

The Reformation **Messenger**

VOLUME 14, NUMBER 4, APRIL 2007

International Missionary Society of The S.D.A. Church Reform Movement



“The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger:
but they that seek the LORD shall not want
any good thing.” Psalm 34:10



We Believe

The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.

He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.

The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness.

The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.

His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.

Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

Official Publication of the International Missionary Society of the Seventh Day Adventist Church Reform Movement, Canadian Field.

- Tel: 416-252-1197 Fax: 416-252-6625
- Email: timom@sympatico.ca
- Web: www.imsmessenger.org

In This Issue

"HONOR THY FATHER..."	3
ANGELS WEEP	7
"HE LEADETH ME..."	9
ARE WE GROWING...	15
LAODICEA IS COUNSELED	17
FEAR & TREMBLING	21
CC: COALS OF FIRE	25

Subscribe To The Messenger

Please Fill In: _____

Name: _____

Mailing Address: _____

No. of subscriptions: at \$18.00 each per year

(Price includes 12 issues, one per month, including shipping & handling)

Amount of cheque: \$

Payable to: IMS Publishing

Makes A Great Gift!

www.4truth.ca

IMS
PUBLISHING

54 NEWCASTLE ST.
TORONTO, ON
CANADA
M8Y1A3



"HONOR THY FATHER AND MOTHER"

"Honor your father and your mother, that your days may be long upon the land which the Lord your God is giving you." Exodus 20:12

Genuine Respect

This is the fifth commandment of the Ten Commandments (lit. "ten utterances" or God's rules of conduct) which in essence says, "honor your father and your mother." To honor is defined as mark of respect, reverence, a sense of what is right or due; as we confer honor to God – a highly respected God. It denotes, also, integrity, trust. A courtroom judge is addressed, "your honor."

It's not often that reference, or mention is made to this divine yet unconditional commandment, or it's quietly reserved for a children's class, or shunned. In fact, "aged parents were abandoned or put to death in heathen lands." (PP 337). More often, however, mention is made of the fourth ("Remember the Sabbath Day"); sixth ("You shall not murder"); seventh

("You shall not commit adultery"); eighth ("You shall not steal"); and so on, but all important as well. But, in fact however, the fifth commandment ("Honor Thy Father and Mother") is mentioned eight times; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 5:16; Matt. 15:14; 19:19; Mark 7:10; 10:19; Luke 18:20; Eph. 6:2!

The marked emphasis, however, is still the same in all..."Honor Thy Father and Mother"...absolute and applicable in any situation. The Alexandrian Jewish author, Philo (GR friend) applied it well; he had already connected the commandments to honor one's parents with general rules of household duties!

Secret Of A Long Life

Yet, we teach our young children that "honor" means "obey." You see, one important factor that should be borne in mind about the Law is that it served as a "schoolmaster" until Christ (Gal 3:24), and that, indeed, is the Apostle Paul's application in Eph.6:1-3. He touches on the domestic life of the Spirit-filled believers

as children and servants of God. Paul said, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord; for this is right. Honor thy father and mother (which is the first commandment with promise), that it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." Well, here we see, too, the first of God's many blessed promises, and that of long life! Also, the rule for fathers (Eph. 6:4) supports authoritarian paternalism, but may refer to "education"(bringing up) rather than "strict discipline."(Bib. Com. Harper 1988, pg. 1119).

Rejecting God

It is true, furthermore, that "parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life, parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God. The fifth commandment requires children

not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents, but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.” (PP 308).

Go In!

To Israel, expecting soon to enter Canaan, it was a pledge to the obedient, of long life in that good land; but it has a wider meaning, including all the Israel of God, and promising eternal life upon the earth when it shall be freed from the curse of sin.”(PP 308).

Certainly, then, we can see the fifth commandment has a wider and more important meaning and a practical application for us, as we, that present Israel, stand before the gates of Canaan.

Financial Interests

Well, we can see, too, that obedience is one form of honor, the honor that young children owe to their parents. Ah! But when children have grown to adulthood and parents have grown old, the emphasis of Scripture shifts from obedience to financial support... “to succor and comfort them in old age.” But, what does Jesus say?

1. Jesus tells the Pharisees - that they have violated the fifth commandment when, using a religious pretext, they have failed to support their parents (Mark 7:9-13). The Hebrew and Greek word for “honor,” *kabad* and *timao*, respectively, have financial connotations. See Gen. 13:2; Prov. 13:18; Isa. 43:23; Mal. 1:6; 1 Tim. 5:17. Now, the Apostle Paul, dealing with the needs of widows in the church, tells children and grandchildren to meet those needs (1Tim. 5:4). He employs some of the strongest, unexpected language against those who refuse this responsibility: “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”(verse 8). Astonishing! Admittedly, it was a problem in those days... and it is, today.

About Face

Providing for our elders is endearing love, but it is also justice. When we were young,

we were utterly helpless. Then our parents provided for all our needs. All too often, of course, this is not the case, as parents abandon their children through divorce or desertion. What I say here, therefore, must be applied analogously to all guardians. So, what changes?

2. When our parents become helpless- the roles must be reversed. We must provide everything for them, to the extent of their needs. “They’re entitled to more than food and shelter.”(AH 360). So, what are these needs?

Those needs, furthermore, are more than financial. Older people often find themselves alone, without friends or family; the “empty nest syndrome.” I see it daily in ritzy, glitzy Florida; many retirement pensioners, sitting on park benches sharing a newspaper, clipping out coupons, eating canned dog or cat food, too old, poor, or crippled to play golf, sleeping under bridges, talking of the “good ol’ days,” in the shadows of luxury high rises, and flowing wealth – many more with no hope, even the enviably wealthy. But, most importantly, a “feeling of rejection.”(UL 131). Even so, what is lacking?

Home Sweet Home

They need companionship, mental stimulation, compassionate understanding, indeed love, and “assurance to the faithful ones” (RY 144); “fruitfulness, by working the brain in life-long diligence.”(2 MCP 399:3) Furthermore, “aged parents long for affection and sympathy”(AH 360).

Therefore, so often the ideal place for them, when they can no longer live independently, is in the home of an adult child. Such home care enables the child more easily to meet the needs of his parent, and it gives the parent a real home, with loved ones and the support that only families can give; a common spirit, praying, and sharing the joys and woes of life. Thusly, together “great victories are gained by parents through earnest prayer and living faith.”(1T 397). This is the life of a God-fearing home for the elderly and the children; “a fortification of prayer and faith.”(2T 398).

Real Culture

In Greece, and in some other cultures, it is the common custom and tradition to care

for the parents in the homes of the children. In fact, it’s considered the “children’s duty, and privilege to care for aged parents” (AH 360-4). The grandparents are adored and cherished; give a certain “gracefulness”(RY 23f); influencing to the benefit of the grandchildren; “convenient” counseling and “services” for their children, genuine usefulness, with deep, infinite wisdom and life experiences of old age. “One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:5, 6)... one walk, one service, one spirit, one roof. What a unique opportunity for younger “parents to bring as much perfection as possible into the family circle.”(6T 382).

Too Bad

But, in a fallen and insecure world, no situation is perfectly ideal, and this beautiful scenario changes. “For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy.” (2 Tim. 3:2). “Disobedience to parents is a sign of the last days, and is increasing.” (CG 229; AA 506).

Home care, today, for elderly relatives, however, is often a difficult situation, both for the older person and for the younger family; petty conflicts, idiosyncrasies, pet peeves, - but, pride prevails above all! So, the younger adults often seek alternatives; but, they often feel a sense of guilt about the prospect of sending their parents to live somewhere other than their family home. It’s normal as it grates with the inborn, normal family make-up ordained by God.

Moment Of Truth

Admittedly, nursing homes, particularly, have developed bad and scandalous reputations over recent decades. Studies have revealed deplorable care in many (but not all) such institutions, as well as the tendency for younger relatives to abandon the nursing home residents entirely, or visit only on Holidays. Many of those residents experience extreme loneliness, neglect, and abusive care by the staff members.

So, Christians and brethren ask, is it ever legitimate, or right to confine an aged relative in a nursing home? Is such an important decision (for some, desperate) ever in keeping with the fifth commandment? Well, it very well may be.

But, is it honorable? Is it inevitable? Is it unavoidable? Is it in the best interests and circumstances of the elderly parent and children? “The Lord searches all hearts.” (1 Chron. 28:9). “Let us search our ways (Lam. 3:40).

**To be sure there are several principles that address and bear on this issue:
Good Samaritan Principles**

1. Separate - It is not wrong in itself for parents to live apart from their children. Indeed, to the original ordinance of marriage in Gen. 2:24; describes a man “leaving” his father and mother in order to “hold fast to his wife.” This principle does not rule out multi-generational living arrangements, but it does mean that marriage creates a “new authority” relationship that normally is expressed by the couple living apart from their parents. As long as a parent is able to live independently, such separation is, perhaps, desirable and acceptable, though there are certainly big advantages for parents and children living fairly close to one another, as mentioned earlier.

2. Monitor - Even when parents are ill or infirm, we should value their independence. Yes, if they can afford and obtain the proper care they need while living independently, and they prefer to do that, nobody ought to, or perhaps, object. Children, of course, should monitor such situations very closely, and with a willingness, however, to step in immediately when needed. In fact, many parents prefer such an arrangement. But, often when confronted, the parents “exhibit a defense mechanism, called ‘denial,’ a disorder which may prevent a stubborn person from complying with treatment, and thereby, worsening the condition, and may lead to depression or become life-threatening.” (Merck Medical Manual 2nd Ed., pg. 548). Pride is the culprit, and must be rid of, only by the power of God in this condition, and by wise counseling.

3. Medical - There are, however, some medical needs, such as Alzheimer’s disease, cancer, advanced cardiovascular disease, severe arthritis, tuberculosis, Hodgkin’s disease, multiple sclerosis, progressive diabetes, mental disorders, incontinence, non-ambulatory, severe malaria, and other chronic, degenerative and infective medical manifestations, that preclude either independent living or living in a family home. These are becoming



more common, as people live longer and medicine becomes more sophisticated. Sometime their needs can best be met through a reputable long-term nursing facility, which are particularly prepared to face these problems. Thank God that such institutions and “care-givers” do exist. But, not everyone can afford such care, to have insurance, or have pension benefits; resulting in a “natural family union,” (a fusion of souls); compatible or not.

4. Decisions - Of course, there are wide disparities in the quality and cost of nursing home care (private and government). One responsibility of children is to help

their parents make wise decisions, or if necessary make decisions for them, among alternatives, but through intensive research, prayer, and wise counseling. Visiting many nursing homes before any commitment is made is one approach, also “homes for the aged have been established by SDA.” (6T 286-87).

5. Visiting - Children should never abandon parents who have been institutionalized, but should visit often (family, friends, church members), providing prayer, emotional support, furnishing reading matter (Bible, Testimonies, etc), Christian material and music, reading to parent when unable to,



are least sensitive to aging. They become automatic and effortless. (WSJ W1 2/16/07.) In fact, a rich wealth of ripe old wisdom. Socrates stated, “wisdom begins after sixty five.” History has reflected the stupendous wisdom of the aged for centuries.

8. Aging - Moreover, an emerging body of research has also revealed that mental functions hold up well into old age, while others get actually better; vocabulary, other verbal abilities, more expert knowledge – “written in stone” (in one’s occupation, profession, hobby, etc.), store more “cognitive templates” (recollection of or mental outlines of generic problems – facts, figures, etc.), and solutions to new problems, keen emotional abilities, intelligence and mature wisdom, cognitive reasoning that can separate what’s important and not, and just “healthy aging” (National Institutes of Health) (WSJ W1 2/16/07). Clearly then, a “pool of sharpened genes,” and “charged DNA.”

9. Peace – Other studies show that the adrenals (GRamygdala) the seat of fear and anger, becomes less responsive to things that once triggered it, such as aggravation and threats. This fits with the stereotype of being at peace with oneself, the world, and God in old age; something to look forward to. (WSJ 2/16/07BiologyW4).

Conclusion: How Or If?

In conclusion, therefore, nursing homes and care-givers, in lieu of home-care, can still play an important role in the life of elderly parents in Christian families when under a close family influence. But, children must take responsibility for

determining how or if to use them in an overall context of love, patience, and care, not demeaning the parents in any manner, nor “cherishing a retaliatory spirit against them”(AH 362). Nursing homes should never be “dumpsters” for people nobody wants to have around. Rather, they should serve to supplement, when needed, a broad relationship of family care and influence, motivated by the love of Christ and honor for the aged ones.

Finally, there was an elderly widower, living alone, who had only one son. He was becoming lonely and dejected. He decided, however, at the invitation of his married son to move in with him and his daughter-in-law. Consequently, he sold his home and gave all of his remaining assets and property to his son.

After a rather short period of time, his daughter-in-law decided, however, that he should leave the house. The son was befuddled; torn between his father and his wife. Granted he loved his father very much, but his wife was over-bearing and insisted his father leave.

Therefore, shortly thereafter, the son asked his father to take a walk with him along a narrow pathway nearby. As they were walking the son tried to console his father by confessing his love for him, but that it would be wiser that he leave to keep the peace.

Midway along the lonely, but familiar path, the father sat on a boulder, and began to cry bitterly.

The son, again, tried to comfort his father by placing his hand on his shoulder, begging forgiveness for his act. The father, however, said, “my dear son, I still love you and always will, but it’s not my having to leave your home that causes me to weep, but the memory of eighteen years ago in which I traveled this very same path with my father, and confined him in the same decrepit, dirty, old nursing home ahead that you are now taking me. “Whatever a man sows that shall he reap.”(Gal 6:7).

“Honor Thy Father And Mother.”

Amen 

John Theodorou, U.S.A.

bringing a favorite dish, supplements, etc. Above all, careful monitoring of their needs, particularly diet and care. Bed or pressure sores are one of the leading causes of long-term-care facility deaths!

6. Discharge - When a nursing home patient has recovered to the point that such care is no longer needed or advantageous, the children should take responsibility, making other suitable arrangements for their parent; home care by a welcomed family or visiting nurse; a return to the not so “empty nest,” with new vigor, hope!

7. Interaction - On the upside of aging parents, longevity studies have revealed that the key to longer-life was not especially diet, or exercise, but interaction with people; beneficial for both children and elderly parents. Many aged are resisting mandatory retirement; (pilots, traffic controllers, law firms, doctors, pastors, engineers, etc.); abilities resist decline! Decisions made are based on many years of experience; hence, knowledge and skill for automatic functions



“Angels of God are in tears as they write in the rolls the words and acts of professed Christians.” Test. Vol. 1, p. 506.

The time to perfect our characters is almost finished, and soon our judgment takes place in the heavenly court, and even one sin that is not overcome and put away will cause us to be eternally lost.

“Those who receive the seal of the living God and are protected in the time of trouble must reflect the image of Jesus fully... I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action.” EW 71.

To reflect the image of Jesus fully is a high standard. Humanly it is impossible to reach. Millions who have tried have utterly failed. But yet with the help of God it can be reached.

Jesus said, “If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove, and nothing shall be impossible unto you.” Matt. 17:20.

We find in the Bible records of people who kept all of God’s commandments. For instance, the parents of John the Baptist. “And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments, and ordinances of the Lord blameless.” Luke 1:6.

What did apostle Paul mean when he wrote to the Philippians, “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.” Phil. 4:13.

Could it be that overcoming sin was not included in all things? And if it was, then there is the answer to all who are struggling to overcome sin.

John writes, “But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.” John 1:12.

The power of God is then available to all who desire perfection of character. But the difficulty arises from the people who are satisfied with their lukewarm condition. They consider themselves, “rich and increased with goods, and having need of nothing;” while their true condition is being “wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked.” And in this condition they are waiting for the Lord to come and to go to heaven. There will be many disappointed believers who will be outside in the end. This is the reason why the angels weep. These angels have done all in their power to arouse these professed Christians to realize their lost condition, but so often in vain.

These believers are sleeping comfortably as the ten virgins, but in a lost condition, without oil in their vessels. They have reached the man’s standard, and the standard of God is ignored. They are not even trying to reach it. The rich young man who came to Jesus was not happy with the high standard of God.

Sins that brought the destruction upon the people in the time of Noah are practiced today. The moral standard is cast down; and Satan is doing his utmost to blind the people’s eyes to their true condition. Hypocrisy and self-righteousness are prevalent and the time of mercy is almost finished.

“No one knows how great the mercy that has been exercised toward us. But few are heartily devoted to God. There are only a few who, like the stars in a tempestuous night, shine here and there among the clouds... I seldom weep, but now I find my eyes blinded with tears; they are falling upon my paper as I write. It may be that ere long all prophesyings among us will be at an end, and the voice which has stirred the people may no longer disturb their carnal slumbers.” Test. Vol. 5, p. 76, 77.

Jesus wept as He beheld the temple and the city. They had rejected Him, the only One who could have saved them. This was the last day of mercy for them. After this day they were no more the chosen people of God.

God is asking, “What could have been done more to My vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?” Isa. 5:4.

We are also asked to weep, “We must weep as He wept for those who will not weep for themselves, and plead as He pleaded for those who will not plead for themselves.” 1 Sel. Mess., p. 118.

We are our brother’s keepers. All who will receive the seal of God are concerned for the salvation of others. The sealing angel has instruction to place the seal of the living God upon the foreheads of the people who weep for others.

“And the Lord said unto him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst

of Jerusalem, and set a mark upon the foreheads of the men that sigh and cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof.” Ezek. 9:4.

“These are the light of the world; and if it were not for these lights, the judgments of God would immediately fall upon the



transgressors of God’s law. I saw then these little jets of light growing brighter, shining forth from the east and the west, from the north and the south, and lighting the whole world.


“Occasionally one of these lights would begin to grow dim, and others would go out, and every time this occurred there was sadness and weeping in heaven.” 1 Sel. Mess., p. 76.

We can change the weeping of the angels to rejoicing. Jesus said, “Likewise, I say unto you, there is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.” Luke 15:10.

This is also a great joy to us when one sinner turns to God through our labours.

“He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.” Ps. 126:6.

If our eyes could be opened to see the great concern of the angels who are watching our every move and read our thoughts, perhaps we would be more careful in our words and actions, and rather than cause them to weep, bring rejoicing to them.

May the Lord help us use this little time that we have left to seek earnestly the perfection of our characters and to work for others to do the same. The recording angels will rejoice to write down this kind of effort by us, and by so doing we will secure our eternal destiny to salvation. **AMEN.** 

Timo Martin, Canada



"He Leadeth Me, O Blessed Thought"

(or is it?)

Is it really a blessed thought to have God lead us? To some it is. To others, it is not always a blessed thought. They only think of the way that the Lord is leading as a thorny way – the way of the cross is a sorrowful way. They grumble and complain all along the way, or then they choose not to fully follow the Lord His way but go their own way presumptuously, expecting God to bless them.

"And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." Isaiah 30:21. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." Prov.3:6

When God leads us and brings us to various junctures in our lives, we can choose to do one of two things... either we do as God tells us (submit) or we can choose not to do as God asks (rebel). Everyone is either submissive to God entirely or then they are a rebel. There is no middle ground. We either say "yes", or "no" to God.

To submit is to yield to the power or authority of another (in this case to God), and to rebel is to willingly, knowingly resist or rise up against some authority or control. They are opposites. Ask yourself what you are doing?

We are all making conscious choices daily in favour of, or, in rebellion against God's leading. Yes, we will do as the Lord requires because it is good for us. God is correct. OR, no, I won't do that. I love my sin too much. Surely God does not expect me to give up ALL my sin. I can keep just a little bit. Unfortunately, many do not trust the Lord's leading enough to follow Him.

Moses encouraged the Israelites to make their decision for the Lord. "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live:" Deut. 30:19

Solomon's father gave him this admonishment: "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind: for the LORD searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts: if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever." 1 Chron 28:9 He could choose to follow the leading of the Lord or not.

On Mt. Carmel, Elijah encouraged the people to choose to submit to the Lord. "And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21.

All throughout history examples are recorded of people who submitted to the Lord and people who rebelled. These examples are written so that we can learn from the mistakes of others and the consequences of not following the leading of the Lord.

Abel chose to submit to the Lord, while Cain rebelled. Jacob was initially a deceiver, but he eventually chose to submit to the Lord, while his brother was rebellious. John the disciple was called a Son of Thunder due to his anger problem, however he submitted to the Lord and he was called the "disciple whom Jesus loved." Judas appeared to be a wise and pious man, however he was a rebel. He did not want to

follow the leading of the Lord.

Abraham

God said to Abraham, "Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of." Genesis 22:2 "This act of faith in Abraham is recorded for our benefit. It teaches us the great lesson of confidence in the requirements of God, however close and cutting they may be; and it teaches children perfect submission to their parents and to God. By Abraham's obedience we are taught that nothing is too precious for us to give to God." ST Jan. 27, 1887.

Joshua

Joshua in his closing address to the nation of Israel gave them this choice to make. He encouraged them to follow the Lord as he had chosen to do. "Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD. And the people answered and said, God forbid that we should forsake the LORD, to serve other gods;" Joshua 24:14-16

"When a man comes to his right mind, he begins to reflect upon his relation to his maker. It is moral madness to prefer the praise of men to the favor of God, the rewards of iniquity to the treasures of heaven, the husks of sin to the spiritual food God gives His children. Yet how many who display intelligence and shrewdness in worldly things, manifest an utter disregard to those things that pertain to their eternal interest." ST May 19, 1881.

Gideon

It took a lot of faith on the part of Gideon to trust the leading of the Lord. From a human standpoint his endeavour appeared as an impossibility. "So the people took victuals in their hand, and their trumpets: and he sent all the rest of Israel every man unto his tent, and retained those three hundred men: and the host of Midian was beneath him in the valley." Judges 7:8 "It is a dangerous

thing for men to resist the Spirit of truth and grace and righteousness, because its manifestations are not according to their ideas, and have not come in the line of their methodical plans. The Lord works in His own way, and according to His own devising. Let men pray that they may be divested of self, and may be in harmony with heaven. Let them pray, 'Not my will, but thine, O God, be done.' Let men bear in mind that God's ways are not their ways, nor His thoughts their thoughts; for He says, 'As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.' In the instruction that the Lord gave Gideon when he was about to fight with the Midianites,--that he should go out against his foes with an army of three hundred blowing trumpets, and carrying empty pitchers in their hands, and shouting, 'The sword of the Lord, and of Gideon,'--these precise, methodical, formal men would see nothing but inconsistency and confusion. They would start back with determined protest and resistance. They would have held long controversies to show the inconsistency and the dangers that would accompany the carrying on of the warfare in such an extreme way, and in their finite judgment they would pronounce all such movements as utterly ridiculous and unreasonable. How unscientific, how inconsistent, would they have thought the movements of Joshua and his army at the taking of Jericho!" 2BC 1004. However, they yielded to the leading of the Lord and a tremendous victory was gained.

WHO knew not the Lord?

Pharaoh – "And Pharaoh said, Who is the LORD, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the LORD, neither will I let Israel go." Ex 5:2

Sons of Eli – "Now the sons of Eli were sons of Belial; they knew not the LORD." 1 Sam 2:12.

The new generation - "And when Joshua had let the people go, the children of Israel went every man unto his inheritance to possess the land. And the people served the LORD all the days of Joshua, and all the days of the elders that outlived Joshua, who had seen all the great works of the LORD, that he did for Israel. And Joshua, the son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died, being an hundred and ten years old. And they

buried him in the border of his inheritance in Timnathheres, in the mount of Ephraim, on the north side of the hill Gaash. And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, which knew not the LORD, nor yet the works which he had done for Israel. And the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD, and served Baalim." Judges 2:6-11

Why did these above mentioned people know not the Lord? Did they not have any knowledge of who the Lord is? Surely they knew all about God. From the many years Moses spent in the court of Pharaoh, it is likely that many people in Pharaoh's court heard about the Lord, from his immediate family to his servants and soldiers. The Lord was working mightily in Egypt through the plagues, as well as sending messages through Moses. Yes, Pharaoh had a knowledge of the Lord. The sons of Eli were brought up by the high priest and were even serving as priests. However, it is recorded in the Bible that they did not know the Lord. Also it is recorded that the new generation of Israelites did not know the Lord. Are these the children whose parents said to Joshua, "Nay; but we will serve the LORD?" Joshua 24:21. All these people knew OF the Lord, but they did not KNOW the Lord experientially. There is a difference.

It is not good enough to just know about the Lord, without having a living experience and connection with God. You can be raised in the faith and be totally destitute of a

knowledge of God as were the sons of Eli. When you submit to the Lord and have this living experience, then the Lord will guide you and you will follow without question.

ISTHEREADIFFERENCEBETWEEN TRANSGRESSION – REBELLION?

Sin is not necessarily rebellion initially. David sinned against God, but he did not rebel. As soon as his sin was pointed out, he repented and returned to following the Lord. When others,
l i k e

King Saul, had their sin pointed out, they rebelled and made excuses, continuing in their lifestyle of sin, walking away from the Lord.

“The LORD God of gods, the LORD God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the LORD, (save us not this day).” Joshua 22:22. Joshua is making a difference between rebellion and transgression in this verse.

To continue in a
lifestyle of sin,
rebellion
will

result. Rebellion can be added to sin. “For he **addeth** rebellion unto his sin, he clappeth his hands among us, and multiplieth his words against God.” Job 34:37. To sin through weakness is not rebellion if the sin is repented of sincerely. Rebellion is saying “no” to God, when direction is given, whether it be counsel regarding sin in our lives, or a task or direction that the Lord wants us to fulfil.

RESULTS OF REBELLION

As with any other sin, the result of rebellion is death. “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of the LORD, he hath also rejected thee from being king.” 1 Samuel 15:23.

“Thou shalt not suffer a witch to live.”

Exodus 22:18. Witches were put to death in the time of ancient

Israel and rebellion is equally offensive in the sight of God.

*The result of
rebellion is
death.*



“Whosoever he be that doth rebel against thy commandment, and will not hearken unto thy words in all that thou commandest him, he shall be put to death: only be strong and of a good courage.” Joshua 1:18

Even if you teach rebellion but do not rebel yourself, you are worthy of death. “Therefore thus saith the LORD; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast *taught* rebellion against the LORD.” Jeremiah 28:16

“Nevertheless they were disobedient, and rebelled against thee, and cast thy law behind their backs, and slew thy prophets which testified against them to turn them to thee, and they wrought great provocations.” Nehemiah 9:26 A person who brings reproof is often thought of as the enemy, but in reality they are servants of God encouraging the people to returning to follow the Lord.

“We are not to unite with the rebellious and call this charity. God requires His people in this age of the world to stand for the right as unflinchingly as did John in opposition to soul-destroying errors.” AA 554

Rebellious son. The ceremonial law in the Old Testament stated that a rebellious child should be put to death. “If a man have a

still enforced?

SUBMISSION

A well known analogy in the Bible regarding submission to the leading of the Lord is the analogy of the potter and the clay. This analogy is referred to in several places in the Old Testament.

“But now, O LORD, thou art our father; we are the clay, and thou our potter; and we all are the work of thy hand.” Isaiah 64:8

“The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter’s house, and there I will cause thee to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter’s house, and, behold, he wrought a work on the wheels. And the vessel that he made of clay was marred in the hand of the potter: so he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, O house of Israel, cannot I do with you as this potter? saith the LORD. Behold, as the clay is in the potter’s hand, so are ye in mine hand, O house of Israel.” Jeremiah 18:1-6

“Woe unto him that striveth with his Maker! Let the potsherd strive with the potsherds of the earth. Shall the clay say to him that fashioneth it, What makest thou? or thy work, He hath no hands? Woe

formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus? Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour?” Romans 9:20, 21

“The potter takes the clay and molds it according to his will. He kneads it and works it. He tears it apart and presses it together. He wets it and then dries it. He lets it lie for a *while without touching it*. When it is perfectly pliable, he continues the work of making of it a vessel. He forms it into shape and on the wheel trims and polishes it. He dries it in the sun and bakes it in the oven. Thus it becomes a vessel fit for use. So the great Master Worker desires to mold and fashion us. And as the clay is in the hands of the potter, so are we to be in His hands. *We are not to try to do the work of the potter.* [I want my vessel to look just like this]. Our part is to yield ourselves to be molded by the Master Worker.” MH 471

“While the human agent is devising and planning for himself something that God has withheld him from doing, he has a hard time. He complains and frets, and has still increased difficulties. But when he submits to be as clay in the hands of the potter, then God works the man into a vessel of honor. The clay submits to be worked. If God had His way, hundreds would be worked and

“The Potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in His hands.”

stubborn and rebellious son, which will not obey the voice of his father, or the voice of his mother, and that, when they have chastened him, will not hearken unto them: Then shall his father and his mother lay hold on him, and bring him out unto the elders of his city, and unto the gate of his place; And they shall say unto the elders of his city, This our son is stubborn and rebellious, he will not obey our voice; he is a glutton, and a drunkard. And all the men of his city shall stone him with stones, that he die: so shalt thou put evil away from among you; and all Israel shall hear, and fear.” Deuteronomy 21:18-21. How many children and youth would face death in this permissive age if the ceremonial law was

unto him that saith unto his father, What begettest thou? or to the woman, What hast thou brought forth?” Isaiah 45:9.10. This verse portrays a person complaining about God’s leading. They are dissatisfied with the vessel that God has molded them into.

“Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter’s clay: for shall the work say of him that made it, He made me not? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it, He had no understanding?” Isaiah 29:16

The Apostle Paul even referred to this analogy. “Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing

made into vessels as He sees best.

“Let the hand of God work the clay for His own service. He knows just what kind of vessel He wants. To every man He has given his work. God knows what place he is best fitted for. *Many are working contrary to the will of God*, and they spoil the web. The Lord wants every one to be submissive under His divine guidance. He will place men where they will submit to be worked into oneness with Christ, bearing His divine similitude. If self will submit to be worked, if you will cooperate with God, if you will pray in unity, work in unity, all taking your place as threads in the web of life, you will grow into a beautiful fabric that will rejoice

in the universe of God.

“The Potter cannot mold and fashion unto honor that which has never been placed in His hands. The Christian life is one of *daily surrender*, submission and *continual* overcoming. Every day fresh victories will be gained. Self must be lost sight of, and the love of God must be constantly cultivated. Thus we grow up into Christ. Thus the life is fashioned according to the divine model

“Every child of God is to do his very best to uplift the standard of truth. He is to work in God’s order. If self is exalted, Christ is not magnified. In His Word God compares Himself to a potter, and His people to the clay. His work is to mold and fashion them after His own similitude. The lesson they are to learn is the lesson of submission. Self is not to be made prominent. If due attention is given to the divine instruction, if self is surrendered to the divine will, the hand of the Potter will produce a shapely vessel.” 4BC 1154

IS IT ENOUGH TO BE JUST A GOOD VESSEL?

All 10 virgins had vessels, however, not all were ready to meet the bridegroom when He came. Five of them had empty vessels.

A widow woman, whose late husband owed a large sum of money to his creditors came to Elisha for help. The creditors threatened to take her sons and make them slaves. All she had in her house was one jar of oil. From that vessel of oil she would find the deliverance she sought. Elisha told her to “Go, borrow thee vessels abroad of all thy neighbours, even empty vessels; borrow not a few. And when thou art come in, thou shalt shut the door upon thee and upon thy sons, and shalt pour out into all those vessels, and thou shalt set aside that which is full.” 2 Kings 4:3, 4. For her to find deliverance she needed to empty her vessel into the many others that she had borrowed.

We may be created and fashioned into a beautiful vessel but we may be useless if we are empty. Then, even if we are full, we still will be useless unless we empty our vessels to aid others to fill their vessel. Unless we submit to being filled with vessels from others (not only from the Lord, but from leaders and elders in the church) we will be useless. When the bridegroom comes, then

it will be too late to fill our vessels. They need to be filled and shared now.

“Cursed be he that doeth the work of the LORD deceitfully, and cursed be he that keepeth back his sword from blood. Moab hath been at ease from his youth, and he hath settled on his lees, and hath not been emptied from *vessel to vessel*, neither hath he gone into captivity: therefore his taste remained in him, and his scent is not changed. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will send unto him wanderers, that shall cause him to wander, and shall empty his *vessels*, and break their bottles.” Jeremiah 48:10-12

“The influence of the Spirit upon the human mind will regulate it after the divine order. But the Spirit does not work in a manner and power beyond the human agent’s power of resistance. A man may refuse to hear the counsels and admonitions of God. He may choose to take the regulating of his conduct into his own hands; but when he does this, he is not made a vessel unto honor. Like Moab, he refuses to be changed, emptied from vessel to vessel, and therefore his scent remaineth in him. He refuses to correct his defective traits of character, although the Lord has plainly pointed out his work, his privileges, his opportunities, and the advancement to be made. It is too much trouble to break up his old ways, and transform his ideas and methods. ‘His scent is not changed.’ He clings to his defects, and is thus unfitted for the sacred work of the ministry. He was not willing to make a close examination of himself, or to closely inquire for light to shine upon him in a clear, distinct manner. His prayers have not ascended to God in humility, while with humble endeavor he sought to live his prayers by understanding and performing his duty.

“After the Lord has put one on test and trial, that he may be assured of his calling to the ministry, if he is content to follow his own way and his own will, if he will not heed the manifestations of the Spirit of God, if he refuses to profit by growth in grace and depth of understanding, be assured that the Lord does not need him; for he cannot communicate that which he has never received.

“Every soul is to minister. He is to use every physical, moral and mental power, through sanctification of the Spirit, that he

may be a laborer together with God. All are bound to devote themselves actively and unreservedly to God’s service. They are to cooperate with Jesus Christ in the great work of helping others. Christ died for every man. He has ransomed every man by giving His life on the cross. This He did that man might no longer live an aimless, selfish life, but that he might live unto Jesus Christ, who died for his salvation. All are not called upon to enter the ministry, but nevertheless, they are to minister. It is an insult to the Holy Spirit of God for any man to choose a life of self-serving.

“Ministry means not only the study of books and preaching. It means service.” 4BC 1159

“Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the LORD, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof; because they came not to the help of the LORD, to the help of the LORD against the mighty.” Judges 5:23,

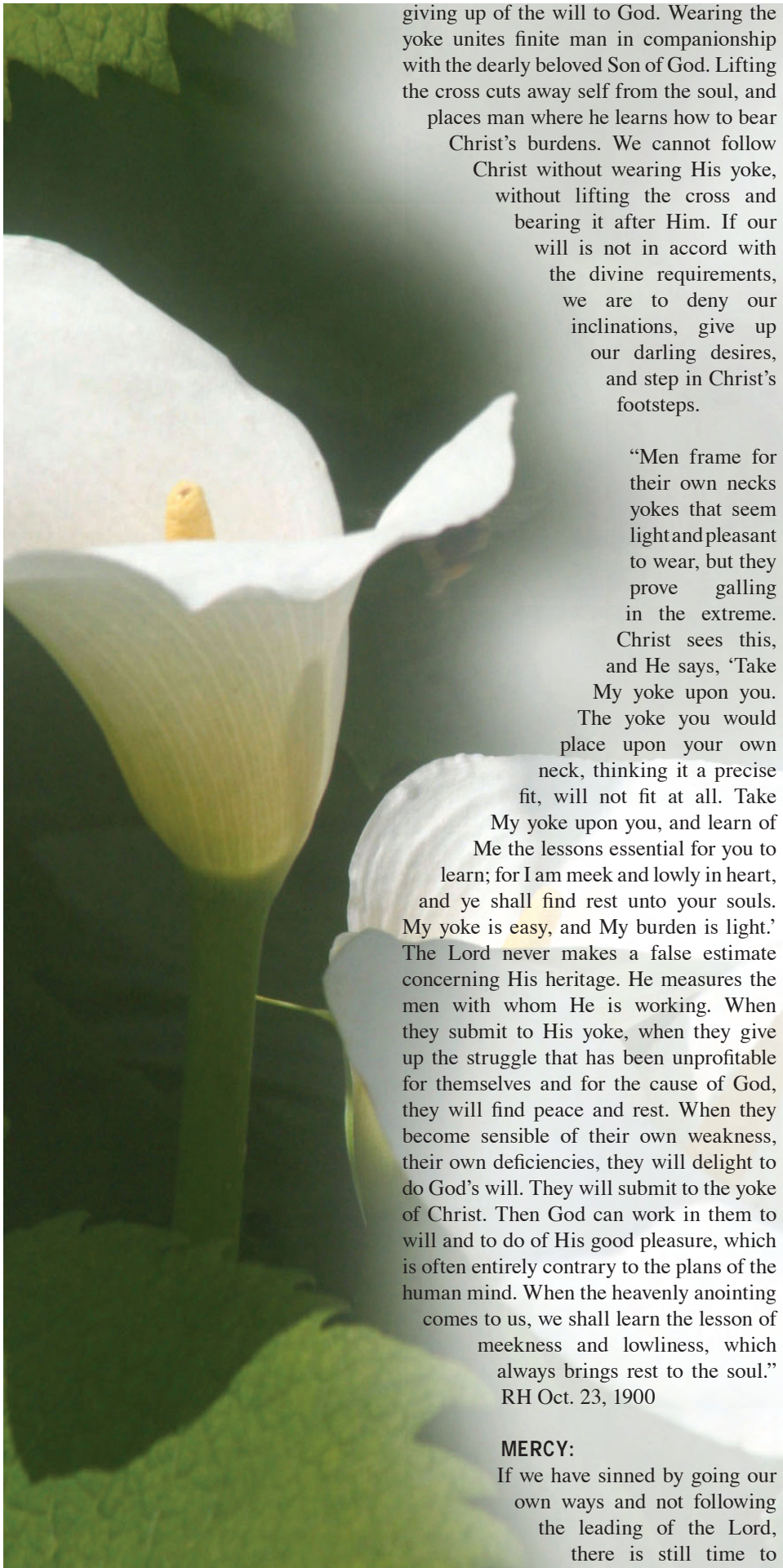
“And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord.” Nehemiah 3:5

“And it shall come to pass at that time, that I will search Jerusalem with candles, and punish the men that are settled on their lees: that say in their heart, The LORD will not do good, neither will he do evil.” Zephaniah 1:12

God has a work for all of us to do, but He doesn’t leave us to work alone.

“Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light.” Matthew 11:28-30. Many will not yoke up with Christ because they do not like the direction that He is leading them.

“We are to bear the yoke of Christ that we may be placed in complete union with Him. ‘Take my yoke upon you,’ He says. ‘Obey My requirements.’ But these requirements may be in direct opposition to the will and purposes of the human agent. What then is to be done? Hear what God says: ‘If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me.’ The yoke and the cross are symbols representing the same thing,--the



giving up of the will to God. Wearing the yoke unites finite man in companionship with the dearly beloved Son of God. Lifting the cross cuts away self from the soul, and places man where he learns how to bear

Christ's burdens. We cannot follow Christ without wearing His yoke, without lifting the cross and bearing it after Him. If our will is not in accord with the divine requirements, we are to deny our inclinations, give up our darling desires, and step in Christ's footsteps.

"Men frame for their own necks yokes that seem light and pleasant to wear, but they prove galling in the extreme.

Christ sees this, and He says, 'Take My yoke upon you.

The yoke you would place upon your own neck, thinking it a precise fit, will not fit at all. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me the lessons essential for you to learn; for I am meek and lowly in heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls. My yoke is easy, and My burden is light.'

The Lord never makes a false estimate concerning His heritage. He measures the men with whom He is working. When they submit to His yoke, when they give up the struggle that has been unprofitable for themselves and for the cause of God, they will find peace and rest. When they become sensible of their own weakness, their own deficiencies, they will delight to do God's will. They will submit to the yoke of Christ. Then God can work in them to will and to do of His good pleasure, which is often entirely contrary to the plans of the human mind. When the heavenly anointing comes to us, we shall learn the lesson of meekness and lowliness, which always brings rest to the soul."

RH Oct. 23, 1900

MERCY:

If we have sinned by going our own ways and not following the leading of the Lord, there is still time to

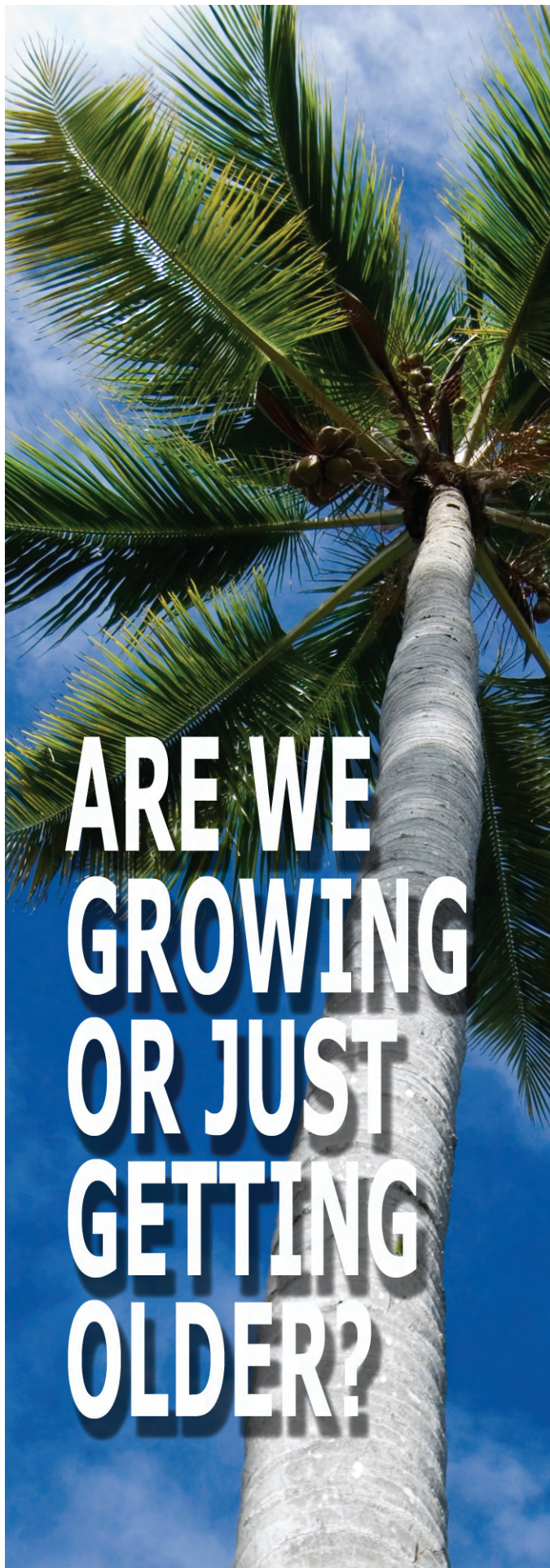
turn around and follow the Lord. Today, we can say "yes" to every requirement of the Lord. We can say, "yes", to being molded and fashioned by the Lord into a vessel of honour. Turn back, while there is still time. The Lord has promised that He will "heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for mine anger is turned away from him." Hosea 14:4.

"To the Lord our God belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him." Daniel 9:9

"You who are tempted and tried and discouraged, look up. Let no weary, halting, sin-oppressed soul become fainthearted, and lose hope. The promises of God come sounding down along the lines to us, assuring us that we may reach heaven if we will abide in Christ. Look up; it is fatal to look down. Looking down, the earth reels and sways beneath you, and nothing is sure. A divine hand is reached toward you. The hand of the Infinite is stretched over the battlements of heaven to grasp your hand in its embrace. The mighty Helper is nigh to help the most erring, the most sinful and despairing. Look up by faith, and the light of the glory of God will shine upon you. Do not be discouraged because you see that your character is defective. The closer you come to Jesus, the more faulty you will appear in your own eyes; for your vision will be clearer, and your imperfections will be seen in distinct contrast with his perfect character. Be not discouraged; this is an evidence that Satan's delusions are losing their power, that the vivifying influence of the Spirit of God is arousing you, and that your indifference and ignorance are passing away." BECHO 12-01-92.

May God help us to follow the leading of the Lord for our lives and to find the joy, peace and happiness there is to be found in following the Lord. It may be a strait and narrow pathway, but with the Lord beside us, the yoke is easy and the burden is light. It's a risk worth taking. **AMEN**

Wendy Eaton, Australia



“And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man.” Luke 2:52.

Children and adolescents grow in stature and knowledge and it is sometimes amazing how fast they grow. In many cases they even surpass their own parents in both information and height. But, there is a time in which physical growth stops and age begins to leave signs of the passing of the years.

The Holy Scriptures tell us that we should grow until we reach the stature of Jesus Christ which means that it is expected for us to grow in wisdom and in favour with God and man.

In order to grow in wisdom we need to have the fear of God in our heart, since it is written: *“The fear of the Lord [is] the beginning of wisdom.”* Psalm 11:10. In order to have the fear of the Lord, we need to have a revelation of His glory, as Isaiah did. The prophet saw the Lord on His throne surrounded by thousands of angels, and he exclaimed: *“Woe [is] me! for I am undone; because I [am] a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips.”* (Isaiah 6:5) This revelation of God’s glory showed the prophet his own condition. He realized he was not any better than any of his fellowmen. This humiliation was necessary so that the prophet could fulfil his mission. Only thus can man become totally dependent on God and grow in wisdom and favour.

Surely we cannot expect to have a vision like Isaiah, Ezekiel or Paul in order to surrender to God’s will; but the Scriptures are a revelation of His holiness and glory. And when studied under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we shall feel so little and miserable as did the prophets in the presence of the Lord and want to depend on Him at all times so that we do not go astray.

All living creatures grow; three elements are indispensable for their growth: light, water and food. To grow spiritually we also need these three elements and in Jesus we find all we need: He is the Light of the world, the living Water and the Bread of Life.

In Psalm 92:12-15, we read: *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord [is] upright: [he is] my rock, and [there is] no unrighteousness in him.”*

The Holy Scriptures tell us that there is not even one that is righteous, but in Genesis 15:6 it is spoken of a righteous man: *“And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness.”* Abraham became righteous by faith. He believed not only that God exists, but in His word and in His promises, and thus he obeyed. All who trust in God’s word like Abraham did, and become His servants are righteous in God’s eyes. His promise to them is: *“The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.”*

The palm tree is one of the most beautiful trees; it grows heavenwards and can reach a very great height. Palm trees bear delicious fruits: coconuts and dates. The thirsty wanderer in the desert rejoices when he sees a palm tree, because it is a sign that there is an oasis nearby where he can quench his thirst and obtain rest.



“The palm tree, beaten by the scorching sun and the fierce sandstorm, stands green and flourishing and fruitful in the midst of the desert. Its roots are fed by living springs. Its crown of verdure is seen afar over the parched, desolate plain; and the traveller, ready to die, urges his failing steps to the cool shade and the life-giving water.” {Ed 116.2}

“See the weary traveller toiling over the hot sand of the desert, with no shelter to protect him from the rays of the tropical sun. His water supply fails, and he has nothing with which to slake his burning thirst. His tongue becomes swollen; he staggers like a drunken man. Visions of home and friends pass before his mind as he believes himself ready to perish. Suddenly he sees in the distance, rising out of the dreary sandy waste, a palm tree, green and flourishing. Hope quickens his pulses; he presses on, knowing that that which gives vigour and freshness to the palm tree will cool his fevered blood and give him renewed life.” {HP 240.2}

“The tree of the desert is a symbol of what God means the life of His children in this world to be. They are to guide weary souls, full of unrest, and ready to perish in the desert of sin, to the living water. They are to point their fellow men to Him, who gives the invitation, ‘If any man thirst, let him

come unto Me, and drink.’ John 7:37.” {Ed 116.2}

This is exactly what it means that the righteous will grow like a palm tree. What a privilege to be so useful!

“*The righteous... shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.*” The cedars of Lebanon are well-known for the quality of their wood. This noble wood was used for the construction of God’s temple in Jerusalem and the King’s palace.


In Ezekiel 17:3, we read: “*A great eagle with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colours, came unto Lebanon, and took the highest branch of the cedar: He cropped off the top of his young twigs, and carried it into a land of traffic...He took also of the seed of the land, and planted it in a fruitful field.*” It is very interesting the work birds can do. We are all twigs or seeds that have been brought from different areas and have been planted in the courtyard of God’s temple. Under His loving care, watered with His Spirit we shall reach a full growth and bear fruit.

“*They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing; to show that the Lord [is] upright: [he is] my rock, and [there is] no unrighteousness in him.*”

No matter how old we are or how many years we have been in God’s church, we can and should still grow. Among the most fascinating trees regarding growth are the evergreens. Every spring there is a growth of up to ten centimetres on each branch that can be quite easily distinguished since its colour is light green and differs from the very dark colour of the rest of the tree. This shows its growth for the year. In summer, one can see no difference any more.

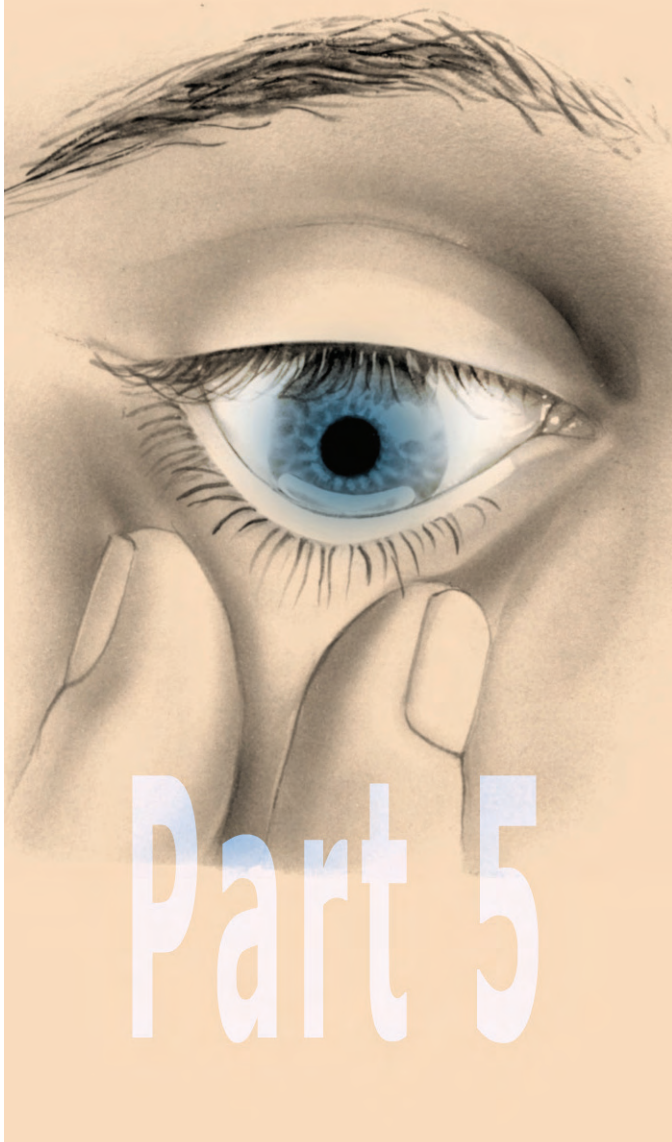
Our growth is internal but it will also be revealed outside, in our appearance, in our words, in our attitude, in our goals.

What is the purpose of this growth? So that we may be able to show that the Lord is upright, firm like a rock and there is no unrighteousness in Him. We are called to vindicate the name of the Lord before the whole universe by accepting the robe of Christ’s righteousness to be able to keep His commandments.

May the Lord help us that we may grow not only in age, but like Jesus, in wisdom and favour with God and man and that like the apostle Paul we may also say: “*...but though our outward man perish, yet the inward [man] is renewed day by day.*” 2 Corinthians 4:16. **AMEN.** 

Teresa Corti

LAODICEA IS COUNSELED



I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. Revelation 3:18

We need to thank God that the True Witness does not close His message to Laodicea with the evaluation of verse 17. After shattering our false security by telling us how wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked we truly are, Jesus goes on to reassure us that our situation is not hopeless. He offers a complete remedy for our problem. There is hope!

Just as Laodicea's problems are many, so Christ has a multiple solution. He says, I counsel you to buy from me:

1. "Gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich"
2. "white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed"
3. "eye salve, that thou mayest see" (verse 18).

As a solution to our poverty and wretchedness, Christ offers us gold purified in the fire so that we may be even richer than we think we are! For our miserable nakedness, He offers us white raiment so that we will not appear unclothed in the judgment. And for our blindness, He offers eye salve so that we may be able to see clearly our true condition. This is the threefold remedy Jesus offers for our threefold condition.

But note a very important phrase in His solution. "I counsel thee *to buy* of me." The precious heavenly merchandise Christ offers us is not free. There is a price to be paid. Normally, these things and what they signify in Scripture are presented as free gifts of God. Then why does Jesus tell Laodicea that she must buy them?

They are free gifts only to those who are poor in spirit. But for the self-righteous, like Laodicea, they are not free; they come with a price. Israel had the same problem as Laodicea – self-righteousness. Through Isaiah, God gave His sales pitch to Israel, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money, come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price." Isaiah 55:1. Now this makes no sense; in fact, it seems to be a contradiction. How can a person buy something if he has no money? And if he can buy without money, what is the price?

We need to understand how the word *buy* is being used here. It's being used the same way we use it in everyday speech – to exchange something you have for something you want more. In Bible times, people often exchanged goods in a barter system. If a person had too much corn growing in his garden, he would exchange it for wheat, perhaps. No money changed hands, but that was "buying" wheat, as far as the people in Bible times were concerned.

It really isn't any different if we use money as the medium of exchange. Let's say you pass a shop and see a lovely pair of shoes in the window. The price tag reads "\$150". You say to yourself, "They are expensive, but I like them. Should I get them or not?" Now, you have \$150 in your pocket. It's yours; you earned it through hard work. But the question you have to decide is: "Should I give up my money for this pair of shoes?" That is what buying is – exchanging something you have for something you want more.

Laodicea may be poor in reality, but she does have something that is very valuable to her. It is her self-righteousness, produced by her works

of the law. That is the basis of her pride – the basis of our pride; even our denominational pride. When a person, or a group of people, has had great success in the religious life, it isn't easy to give it up for the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The history of the Jews demonstrates this, as does the history of our own Seventh-day Adventist Church in 1888. The more outward success we have, the harder it is to discard it all for the righteousness of Jesus. It costs a great deal to do that; it's terribly expensive. Paul says:

"I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more. Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews... But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ." (Philippians 3:4, 5, 7, 8)

Paul was extremely successful as a Pharisee, yet he was willing to count all his successes as mere trash in comparison to the righteousness of Christ. When the True Witness says to Laodicea, "I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire," He is saying, "You must give up your self-righteousness." That isn't easy to do, and the more self-righteousness we have, the more difficult it is to exchange it for the righteousness of Jesus. Ellen White says:

"The people of God are represented in the message to the Laodiceans as in a position of carnal (fleshly) security. They are at ease, believing themselves to be in an exalted condition of spiritual attainment." (3T:252)

"I asked the meaning of the shaking I had seen (in the church) and was shown that it would be caused by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans. This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver and will lead him to exalt the standard and pour forth the straight truth. Some will not bear this straight testimony. They will rise up against it, and this will cause a shaking among God's people." (1T:181)

"They (pastors) are not willing to be deprived of the garments of their own self-righteousness. They are

not willing to exchange their own righteousness, which is unrighteousness, for the righteousness of Christ, which is pure unadulterated truth." (TM: 65)

The flesh does not give up its own righteousness without a fight. It happened in our church in 1888, and it continues to happen. The flesh says, "I worked hard for this righteousness. Why should I give it up?" But there is no room for a mixture of self in the pure gospel of Christ our righteousness. Our attitude must continually be, "Not I, but Christ."

If anyone in the Jewish church was famous for self-righteousness, if there was anyone who could claim wonderful success, it was the apostle Paul before his conversion. He was without equal whether judged on the basis of his birth, his status as a Pharisee, or his law performance. It was zeal for God that caused him to persecute the early Christians. Yet Paul was willing to give up all this success for the righteousness of Christ. He says, "Lord, I was on fire for You, and when I persecuted Christians, I wasn't doing it in rebellion against You. In my mind, I was serving You. Regarding the righteousness of the law, I was blameless. But those things that I thought were going to qualify me for heaven, I have come to count as rubbish compared to Christ and His righteousness." (see Philippians 3:4-9)

Paul was willing to give up all his religious success in exchange for Christ's righteousness. That is what the True Witness is talking about when He counsels Laodicea to "buy" gold, white raiment, and eye salve. We give up our self-righteousness, which means so much to us, in exchange for Christ's righteousness, which can alone make us rich and clothed and able to see.

But notice that this exchange involves suffering. Paul says, "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things" (Philippians 3:8). It hurts our pride, individually and denominationally, when we give up all that we have attained through our hard work in order to accept Christ's righteousness. It's painful to our human natures. But we have only two options: we can cling to our own self-righteousness, which we have developed by much effort, or we can accept Christ's righteousness, which we receive by faith alone. We cannot have both; we must

give up one or the other. That is the price we have to pay; it's a costly price, but it is the only solution to our Laodicean problems.

When the True Witness asks us to "buy" from Him gold and white raiment and eye salve, He is asking us to give up everything – our opinion of ourselves, all that we have thought was profit to us, but is not. All this we must exchange for Christ's righteousness, both in terms of our justification and our sanctification. The formula for both is the same – "Not I, but Christ." That's an expensive price, but it is what is required to "buy" the goods the True Witness offers. Are we willing to give up self and all the success that has given us "stars in our crown"? Are we willing to give up all for the righteousness of Christ? That is the price Paul the Pharisee had to pay, and it is the price we must pay as well.

That is why Ellen White says the counsel of the True Witness to Laodicea will produce a shaking in the church. "Because some – especially those who have been successful in developing self-righteousness -- will not be willing to pay the price. People who successfully produce self-righteousness usually have very strong wills. Strong-willed persons have greater success than weak-willed persons. Strong-willed persons give the rest of us a hard time in committee meetings, and they often give sinners a hard time in discipline committees. They come down hard on people."

Never forget that God views all our spiritual successes as filthy rags. Whatever we think is valuable in terms of our own spiritual achievements is, in God's eyes, tainted and impure, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags, and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities (self-righteousness) like the wind, have taken us away." (Isaiah 64:6).

We have examined the meaning of the word *buy* in the True Witness's counsel. Now let's look at the three items of merchandise He offers to Laodicea. The first is "gold tried in the fire" (Revelation 3:18). What does this represent? Peter gives us a clue:

"For a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations. That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of

Jesus Christ.” (1Peter 1:6, 7).

“Gold tried in the fire” is simply “faith that has been purified of self”. It is the faith of Jesus Christ, because Jesus’ faith was purified by fire at Gethsemane and at the cross. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed three times, “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42). He didn’t allow self to have any part in His redemptive mission. Every trace of self was crucified in the life and death of Christ (see Luke 9:23).

When we first accept Christ, our faith is still egocentric. We accept Him either because we are afraid of the judgment or because we want to go to heaven. That is the normal experience of most Christians. But Christ wants to purify our faith of this egocentric motivation. He wants us to have what Paul calls “faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6). That is the gold tried in the fire that the True Witness wants us to have.

“Faith and love are golden treasures, elements that are greatly wanting among God’s people” (Testimonies for the church 3:255). Don’t we have faith? Yes, but it is an egocentric faith. We must give it up for the faith that is motivated by *agape* love. We must exchange our self-centered faith for Christ’s self-sacrificing faith. Ellen White says:

“The gold tried in the fire is faith that works by love. Only this can bring us into harmony with God. We may be active, we may do much work; but without love, such as dwelt in the heart of Christ, we can never be numbered with the family of heaven.” (Christ’s Object Lessons, 158).

We must be careful when we read such a statement that we don’t read it only in the context of justification. Ellen White is writing here in terms of sanctification as well. Sanctification is the evidence of justification, and it must be reflected in us more and more. Without Christ’s *agape* love, we can never truly reflect His character. There must be spiritual growth so that the very life of Christ will become our life. “The gold here recommended as having been tried in the fire is faith and love. It makes the heart rich; for it has been purged until it is pure, and the more it is tested the more brilliant is its luster.” (4T:88).

So the gold Christ offers is “faith which worketh by love.” (Galatians 5:6). It is a faith that has been purged of self. That is what the True Witness is offering us. He says, “I want to offer you My faith, which is motivated by pure love, in exchange for your faith, which is self-centered.”

The second item Christ offers Laodicea is white raiment. This is the righteousness of Jesus – both imputed and imparted. But we need to be clear that it is His *imputed* righteousness that qualifies us, or gives us the title, for heaven – not His imputed righteousness *plus* His imparted righteousness. The righteousness that qualifies us for heaven was accomplished *for us*, but *outside* us, in the holy life and death of Christ. Imparted righteousness reproduces Christ’s righteousness *within* us; it gives evidence that His righteousness has been imputed to us by faith and thus fits us for heaven. This is an important distinction because some teach that the righteousness that qualifies us for heaven is a combination of the imputed righteousness of Christ (justification) *plus* His imparted righteousness (sanctification).

Paul says, “What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith. But Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness, hath not attained to the law of righteousness.” (Romans 9:30, 31). He presents two groups of people – Gentiles and Israel – and two methods of achieving righteousness – faith or law keeping. The Gentiles

succeeded, and the Jews failed. Why? Because the Gentiles accepted Christ as their righteousness, while the Jews tried to become righteousness through law keeping.

Paul is saying that there can be no mixture of self-righteousness and Christ our righteousness. It is either one or the other. The moment you accept Christ’s righteousness, you must give up your own self-righteousness. The moment you uphold self-righteousness, Christ’s righteousness becomes an offense to you. Paul concludes, “Whosoever believeth on him (Christ) shall not be ashamed.” (verse 33). Those who buy the white raiment will ensure that the shame of their nakedness will not appear (see Revelation 3:18). They will not be ashamed, because they will be clothed with the imputed righteousness of Christ, the only righteousness that will be able to stand perfect in the judgment. If we appear in the judgment in our own self-righteousness, we will appear naked, because God looks not only at what we have done, but at the motive for doing it. In fact, He is concerned primarily with motive. And self-righteousness is always motivated, or polluted, with self. It’s true that our works



(the imparted righteousness of Christ) will testify in the judgment that we have received His imputed righteousness, but they will not contribute in the least to our justification.

So the white raiment that the True Witness offers to Laodicea is the imputed and imparted righteousness of Christ. “The marriage of the Lamb is come”, John writes, “and his wife hath made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.” (Revelation 19:7, 8). Christ has been waiting for generations to reproduce His character in His bride so that she might be ready for the marriage.

Is the fine linen, the white raiment, something that the bride produces for herself? Does she make herself ready through self-effort? No. It was *granted* that she should be clothed in white raiment. Christ clothes His bride; she does not clothe herself. “The white raiment is purity of character, the righteousness of Christ imparted to the sinner. This is indeed a garment of heavenly texture that can be bought only of Christ for a life of willing obedience” (4T:88). Here, Ellen White does not mean obedience in the sense of obedience to the law; “willing obedience” means being willing to say, “Not I, but Christ”. It is an obedience of faith that manifests itself in obedience to all the commandments of God.

Finally, the True Witness offers us eye salve. In the Middle East during New Testament times, people didn’t have sunglasses. They used a black ointment to protect their eyes from the glare of the sun and to help them see without squinting in its harsh light. The eye salve is used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit opening our eyes. The Holy Spirit guides us into all truth (see John 16:13, 14). He is the only One who can open our eyes and show us our true condition – that our self-righteousness is like filthy rags. Ellen White writes, “The eye salve is that wisdom and grace which enables us to discern between the evil and the good and to detect sin under any guise.” (4T:88). Self-righteousness is actually sin, but it doesn’t appear to be sinful. It looks good – until the eye salve allows us to see it in its true light.

Remember that the general context of the entire Laodicean message is “works”. The

key phrase is “I know thy works” (Revelation 3:15). Are Laodicea’s works hot? Are they cold? They are neither; they are lukewarm. Christ wants our works to be hot. And they can be hot only through His imparted righteousness. He offers us His imputed righteousness so we may be clothed and not stand naked in the judgment. But He also offers us His imparted righteousness so that He may be fully reflected in us. This has to take place before the end can come. (see Revelation 18:1).

“Again and again has the voice from heaven addressed you. Will you obey this voice? Will you heed the counsel of the True Witness to seek the gold tried in the fire, the white raiment and the eye salve? The gold is faith and love; the white raiment is the righteousness of Christ; the eye salve is that spiritual discernment which will enable you to see the wiles of Satan and shun them, to detest sin and abhor it, to see truth and obey it.” (5T:233).

For this reason, God allows the last generation of Christians to go through the time of trouble. It is part of the work of producing the righteous character of Christ in us; it is part of the process of reflecting the white raiment we have “bought” from Christ. Ellen White writes:

“Their (God’s people’s) affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God’s love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is needful to be placed in the furnace of fire; their earthliness must be consumed, that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.” (The Great Controversy, 621).

Notice that the time of trouble will be the real test of righteousness by faith, showing whether we have truly bought the pure white raiment of Christ. What will we have to give up in the time of trouble? We will have to abandon any attempt to hold on to self-righteousness, because the real issue in the great tribulation will be our faith. (see Luke 18:8; Isaiah 54:5-8). This refining process does not secure salvation for us. Rather, its purpose is to demonstrate to the world that the gospel “is the power of God unto salvation.” (Romans 1:16). Then God will declare to the world, “Here are My people who have the faith of Jesus. You can


try them to the very limit. You cannot kill them, but you can test them.” And as we are tested, what will appear is a faith motivated by self-sacrificing love. Our anchor in the time of trouble will not be our love for God, but God’s love for us (see Romans 8:35-39). Our faith will lay hold on His love, which was manifested for sinners on the cross.

What held Jesus to the cross? Why didn’t He come down and save Himself when taunted to do so? Wasn’t He able to do that? Of course, He was able! But by faith He clung to the Father’s love. As far as His feelings were concerned, He *felt* the Father had forsaken Him. But by faith He believed in the love of God that never fails. (see 1 Corinthians 13:8). We need that kind of faith as well. Our faith, too, must be in God’s love and His righteousness, which He has given us freely in Jesus Christ.

Notice how Ellen White describes the faith of Jesus tried by fire at the cross:

“Amid the awful darkness, apparently forsaken of God, Christ had drained the last dregs in the cup of human woe. In those dreadful hours He had relied upon the evidence of His Father’s acceptance heretofore given Him. He was acquainted with the character of His Father; He understood His justice, His mercy, and His great love. By faith He rested in Him whom it had ever been His joy to obey. And as in submission He committed Himself to God, the sense of the loss of His Father’s favour was withdrawn. By faith Christ was victor.” (Desire of Ages, 756).

Christ comes to each of us and says, “Will you please buy? Will you please give up your own self-evaluation that has deceived you so badly? Will you give up all your spiritual successes and all those badges that the church has given you for your great efforts? Are you willing to consider all that as rubbish in exchange for My righteousness?”

We must each choose. I know the choice I have made. I have discovered that the righteousness which can qualify me for heaven is not a successful ministry. The only righteousness that can qualify me for heaven is Christ’s righteousness. May God help us, individually and as a church, to buy the gold, the white raiment and eye salve that will make it possible for us to reflect the character of Christ fully in these last days! 

FEAR & TREMBLING

The hope that we have needs to be enriched and encouraged. We look at Scripture and seek to feed our souls. We see very vividly without the help of the Holy Spirit, the reading of the Bible and E G White's writings raises many contradictions.

Because of these apparent contradictions to our human mind, we need the Holy Spirit to correctly appreciate these contradictions. One of the contradictions we need clarifying on is regarding salvation. On one hand the Scripture says, fear not, come unto me and you will find rest, peace I leave with you. Trust and perfect love casteth out all fear. Then on the other hand, it says work out your salvation with fear and trembling. Do you see an apparent contradiction there?

“Well, then, you say, am I to go around fearing and trembling all the way? Yes, in one sense, but not in another sense.” {TDG 344.1}

Philippians 2:12-13. “Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”

In these two texts the Scriptures expose and unravel an essential interaction for the salvation of sinful humanity, of which we all are a part.

You have the fear of God before you, and you will have a trembling lest you will depart from the counsels of God. There will be that trembling. You will be working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Does it rest here? No, let us hear how the divine power comes in: “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (verse 13). Here are man's works, and here are God's works. They both cooperate. Man cannot accomplish this work without the help of

the divine power. {TDG 344.2}

This meditation, as quoted is to grasp it in living exercise. This is the purpose of our study. We often hear we have to work together with God. What is the actual engagement? To fear and to tremble, to rest and to trust. What is the living aspect of this? Did you notice you have the fear of God before you? God the great monarch of the universe comes to every sinner on this planet as is demonstrated in His approach to the children of Israel, the Hebrews, as they came out of Egypt. Here is an object lesson in living reality. This is where we will gain our appreciation. God speaks to them on Mt Sinai. There is the demonstration of the fear of God before the people.

Exodus 20:1-2. “And God spake all these words, saying, I [am] the LORD thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.”

He is speaking from Mt Sinai. He reminds them, I have brought you out of bondage with this mighty hand you have just experienced by demonstration. Now, they stand in front of him, these sinners he was wanting to help; and with thundering tones, He proclaims the Ten Commandments.

Exodus 20:18. “And all the people saw the thunders, and the lightnings, and the noise of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking: and when the people saw [it], they removed, and stood afar off.”

Here lies the real issue. The fear of God must be before us. God makes sure of it in dealing with the Hebrews. He comes to them with power and glory and they tremble. Moses says don't be afraid, God is proving you that you sin not.

It is essential we have this fear in place as

demonstrated here. Because as that fear is in place that we sin not and with the Ten Commandments, we become awe struck at this expectation and demonstration of God's greatness.

We look at the fear that is in place and its consequence.

Exodus 19:3-8. “And Moses went up unto God, and the LORD called unto him out of the mountain, saying, Thus shalt thou say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel; Ye have seen what I did unto the Egyptians, and [how] I bare you on eagles' wings, and brought you unto myself. Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth [is] mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation. These [are] the words which thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel. And Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before their faces all these words which the LORD commanded him. And all the people answered together, and said, All that the LORD hath spoken we will do. And Moses returned the words of the people unto the LORD.”

The Lord may be speaking to us today-- “You have seen what I have done for you.” Hasn't the Lord done wonderful things for us? He has redeemed us from our past life of bondage. He reminds us of this.

With the consciousness of the fear of God, the people said they would do it all. God proves you when He gives you the Ten Commandments whether you will be true to your commitment. With that fear and beautiful promise you made, of course, yes Lord we will do it. He secures the human agreement, the human expression. What the Lord has said we will do it, they

say. They were in terrible fear. We will be obedient, we will do that. What does God do? He entrenches the commitment they had expressed. He drives it home. How?

Exodus 24:5-8. "And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the LORD. And Moses took half of the blood, and put [it] in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled [it] on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words."

They were awe struck at the demonstration of God's glory. Animals were slain, blood was sprinkled at their commitment. It was a vow, a serious relationship with God.

Deut 26:16-18. "This day the LORD thy God hath commanded thee to do these statutes and judgments: thou shalt therefore keep and do them with all thine heart, and with all thy soul. Thou hast avouched the LORD this day to be thy God, and to walk in his ways, and to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and to hearken unto his voice: And the LORD hath avouched thee this day to be his peculiar people, as he hath promised thee, and that [thou] shouldst keep all his commandments."

What have they done? They have avouched. Another word is vowed. A solemn promise. This is unequivocal. There is no variation. It is firmly entrenched and put into place. God has placed His laws before the sinner, and has said to them, this is what will make you great, this will give you a future. They want that, of course. With the fear of God before them, they make that solemn statement with all their heart and soul.

"The covenant that God made with His people at Sinai is to be our refuge and defense... This covenant is of just as much force today as it was when the Lord made it with ancient Israel. This is the pledge that God's people are to make in these last days. Their acceptance with God depends on a faithful fulfillment of the terms of their agreement with Him. God includes in His covenant all who will obey Him. To all who will do justice and judgment, keeping their

hand from doing any evil, the promise is, 'Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.' (Isa. 56:5)." {AG 142.3}

Can we see clearly there is no alteration? The solemn trembling submission to the Ten Commandments and to all of God's statutes are to be solemnly agreed upon. We are to take hold of those principles. We have it in the words of Jesus. Remember when He was asked what must one do to have eternal life by the rich young ruler? What did Jesus say? Keep the commandments. This is how you're going to have eternal life. With all your heart and soul are you to engage with God.

Luke 10:25-28. "And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live."

On these two commandments hang all the law. Without any deviation of understanding, this is reality. This was and is and always will be the way of eternal life for the sinner, who has been redeemed by God's mighty hand from captivity.

Ezekiel 33:12. "The righteousness of the righteous shall not deliver him in the day of his transgression: as for the wickedness of the wicked, he shall not fall thereby in the day that he turneth from his wickedness; neither shall the righteous be able to live for his [righteousness] in the day that he sinneth."

It is very vivid then that the turning away from disobedience from breaking the Ten Commandments or any of God's laws requires us to turn away from doing sin. We must follow the statutes. This is man's part in gaining salvation. This is man's part of the equation. Remember when we read it? We'll be working out our own salvation with fear and trembling. This side of the equation is ours, to put away wrong and to keep the commandments. There is no other way. As this is man's part of the equation, how do you succeed? How did the children of Israel succeed? They said yes, everything God has said we'll do. We know the story

so well. In one simple statement, God puts this across in a heart-broken approach.

Jeremiah 31:32. "Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD."

Here is the most humiliating experience that meets every sinner, like the children of Israel; they make a solemn vow. They confess very solemnly, yes. It was confirmed with the sprinkling of blood and the death of an animal so solemnly entered into. Now the human pride and intensity of trying to keep those laws has been totally shattered. They have not been kept it as promised.

Look back at your life,--was there ever a time you promised you would keep the commandments? And you vowed to God that you were going to keep them? Those that are baptised have made such a vow. Then comes the shattering reality that you have failed. There are many a people who become totally discouraged and think they're never going to make it as they have ruined their sense of proprietary and honour by blatantly doing the opposite of what they were going to do. Does God turn His back on them? Like as a father pitieth his children... Did you notice God is ever so merciful? He looks upon the people who have made him a promise and doesn't despair.

Psalm 103:8-14. "The LORD [is] merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy. He will not always chide: neither will he keep [his anger] for ever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as the heaven is high above the earth, [so] great is his mercy toward them that fear him. As far as the east is from the west, [so] far hath he removed our transgressions from us. Like as a father pitieth [his] children, [so] the LORD pitieth them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we [are] dust."

Indeed, God does not cast us off because He remembers what we're made of. He remembers our condition. He knows it. So like a pitying father, He finds another way. What does He do with our broken vow and covenant that was so solemnly made?

Jeremiah 31:31-33. "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with

the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day [that] I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.”

The covenant that we made, broken as it is, God makes another covenant with the people who have broken their covenant. What an amazing story when you let it sink into your heart. I’ve absolutely disgraced myself, I’m devastated, I’m lost, because I’ve broken my vow. God says, right, I’m going to make another covenant with you. This time, the covenant sounds different.

Hebrews 8:6-8. “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first [covenant] had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.”

Was it faultless? No, it was not faultless. That’s why he had to have a second one. Where did the fault lie? Finding fault with them. What did they do? What do we do? We promise. But God is going to make a covenant built on better promises than that.

Hebrews 8:9. “Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.”

The better covenant, better promises. To ratify, to make that new covenant of better promises become an entrenched, embedded appreciation in the believer. What did God do in reference to that better covenant?

Hebrews 9:13-15. “For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this cause

he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions [that were] under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.”

There are a lot of sinners out there who think Jesus simply died for their sins and that was it.

He looks back at that sprinkling of the blood that ratified the first covenant that was built upon man’s promises. There are a lot of sinners out there who think Jesus simply died for their sins and that was it. What did Jesus die for? He died for the redemption of transgressions under the FIRST testament.

What was the first testament? I will keep the commandments. Now that I have failed miserably, what does it require? I have transgressed that solemn vow. As my conscious is struck by my weakness, my absolute shortfall, I see Jesus dying for that very transgression. Is this a better covenant when your conscious is purged, no longer by the death of animals and your own promises, but by the death of Jesus for the transgression of your failed vows and your mistaken activities? So contrary to what I really wanted.

What did Jesus die for? For the transgressions after I made the agreement. That’s what He died for. That really drives the point home. Here we behold a two-fold sense of responsibility.

1. The fear of breaking my promise and then failing, the fear of doing it again.
2. The fear of despising God’s immense sacrifice. There is a two-fold activity in the two covenants God has laid out before us.

Listen to the immense sacrifice it took to release me from the transgressions of my promises. “The cup of suffering was placed in His hand as if He were the guilty one. He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end.” MR p 369:3.

Think. This is the immense sacrifice that it took to relieve us of our broken promises.

Romans 2:4. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?”

It purges my conscious. My promise, honour and failure. A deep sacrifice of Jesus, His loving kindness and goodness leads me to

repentance. It leads me to deal with my problem of sin breaking. I won’t ever want to break the commandment again. I’ve broken the covenant. I’m going to try to not break it. I need a firm decision. Can you see the fear that comes in now? The fear of despising the sacrifice? It leads me to repentance. What is true repentance? This is something that this two-fold covenant is going to achieve.

2 Corinthians 7:10-11. “For Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, [what] clearing of yourselves, yea, [what] indignation, yea, [what] fear, yea, [what] vehement desire, yea, [what] zeal, yea, [what] revenge! In all [things] ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter.”

True repentance is when we have violated that covenant and we feel so crushed because we’ve done so. Then the second covenant comes into focus that Jesus has died for us. What feelings of resentment come inside of you because of your sinfulness? How careful will I be in the future; I can’t continue to do this in future any more. It is a godly sorrow. What clearing of yourselves. What indignation. When Nathan asked King David about this man that was wrong, and he brought it to his conscious, David was indignant; he said, he deserves to die. Nathan said, you are that man. What fear, that Jesus died for me. It’s overwhelming. I have a vehement desire. He has done something so wonderful for me. I am going to make a difference in my life; work out my own salvation with fear and trembling. I don’t want to break this thing again. What revenge, what zeal. He works in us a great zeal. That’s what God does with us. This is true repentance. Here is the working of the new covenant.

2 Corinthians 3:3. “[Forasmuch as ye are] manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart.”

“All our good works are dependent upon a power outside of ourselves. Therefore there needs to be a continual reaching out of the heart after God, a continual, earnest, heartbreaking confession of sin and humbling of the soul before Him. Only by constant renunciation of self and

dependence on Christ can we walk safely.” {COL 159.4} “The nearer we come to Jesus and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly we shall discern the exceeding sinfulness of sin and the less we shall feel like exalting ourselves. Those whom heaven recognizes as holy ones are the last to parade their own goodness. The apostle Peter became a faithful minister of Christ, and he was greatly honoured with divine light and power; he had an active part in the upbuilding of Christ’s church; but Peter never forgot the fearful experience of his humiliation; his sin was forgiven; yet well he knew that for the weakness of character which had caused his fall only the grace of Christ could avail. He found in himself nothing in which to glory.” {COL 160.1}

How can you humble yourself? Only as you realise your broken promises. Otherwise you can’t humble yourself. God makes sure of it through causing us to make solemn promises. As we keep on going with the promises we have made and the failures we have engaged in, we keep coming to the cross, saying, Lord be merciful to me. The repentance deepens by the heart-breaking confession of sin. Only by constant renunciation of self, and dependence on Christ can we walk safely. The two come hand in hand.

You can’t make anyone do it. You can’t make someone humble himself. We often do it among human beings. Someone has really violated the law of God in the church. We come and up say, what did you do that for? You know we have to censure you now. What goes on in the heart of a person who does that? When you’ve broken your promise, Jesus had to die for the broken promise. It goes deeper than just Him dying for it. He bore the sin of the world to the bitter end. Yet men continue to sin. The only way we can become humble and contrite is for us to see our sinfulness. Not only at the cross. Jesus is our high priest right now. If you lose sight of Jesus you’ll keep on sinning. But you will be determined with revenge upon your sinfulness. We will resist these terrible things by keeping our eyes on the covenant activities.

Isaiah 56:1 “Thus saith the Lord, keep ye judgement, and do justice for my salvation is near to come and my righteousness to be revealed.”

What must we do? We keep on doing what is right irrespective of our failures. I must

continue to do it. I can’t succeed perfectly, my repentance becomes deeper and deeper. As I pursue the path, and I keep on looking to Jesus, suffering my sin continually, as it is said, He bore the sin of the world. As that continues to permeate and purge my conscious, there comes a point in time where God’s righteousness will be manifest in His people. That’s the process.

TDG page 344:2. “You have the fear of God before and you will have a trembling lest you depart from the counsels of God.”

You tremble, “I know I’ve failed before, help me Lord.” You will be working out your own salvation with fear and trembling. Here are God’s works, and here are man’s works. They both co-operate.

TDG page 167. “Everyone of us has a work to do in our own salvation. Which is to meet every requirement of God. God does not do anything independent of him...”

You can’t separate this to obey every command. The ongoing process of firm resolute decision and of fear lest I fall back into breaking my covenant again, and a firm reliance upon God’s sacrifice of Jesus Christ. This is the ongoing exercise. My vehemence over my failures deepens and I cast myself more heavily upon God’s sustaining strength. This is the fear and trembling.

OHC page 91. “What does this mean? It means that everyday you are to distrust your own human efforts and wisdom, you are to fear to speak at random, you are to fear to follow your own impulses. Fear the pride of heart and the love of the world.”

Fear that the new covenant is not going to happen in your life. Fear that. Watch closely to keep your promise of keeping those laws. And if you fail, rely on the grace of Jesus. Fear to rely on the slightest human power. Only follow the decision, the will. Don’t rely upon your human effort.

AG page 302. “But those who are waiting to behold a magical change in their characters without determined effort on their part to overcome sin, will be disappointed. We have no reason to fear while looking to Jesus, no reason to doubt but that He is able to save to the uttermost all that come unto Him; but we may constantly fear lest our old nature will again obtain the supremacy, that the enemy shall devise some snare whereby we shall again become his captives.”


The old nature is not being totally destroyed. It’s the flesh, its still there. All our memories of all our past ways of living; we may fear that this should take the supremacy, that the enemy should devise that we should become his captives again.

Very vividly this co-partnership experience is described in the covenant. Man’s effort and God’s power.

“The work of gaining salvation is one of co-partnership, a joint operation. There is to be co-operation between God and the repentant sinner. This is necessary for the formation of right principles in the character. Man is to make earnest efforts to overcome that which hinders him from attaining to perfection. But he is wholly dependent upon God for success. Human effort of itself is not sufficient. Without the aid of divine power it avails nothing. God works and man works. Resistance of temptation must come from man, who must draw his power from God. On the one side there is infinite wisdom, compassion, and power; on the other, weakness, sinfulness, absolute helplessness.” {AA 482.2}

While the Lord is working with us, we must be working for ourselves. When the Lord sends His servants to us with reproof, with cautions, with warnings, we are not to turn away and refuse to receive the message because it does not come from learned men. We are not to say, “This message is not needed.” Every message sent to you by God’s messenger is for your good, to teach you the way of salvation more perfectly. What means has God to communicate His will to men, unless it be through His delegated messengers? And are you not afraid to select that portion of the message that pleases you, and reject that which crosses your track? {TDG 167.3}

It is human to reject things that don’t suit us. Because of the covenant that God has enacted, he has sent messages to make the expectations of God vivid to our mind. I’m brought deeper and deeper into repentance. If I reject God’s messengers, where am I going to go?

Let us thank God for the revelation of His grace, thank God for the covenant exercises, and the measure by which He has helped us to be saved. Let us take of hold it with the whole heart and the whole soul. Amen. 

Transcribed sermon from John Thiel, Australia

COALS OF FIRE



CHILDRENS CORNER

Gary came home from school with a rapid step and impetuous manner. His mother looked up from her work. There was a round, red spot on his cheek, and an ominous glitter in his eyes. She knew the signs. His naturally fierce temper had been stirred in some way to a heat that had kindled his whole nature. He tossed down his cap, threw himself on an ottoman at her feet, and then said, with still a little of the heat of his temper in his voice, "Never say, after this, that I don't love you, Mother."

"I think I never did say so," she answered gently, as she passed her hand over the tawny locks, and brushed them away from the flushed brow. "But what special thing have you done to prove your love for me just now?"

"Taken a blow without returning it."

She bent over and kissed her boy. He was fifteen years old, a tall fellow with strong muscles; but he had not grown above liking his mother's kisses. Then she said softly, "Tell me about it, Gary."

"Oh, it was Darryl. You know what a mean fellow he is, anyhow. He had been tormenting some of the younger boys till I could not stand it. Everyone of them is afraid of him."

"I told him he ought to be ashamed of himself, and tried to make him leave off, till, after a while, he turned from them, and coming to me, he struck me in the face. I believe the mark is still there now;" and he turned the other cheek toward his mother. Her heart was filled with sympathy and secret indignation.

"Well," she said, "and you—what did you do?"

"I remembered what I had promised you for this year, and I took it—think of it, Mother—took it, and never touched him! I just looked into his eyes, and said, 'If I strike you back, I should lower myself to your level.'"

"He laughed a great, scornful laugh, and

said, 'you hear, boys, Gary's turned into a preacher. You had better wait, sir, before you lecture me on my behaviour to the little ones, till you have courage enough to defend them. I don't want to hear anything more from a coward like you.'

"The boys laughed, and some of them said, 'Good for you, Darryl!' And I came home. I had done it for the sake of my promise to you! For I'm stronger than he is, any day; and you know, Mother, whether there's a drop of coward's blood in my veins. I thought you were the one to comfort me; though it isn't comfort I want so much, either. I just want you to release me from that promise, and let me go back and thrash him."

Mrs. Morgan's heart thrilled with silent thanksgiving. Her boy's temper had been her greatest grief. His father was dead, and she had brought him up alone, and sometimes she was afraid her too great tenderness had spoiled him.

She had tried in vain to curb his passionate nature. It was a power which no bands could bind. She had concluded at last that the only hope was in enlisting his own powerful will, and making him resolve to conquer himself. Now he had shown himself capable of self-control. In the midst of his anger he had remembered his promise to his mother and had kept it. He would yet be his own master, -- this brave boy of hers, -- and the kingdom of his own mind would be a goodly sovereignty.

"Better heap coals of fire on his head!" she said quietly.

"Yes, he deserves a good scorching," he pretended to misunderstand her, "But I did not think you would be so revengeful."

"You know well enough what kind of coals I mean, and who it was that said, 'If thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink.' I cannot release you from your promise till the year for which you made it is over."

"I think that the Master who told us to

render good for evil, understood all the wants and passions of humanity better than any other teacher has ever understood them. I am sure that what He said must be wise and right and best. I want you to try His way first. If that fails, there will be time enough after this year to make a different experiment."

"Well, I promised you," he said, "and I will show you that, at least, I'm strong enough to keep my word until you release me from it. I think, though, you don't quite know how hard it is."

Mrs. Morgan knew that it was very hard for a true, brave-hearted boy to be called a coward; but she knew, also, that the truest bravery on earth is the bravery of endurance.

"Look out for the coals of fire!" she said smilingly, as her boy started for school the next morning. "Keep a good watch, and I'm pretty sure you will find them before the summer is over."

But he came home at night depressed and a little gloomy. There had always been a sort of rivalry between him and Darryl, and now the boys seemed to have gone over to the stronger side, and he had that bitter feeling of humiliation and disgrace, which is as bitter to a boy as the sense of defeat ever is to a man.

The weeks went on, and the feeling wore away a little. Still the memory of that blow rankled in Gary's mind, and made him unsocial and ill at ease. His mother watched him with some anxiety, but did not interfere. She had the true wisdom to leave him to learn some of the lessons of life alone.

Finally the last day of school came, and the next day there was a picnic in which all the teachers and students were to join.

Gary hesitated a little and then decided to go. The place selected was a lovely spot, known as "the old mill." It was on the banks of a river, where the stream runs

fast, and the grass was green, and great trees with drooping boughs shut away the July sunlight.

Among the rest were Darryl and his little sister Helen, the one human being whom he seemed to really and tenderly love. The teacher's eyes were on him for this one day, and he did not venture to insult the older teacher or domineer over the little ones. He and Gary kept apart as much as they conveniently could; and Gary entered into the spirit of the day, and really enjoyed it much better than he anticipated.

The picnic lunch was spread on the grass, and it was delicious. They made the lunch last as long as they could, and then they scattered here and there, to enjoy themselves as they liked.

On the bridge, just above the falls, stood a little group, fishing. Among them were Darryl and his sister. Gary, always deeply interested in the study of botany, was a little distance away, with one of the teachers, pulling in pieces a curious flower.

Suddenly a wild cry arose above the sultry stillness of the summer afternoon and the hum of quiet voices round. It was Darryl's cry: "She's in, boys! Helen's in the river, and I can't swim. Oh, save her! Save her! Will no one try?"

Before the words were out of his lips, they all saw Gary coming with flying feet, -- a race for life. He unbuttoned coat and vest as he ran, and cast them off as he neared the bridge. He kicked off his shoes, and threw himself over.

They heard him hit the water. He went under, rose again, and then struck out towards the golden head, which just then rose for the second time. Every one who stood there lived moments which seemed hours.

Mr. Sharp, the teacher with whom Gary had been talking, and some of the boys, got a strong rope, and running down the stream, threw it on the water just above the falls, where Gary could reach it if he could get so near the shore -- if.

The water was very deep where Helen had fallen in, and the river ran fast. It was sweeping the poor child on, and Darryl threw himself upon the bridge, and sobbed and screamed. When she rose the third time, she was near the falls. A moment

more and she would go over, down on the jagged, cruel rocks beneath.

But that time Gary caught her -- caught her by her long, glistening, golden hair. Mr. Sharp shouted to him. He saw the rope, and swam towards it, his strong right arm beating the water back with hammer strokes -- his left motionless, holding his white burden.

"O God!" Mr. Sharp prayed fervently, "keep him up, and spare his strength a little longer, a little longer!" A moment more and he reached the rope and clung to it desperately, while teacher and boys drew the two in over the slippery edge, out of the horrible, seething waters, and took them in their arms. But they were both silent and motionless. Mr. Sharp spoke Gary's name, but he did not answer. Would either of them ever answer again?

The teachers went to work for their restoration. It was well that they had intelligent guidance, or their best efforts might have failed.

Gary, being the stronger, was first to revive. "Is Helen safe?" he asked.

"Only God knows," Mr. Sharp answered. "We are doing our best."

It was almost half an hour before Helen opened her blue eyes. In the meantime Darryl had been utterly frantic and helpless. He had sobbed and groaned and even prayed, in a wild fashion of his own, which perhaps the pitying Father understood and answered.

When he heard his sister's voice, he was like one beside himself with joy; but Mr. Sharp quieted him by a few low, firm words, which no one else understood.

Some of the larger girls arranged one of the wagons and placed Helen into it.

Mr. Sharp drove home with Gary. When he reached his mother's gate, Gary insisted on going in alone. He thought it might alarm her to see someone helping him; besides, he wanted her a few minutes quite to himself. His mother saw him coming, and opened the door.

"Where have you been?" she cried, seeing his wet, disordered clothing.

"In the river, Mother, fishing out Helen."

Then, while she was busy preparing for his comfort, he quietly told his story. His mother's eyes were dim, and her heart throbbed chokingly.

"O, if you had been drowned, my boy, my darling!" she cried, hugging him close, wet as he was. "If I had been there, Gary, I couldn't have let you do it."

"I went in after the coals of fire, Mother."

Mrs. Morgan knew how to laugh as well as to cry over her boy. "I've heard of people smart enough to set the river on fire," she said, "But you are the first one I ever knew who went in there after coals."


The next morning a group of boys came to visit Gary, with Darryl at their head. Every one was there who had seen the blow which Darryl struck, and heard his taunts afterward. They came into the sitting room, and spoke with Gary before his mother. Darryl was the spokesman.

"I have come," he said, "To ask you to forgive me. I struck you a mean, unjustifiable blow. You received it with noble contempt. To provoke you into fighting, I called you a coward, meaning to bring you down by some means to my own level. You bore that, too, with greatness I was not great enough to understand; but I do understand it now.

"I have seen you -- all we boys have seen you -- face to face with Death, and have seen that you were not afraid of him. You fought with him, and came off ahead; and we are come to do honour to the bravest boy in town; and I thank you for a life a great deal dearer and better worth saving than my own."

Darryl broke down just there, for the tears choked him.

Gary was as grand in his forgiveness as he had been in his forbearance.

Helen and her father and mother came afterward, and Gary found himself a hero before he knew it. But none of it all moved him as did his mother's few fond words, and the pride in her joyful eyes. He had kept, with honour and with peace, his pledge to her, and he had his reward. The Master's way of peace had not missed him. 



Evangelistic Meetings in Vancouver, Canada

IMS
around the world



Youth Skating in Toronto, Canada



Baptism, Lagonoy, Camarines sur



Baby Dedication in Ghana



Br. Dering & Br. Gabriel in Ghana



Brethren in Ghana



Baptism in Benin



Church School, Tanzania



Children's class in Ghana