, "...no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark of the beast in the right hand, or in their foreheads." Revelation 4:9,10; 13:17. As with Eve in Eden, and Daniel in Babylon, we are left at the cross-roads to choose who to obey, and God will respect our choice and reward it as it shall require. Dear reader, what will your choice be? For to be sure of not faltering between these opinions, it requires Godly Wisdom which God has pledged to give to all liberally and abrideth not.

When the decree goes forth enforcing a spurious Sabbath, the first day of the week, a common working day, possessing no sanctity whatever, in place of a thus saith the Lord, 'blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed it,' "God has revealed what is to take place in the last days, that His people may be prepared to stand against the tempest of opposition and wrath. Those (we) who have been warned of the events before them are not to sit in calm expectation of the coming storm, comforting themselves that the Lord will shelter His faithful ones in the day of trouble. We are to be as men waiting for their Lord, not in idle expectancy, but in earnest work, with unwavering faith. It is no time now to allow our minds to be engrossed with things of minor importance. While men are sleeping, Satan is actively arranging matters so that the Lord's people may not have mercy or justice. The Sunday movement is now making its way in darkness. The leaders are concealing the true issue, and many who unite in the movement do not themselves see whither the undercurrent is tending. Its professions are mild and apparently Christian, but when it shall speak it will reveal the spirit

of the dragon. It is our duty to do all in our power to avert the threatened danger. We should endeavor to disarm prejudice by placing ourselves in a proper light before the people. We should bring before them the real question at issue, thus interposing the most effectual protest against measures to restrict liberty of conscience. We should search the scriptures and be able to give the reason for our faith. Says the prophet; 'The wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.'" 5T 452

A SURE HOPE

When the edict goes forth to worship as man (beast) finds it convenient, dare to be a Daniel holding fast the promises of the God of deliverance, and testify before the rulers, kings, counselors and mighty men of earth marshaled to get rid of the minority that gives their total allegiance boldly yet calmly saying, "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand. O King." "Know therefore that the Lord thy God, He is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love Him and His commandments to a thousand generations; And repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them: He will not be slack to Him that hated Him, He will repay him to his face." Deuteronomy 7:9, 10.

As with the amazing deliverance of Daniel from the fiery furnace of fire and from the lion's den, so shall it be to His faithful children in the last great conflict. "With shouts of triumph, jeering and imprecation, throngs of evil men are about to rush upon their prey. When, lo, a dense blackness, deeper than the darkness of the night, falls upon the earth. Then a rainbow, shining with the glory from the throne of God, spans the heavens and seems to encircle each praying company. The angry multitudes are suddenly arrested. Their mocking cries die away. The objects of their murderous rage forgotten. With fearful forebodings they gaze upon the symbol of God's covenant and long to be shielded from its overpowering brightness.

By the people of God, a voice clear, and melodious, is heard, saying, 'Look up' and lifting their eyes to the heavens, they behold the bow of promise... they hear the request presented before His Father

and the holy angels: 'I will that they also, whom Thou hast given Me, be with Me where I am.' John 17:24. Again a voice, musical and triumphant, is heard saying: 'They come! they come! holy, harmless, and undefiled. They have kept the word of My patience; they shall walk among the angels;' and the pale, quivering lips of those who have held fast their faith utter a shout of victory." GC635-6

Such is the scene given us as to the closing events of this earth's history. How sweet is the ending! How we admire and yearn to be numbered with the little faithful company! Thanks be to God in Jesus Christ that this wonderful opportunity is open to ALL in whom the will of God will be found.

"The enemies of God's law, from the ministers down to the least among them, have a new conception of truth and duty. Too late they see that the Sabbath of the fourth commandment is the seal of the living God. Too late they see the true nature of their spurious sabbath and the sandy foundation upon which they have been building. They find that they have been fighting against God. Religious teachers have led souls to perdition while professing to guide them to the gates of Paradise. Not until the day of final accounts will it be known how great the responsibility of men in holy office and how terrible are the results of their unfaithfulness." GC 640

It takes a critical search of the scriptures personally so as to be wise. "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? Prudent, and he shall know them? For the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them: but the transgressors shall fall therein." We have no excuse that God has not clearly specified what to understand so as to be wise; the wisest King on earth will counsel me and you, "hear the conclusion of the whole matter: fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man." Ecclesiastes 12:6-13

May the Lord graciously help us help know and understand our duty to God while we are called today, in a humble time of peace. **AMEN**

John Riang'a Obwocha, Nairobi, Kenya

Your Papers, Please?

US adopts National ID: Homeland Security Now In charge of Regulations for all US States Drivers Licenses and Birth Certificates By: Jonathan Wheeler

"In a chilling act more reminiscent of the now defunct Soviet Union or the Nazi regime of Adolph Hitler, the United States Congress passed legislation yesterday that requires the States to surrender their regulatory rights over drivers licenses and birth certificates to The Department of Homeland Security.

The massive US Intelligence Reform Bill weighed in at over 3,000 pages and though unread by individual Members of either the House or Senate nevertheless passed all of the legislative hurdles needed in order to become law.

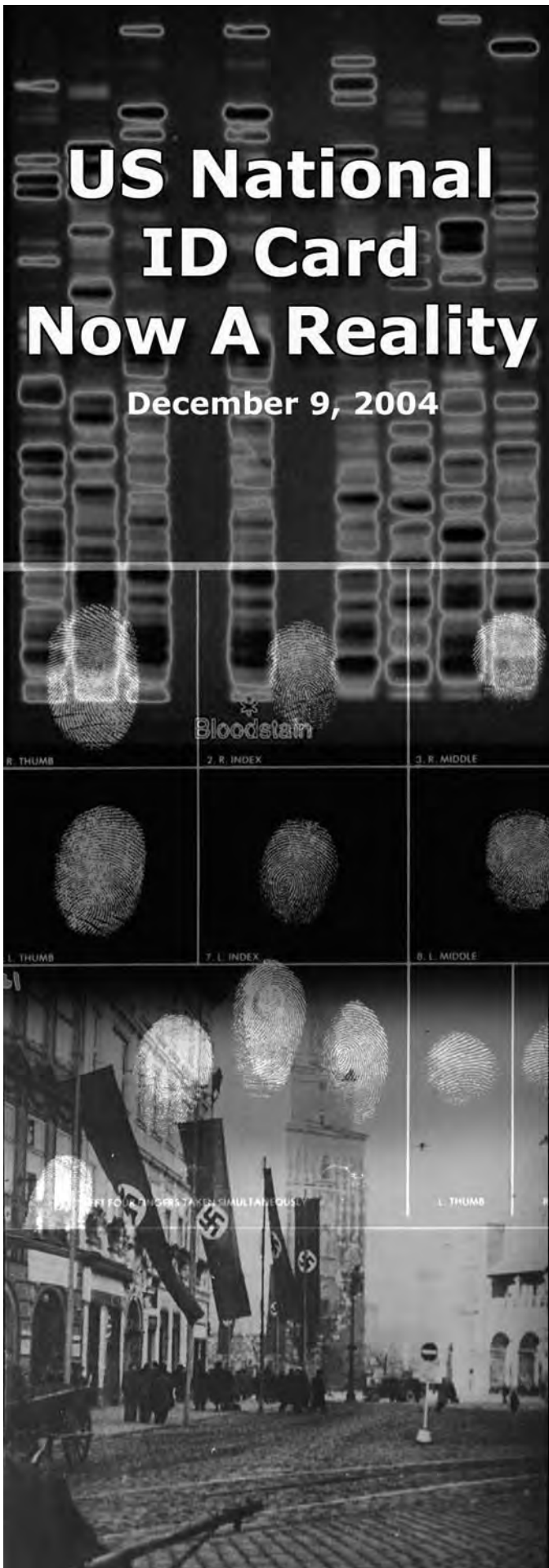
President Bush lobbied hard for these provisions, only objecting when Senator Sensenbrenner attempted to require these same provisions for illegal aliens but which the President opposed. This provision was dropped from the final bill.

Beginning in 2005, the Department of Homeland Security will issue new uniformity regulations to the States requiring that all Drivers Licenses and Birth Certificates meet minimal Federal Standards with regard to US citizen information, including biometric security provisions.

Added to currently existing Federal Laws and Supreme Court rulings American citizens when born will be issued a Social Security Number that will be included on their Birth Certificates, along with DNA biometric markers. All Birth Certificates will also be registered in a Federal Government database maintained by the Department of Homeland Security. No child will be allowed enrollment to schools or be entitled to either State or Federal Government benefits programs without first presenting a certified Homeland Security registered Birth Certificate.

Drivers Licenses will also contain DNA biometric markers and include the holder's Social Security Number and be required for receiving and applying for all State and Federal benefits programs. Previous Supreme Court rulings have also upheld State and Federal Law Enforcement authorities right to request Identification from any American citizen, for any reason and at any time as not being violations of their, the citizens, constitutionally protected rights.

Major Banks and credit card companies have applauded the adoption of a National ID system as being important to counter fraud and increasing instances of identity theft. National ID cards with biometric markers will eliminate them from having to issue Credit and Debit cards, which for the first time in US history have surpassed the usage of checks and cash. Utilizing The Department of Homeland Security's centralized federal database, Banks and credit card companies will only require the presentation of a citizens Drivers License to make purchases as all of the persons financial information, including credit and cash balances, will already be known in "real time". (The



combining of Homeland Security and Banking databases on citizen's balances and purchases, along with their past and present purchasing information, has been allowed under previous Federal Laws including the Patriot Act.)

Also included in this bill is a law to require The Department of Homeland Security to



establish a separate ID system for citizens to use prior to boarding airplanes, and which is eerily reminiscent of the Soviet and Nazi regimes dreaded Internal Passport.

Never before in our history have the words of Benjamin Franklin been so correct when he stated:

“people willing to trade their freedom for temporary security deserve neither and will lose both.”

Today, December 9, 2004 will be one of those moments in time that future historians will look back on and pin point as being the day that the United States of America, as it was founded by its forefathers, ceased to exist.”

My dear friends, all that we have studied, read, believed, is fulfilling before our eyes quickly. We are truly living in the last moments of this world's history as we know it. Read Revelation 13. This can happen overnight with the ID card in place. “Seek ye the Lord while He may be found, call ye upon Him while He is near.” Isaiah 55:6

*With the love that Jesus gave me,
Marline Balbach*

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NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTIONS OF THE TORONTO CHURCH

December 31, 2004



Chester: I want to be more submissive to God.

Joaquin: I want to read testimonies more.

Mike: I want to do more Bible reading.

Raquel: I want to be more kind and help those in need more.

Abel: I want to be more patient and read the Great Controversy book.

Rosario: I want to make my character pure.

Matthew: I want to help people who are less fortunate.

Gerson: I want to have more faith.

Ginell: I want to pray more.

Veronica: I want more wisdom from God and be more patient.

Deborah: I want to use all my talents wisely to the honour of God.

George Sabau: I want to be a better person spiritually.

Rafael: I want to teach myself good lessons.

Fanny: I want to change my diet to eat more raw food.

Deslyn: I want to do canvassing and read the Bible more.

Carlos: I want Jesus to help me to change my life.

Amalia: I want to serve God more, read the Bible every day, and to bring souls to the Saviour.

George: I want to change my life to be more pleasing to God.

John McTavish: I want to grow spiritually and exercise more.

Beulah: I want to be a peacemaker to bring unity among the Brethren and to have the character of Jesus.

Len: I want to do more missionary work.

Alberto: I want to be a truly good Christian

Lucia: I want to be more humble and conduct cooking lessons.

Ninia: I want to be more peaceful.

Elaine: I want to be more patient.

Matthew: I want to be more loving.

Reina: I want to stop procrastinating

Timo: I want to do more church work and less worldly business.

LETTER TO JESUS



As Manuel gazed out over his broad fields of tall corn, a pleased smile spread over his brown face. He, Maria and the children had worked extra hard this year. They had planted more corn than ever before, and that had meant clearing more land. Large piles of rocks at the edges of the fields stood like sentinels, silent testimony to the many hours of back-breaking labour it had taken to make the land fit for cultivation.

Manuel's smile was not only for the rustling stalks that seemed to grow before his very eyes. Of course, they would make his dream come true, and he was grateful for them. But in his imagination he could see more than corn. He could see his children wearing real shoes, carrying books, and walking several miles every day to the little school where they would get an education. Manuel himself had very little schooling. He could read and write and do simple arithmetic, but his children must have more. They must be able to take their place in the life of the small community. Pedro might, with an education, become mayor of the village, or at least postmaster or wireless operator. And Lisell? Why, with an education, a pretty girl like her could marry well and not have to spend her life hoeing in the fields like most of the country folk.

Yes, Manuel was pleased. He had gone to church every week and prayed for an especially good crop, and God had answered.

"Beautiful, beautiful!" Manuel breathed the words contentedly as he surveyed his acres. But even as he spoke he noticed clouds gathering on the far horizon. More rain? Well, it would do no harm. He turned and strode into the house for breakfast.

The rain came, wild sheets of it followed by great hailstones. The ice beat the growing things furiously into the ground, and as Maria and Manuel stood at the door and watched, they saw the work of many months swiftly ruined.

Manuel stood as in a trance. He could not

believe it. Why had God let this happen to him? He was not a greedy man. He only wanted a better life for his children. The sun came out and flooded the green valley with cheerful rays. But there was no cheer in Manuel's heart. All his dreams were shattered for another year. There was nothing left, nothing. Not even enough to live on through the winter. He would have to sell the animals, and even then they would have barely enough to eat.

Manuel slipped to the ground with his back against the hut and pulled his hat over his eyes. He could think better this way, and right now he really needed to think – hard. There was still enough time, he figured, to plant another crop, but it would have to be done immediately. He would not be able to give as thorough attention to cultivating as he would like, but there was time to get another crop in and harvested before frost. Where, however, would the seed come from?

Then Manuel had an idea. He jumped to his feet and untied his faithful burro. Stuffing a loaf of bread into the saddlebag, he rode off toward the village. Looking neither to the right nor to the left and greeting no one on the way, Manuel soon tied his burro to the rail in front of the post office. Frederico, the village postmaster, looked up in surprise as the farmer entered. Manuel never came to town except on market day, and only occasionally did he ever come into the post office.

Manuel walked up to the open window, took off his large hat and requested politely, "One stamped envelope and a sheet of writing paper, please."

Frederico obliged, sweeping Manuel's money into the drawer. He watched curiously as Manuel seated himself at the rickety table in the corner and picked up the scratchy pen. Manuel spent a long time on the message, for it had been years since he had written a letter, and he wanted this one to be just right. Finally, he folded the

paper carefully, moistened the seal with his tongue, and painstakingly addressed the envelope. Bowing politely, he handed the letter to Frederico. Leaving the post office, he mounted the burro and headed for home with a peaceful heart. Once more a smile played round his lips. Everything would be all right now.

Frederico took Manuel's letter and prepared to drop it in the mail bag. Then, a bit curious, he glanced at the address. "TO JESUS!" Frederico stroked his chin thoughtfully. What was he going to do with this letter? He couldn't just drop it into the waste basket. Manuel had paid for it to have it mailed, and it had to go somewhere.

"Antonio!" called Frederico to his assistant in the back room. Antonio roused himself from his nap, took his feet off the table, and rose from his wicker chair. Lazily he shuffled into the front room.

"Look, Antonio, Manuel has written a letter to Jesus!" Frederico shoved the envelope toward him. "What are we going to do with it?"

Antonio took the letter and looked at it thoughtfully. "Keep it until he comes in next time and give him back his money. Just tell him we have no correspondence with heaven." But Frederico could not bring himself to see it that way.

"Why don't we open it and see what's inside?" he asked.

"And tamper with the mail?" Antonio was aghast.

"We can't send it, so we may as well know what it is that's so serious that Manuel had to write Jesus about it," Frederico reasoned. He tore the letter open and began to read:

"Dear Jesus: You know how hard Maria and I and the children have worked this season to bring in an abundant crop. You have seen us digging out the rocks, uprooting the

stumps, plowing the ground, and planting the corn. You have been gracious to send the rain at the right time and cause the seed to sprout and grow. You know that our plans for the future are only for the good of our children. We want them to have shoes and books so that they can go to school.

“Today You permitted the hail to ruin everything. You can see there is nothing left. Unless You do something about it we will starve this winter. I know that You are testing my faith in Your providence. And I am telling You now that I know You have not forgotten us. I love and serve You every day and I know You will help us. I have figured that it will cost me about one hundred dollars to buy enough seed to replant. So I am asking You to send it to me in the next mail, which comes in, as You know next Tuesday. I shall be here to receive the letter with one hundred dollars right after the mail arrives. In the meantime we will prepare the land for planting.

Your humble servant, Manuel”

Frederico and Antonio looked at each other with questioning eyes.

“How did he ever write that so well, I wonder?” said Frederico. “I wish we could do something about it. He’s a poor, ignorant peasant, but he has more faith and perseverance than I would have.” “Yes, we should do something,” Antonio agreed. “Why don’t we show the letter to people who come in and ask them to leave donations? Then we can put the money in an envelope and give it to Manuel when he comes in on Tuesday. I hate to shake the poor man’s faith.”

“Good idea,” Frederico agreed.

So the two postmasters began their campaign to answer Manuel’s prayer. Nearly everyone who came in gave something, and at mail time on Tuesday Frederico counted it. Sixty dollars. Not as much as Manuel had asked for, but it would surely help. Frederico put the money into an envelope, sealed it, and waited for Manuel.

At mail time Manuel walked in. His shoulders were back and his head was high as he walked into the small post office and inquired whether there was mail for him. With a twinkle in his eye Frederico handed Manuel the envelope. Antonio pressed close

to the window, and the two men watched with interest as Manuel slowly counted the cash. He shook his head, and then counted again. Finally, he stuffed the money into his belt and approached the window again, this time with determination in his eyes, and asked for another sheet of paper and another stamped envelope. Frederico and Antonio looked at each other quizzically. What could he be writing about this time? Perhaps a thank-you note?

Manuel did not hesitate, but sat down promptly and began writing. In a short time he folded and sealed the letter and handed it



to Frederico.

As soon as Manuel had disappeared from sight Frederico pounced upon the letter. Feverishly he tore it open.

“Dear Jesus: I am very grateful to You for answering my request in this time of great emergency. However, I think You should know that the rascals here in the post office removed forty dollars. I cannot possibly make it this year without the other forty, so I shall call back again at mail time next Tuesday for Your letter with another forty dollars in it. In the meantime I shall plant the seed that I buy with these sixty dollars.

Your humble servant, Manuel”

“That’s what you get for tampering with the mail,” grumbled Antonio. “I knew no good would come of it. You should just

have thrown away the letter and let him blame God. Now we have to take the blame for stealing the forty dollars, and nobody thanks us for raising the sixty.”

Frederico stroked his chin. “A better idea is for each of us to put in twenty dollars. I don’t want him to lose his faith in God. What he thinks of me doesn’t matter.”

So when Manuel arrived for his letter the next week Frederico and Antonio watched while he opened it. Painstakingly he counted the money, and then approached the window for yet another sheet of paper.

“Dear Jesus: I thank You for sending the additional dollars. Now my children can go to school this year. And I think that the men in the post office read my last letter, for they did not take out any of the money this time.”

In a few weeks Manuel’s carefully prepared fields were again green with new sprouts of corn. His dream, which had seemed doomed for awhile, was on its way to fulfillment.

“Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:” Matthew 6:1-3

Although Frederico did not receive any appreciation for his good deed, and was even blamed for stealing the forty dollars, that did not deter him from doing his good deed. He knew that God will reward him in heaven. He simply wanted to encourage the faith of Manuel, whether he received any recognition from man or not. “And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men;” Col. 3:23

Jesus sees all our good deeds and they are recorded in heaven. That is all the recognition we need. “Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name.” Mal. 3:16