



The Reformation **Messenger**

VOLUME 16 NUMBER 3 MARCH 2009

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

“Thou shalt therefore keep this ordinance in his season from year to year. Exodus 13:10


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.

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Volume 16, Number 3, March 2009

- 
- 3 CHRIST OUR REFUGE**
 - 5 THE MOST IMPORTANT JOURNEY OF OUR LIFE**
 - 8 THE SWEET INFLUENCE OF CHRIST'S...**
 - 10 NOW IS THE ACCEPTED TIME!**
 - 14 "FATHER, FORGIVE THEM..."**
 - 19 CODE BLUE! CODE BLUE!**
 - 21 GRACE: DIVINE ASSISTANCE**
 - 24 "IT IS NOT FOR YOU TO KNOW..."**
 - 25 CHILDREN'S CORNER: THE CAPTAIN WAS...**

The Reformation
Messenger

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

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Christ Our Refuge

"For by as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous." Rom. 5:19.

"Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." Ps. 51:5

God through Jeremiah says, "Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? Then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil." Jer. 13:23

"The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." Rom. 6:23.

The apostle writes to the Romans, "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. 7:24.

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved." John 3:16, 17.

CITIES OF REFUGE

"There were six cities in the land of Canaan (see Numbers 35, Deuteronomy 19, Joshua 20) which were set apart as places of refuge to which a man might flee if he had either by accident or design, killed another. These cities were easily accessible. Three were on the west side of the river Jordan and three on the east side. Every year "the roads leading to them were always to be kept in good repair; all along the way signposts were to be erected bearing the word "Refuge" in plain bold characters, that the fleeing one might not be delayed for a moment. Any person—Hebrew, stranger, or sojourner—might avail himself of this provision.

"But while the guiltless were not to be rashly slain, neither were the guilty to escape punishment. The case of the fugitive was to be fairly tried by the proper authorities, and only when found innocent of intentional murder was he to be protected in the city of refuge. The guilty were given up to the avenger. And those who were entitled to protection could receive it only on condition of remaining within the appointed refuge. Should one wander away beyond the prescribed limits, his life would pay the penalty of his disregard of the Lord's provision. At the death of the high priest, however, all who had sought shelter in the cities of refuge were at liberty to return to their possessions.

"In a trial for murder the accused was not to be condemned on the

testimony of one witness, even though circumstantial evidence might be strong against him. The Lord's direction was, 'whoso killeth any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses; but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die.' Num. 35:30.

"It was Christ who gave to Moses these directions for Israel; and when personally with His disciples on earth, as He taught them how to treat the erring, the Great Teacher repeated the lesson that one man's testimony is not to acquit or condemn. One man's views and opinions are not to settle disputed questions. In all these matters two or more are to be associated, and together they are to bear the responsibility, 'that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.' Matt. 18:16.

"If the one tried for murder were proved guilty, no atonement or ransom could rescue him. 'Whoso sheddeth man's blood, by man shall his blood be shed.' Gen. 9:6. 'Ye shall take no satisfaction for the life of a murderer, which is guilty of death; but he shall be surely put to death.' 'Thou shalt take him from Mine altar, that he may die,' was the command of God. 'The land cannot be cleansed of the blood that is shed therein, but by the blood of him that shed it.' Num. 35:31, 33; Ex. 21:14. The safety and purity of the nation demanded that the sin of murder be severely punished. Human life, which God alone could give, must be sacredly guarded." PP 515, 516

God has different ways of teaching. A great many things about which we read in the Old Testament are what is called types. A type, in scripture language, means a pattern or likeness to a person who is to come, or an event which is to take place. It is supposed to point forward to something more valuable than itself. Thus, for example, the blood of the lamb which was slain on the Jewish altar was a type, or a foreshadowing, of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for our salvation. Hence John the Baptist, pointing to the Saviour, said to his disciples, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." John 1:29. the paschal lamb which was slain to commemorate the deliverance of the Jews from the bondage of Egypt, and the lamb which was offered daily, both morning and evening, in the service of the temple, were representations of the greater sacrifice which Christ came from heaven to make for our salvation.

So the land of Canaan was a type of heaven. The lifting up of the brazen serpent on a pole was a type of our Saviour's crucifixion; and the cities of refuge were a beautiful type of Jesus Christ, who is the sinner's refuge.

We have all sinned, and therefore we all need a place of safety. The avenger says, "Thou shalt surely die." Escape for thy life. But, so that we may not die eternally, God has given us the Bible and is constantly

pointing to Jesus Christ as the sinner's refuge. He is our hiding place.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus." Who is he that condemneth? 'It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us;' that 'we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.' Rom. 8:1, 34; Heb. 6:18.

"He who fled to the city of refuge could make no delay. Family and employment were left behind. There was no time to say farewell to loved ones. His life was at stake, and every other interest must be sacrificed to the one purpose—to reach the place of safety. Weariness was forgotten, difficulties were unheeded. The fugitive dared not for one moment slacken his pace until he was within the wall of the city.

The sinner is exposed to eternal death, until he finds a hiding place in Christ; and as loitering and carelessness might rob the fugitive of his only chance for life, so delays and indifference may prove the ruin of the soul. Satan, the great adversary, is on the track of every transgressor of God's

holy law, and he who is not sensible of his danger, and does not earnestly seek shelter in the eternal refuge, will fall a prey to the destroyer.

"The prisoner who at any time went outside the city of refuge was abandoned to the avenger of blood. Thus the people were taught to adhere to the methods which infinite wisdom appointed for their security. Even so, it is not enough that the sinner believe in Christ for the pardon of sin; he must by faith and obedience, abide in Him. 'For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.' Heb. 10:20, 27." PP 516, 517

The way to our city of refuge is plain. "I am the way," is the Saviour's own direction. The gate is always open, and the assurance is, "Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out." "Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name." DA 131 AMEN

**Golden Kayawa Hingabantu
Zambia**



The Most Important Journey Of Our Life

When we read a part of the history of the people of God in the book of Ezra, we find a text that has to do with a very important decision.

The condition of our society, of our planet and even of the religious world is the result of important decisions taken in different meetings by different committees. But there are decisions that we ourselves need to take that can have a positive or negative result for our private life. Our Bible verse today has to do with one of those decisions.

“For upon the first [day] of the first month began he [Ezra] to go up from Babylon.” Ezra 7:9. The people of God had been taken in captivity to Babylon due to their disobedience and rebellion towards God. They were in captivity for 70 years and were badly influenced by the habits and customs of that heathen land. When the time pre-established by God came, the Lord aroused the king Persia, who had conquered Babylon, to allow the Israelites to go out of Babylon to Jerusalem, under the hand of the Lord, says the Scripture.

“For upon the first [day] of the first month began he to go up from Babylon” (in other translations it says Ezra “took the decision” to leave Babylon. On the first day of the first month people decide many things and maybe we do also. We all want to have a better year, more success in our private life, to be happier, to have more peace and joy, to be healthier, etc. Who does not want all that?

Babel or Babylon means confusion and confusion is a synonym of chaos and disorder and disorder brings insecurity. It is a great thing to come out of Babylon, to decide to put order in our life. Although we are children of God and have the privilege of knowing His commandments and precepts so that we may live a better life, we may still be in Babylon due to our negligence in the observance of a certain commandment. In Babylon there is no peace or happiness.

Usually we take the decision to abandon Babylon on the first day of the first month, but before the first week is over we are still in Babel, bound to our own old habits, that separate us from God and rob us our peace.

Let us study what Ezra did after he took the decision to leave Babylon and go to Jerusalem, to the city of Peace. Did he manage to leave Babylon for good or did he return to it and go back into captivity? In verse 7:10 we read, *“For Ezra had prepared his heart to seek the law of the Lord and to do [it].”* Therefore, after making up his mind to leave Babylon, he decided to study God’s law and put it into practice. His heart longed for order, to get out of the chaos of Babylon, away from captivity. He knew that God is order and His law can bring order into our life.

When Daniel was in the court of the king of Babylon, he *“purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king’s meat, nor with the wine which he drank.”* (Dan. 1:8) It was

a decision of the heart. That was the kind of decision that Ezra took and heaven prepared his way. The king of Persia, Antaxerxes, wrote to all the treasurers beyond the Euphrates the following command, *“whatsoever Ezra the priest, the scribe of the law of the God of heaven, shall require of you, it be done speedily.”* (Ezra 7:21). And it is mentioned everything he received: wheat, wine, oil, salt. What promise did Jesus give the audience that heard the Sermon on the Mount? *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* Matthew 6:33. *“All these things”* refers to their physical need for clothing and food.

Ezra expresses his joy in the following words, *“And I was strengthened as the hand of the Lord my God [was] upon me”* (Ezra 7:28). In other words, the Lord has blessed the decision that I took with all my heart. *“The Lord [is] my shepherd; I shall not want.”* (Psalm 23:1). And Ezra says in chapter 8:22, *“The hand of our God [is] upon all them for good that seek him.”*

The decision was taken and other people also decided to go with Ezra, to leave Babylon. They had enough food for the whole journey, but what did they do? Did they prepare a big feast, like it is the custom on the first day of the first month when so many important decisions are taken? The Scriptures tell us that they gathered near a river and Ezra called a fast and we read, *“that we might afflict ourselves before our God, to seek of him a right way for us, and for our little ones, and for all our substance.”* (Ezra 8:21).

Even though Ezra knew that the hand of the Lord was upon them when he saw the great generosity of the king, there was no presumption in his heart. He did not go ahead in the assurance that the Lord who had that one time blessed them so richly would do it continually. He wanted to plead for that blessing of the Lord as a special grace and through fasting showed the Lord what Job once expressed, *“I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary [food].”* (Job 23:12).

Ezra writes *“So we fasted and besought our God for this: and he was entreated of us.”* 8:23.

After this stop at the river, they continued on their way to Jerusalem, the city of Peace. Ezra made a wonderful decision on the first day of the first month, to move from Babylon--confusion, to Jerusalem--God's peace. There is no peace in the midst of disorder and chaos, even when we already belong to God's people. The Holy Spirit that was given us as a Guide and Teacher does not leave us in peace when we take wrong steps. May the Lord be glorified and praised for that!

After they fasted and humbled themselves before the Lord, *“we departed from the river of Ahava on the twelfth [day] of the first month, to go unto Jerusalem: and the hand of our God was upon us, and he delivered us from the hand of the enemy, and of such as lay in wait by the way.”* (Ezra 8:31). Twelve days went by and they could

keep their decision, go ahead to reach their goal. In other words, when we humble ourselves before the Lord, He protects us from all evil. Evil is generally our weaknesses and our shortcomings, that can make us deviate from the narrow path that leads to victory. On our way to Jerusalem, we come across many trials and temptations, but they have power over us as long as there is covetousness in our heart. James writes, *“Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.”* (James 1:13, 14)

And so Ezra went on to Jerusalem and the people with him. Every time they did something wrong, we read in Ezra 9:4, *“Then were assembled unto me every one that trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the transgression of those that had been carried away; and I sat astonished until the evening sacrifice.”* They acknowledged their sins, humbled themselves before the Lord and asked for forgiveness. Through humbleness and obedience they came to Jerusalem. Through humbleness and obedience we can also reach the heavenly city.

Our spiritual journey away from the world and the sin that dwells in us to the peace the Lord wants to give us, is similar to Ezra's journey from Babylon to Jerusalem. Only a perfect obedience to all statutes and commandments of God in all their breadth and depth can give us that inner peace that cannot be disturbed by anything or anybody.

When the people arrived in Jerusalem, all who had decided to leave Babylon (it was a voluntary decision) they rested for three days. The journey lasted five months. On the fourth day they began their activities. First they restored the altar of sacrifice. We know that the service performed at that altar was a shadow of Christ's sacrifice, the Lamb of God who took away our sin.

Ezra spoke a wonderful prayer *“Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore.”* (Ezra 10:1).

On the seventh month, two months after they had arrived in Jerusalem, *“all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that [was] before the water gate; and they spake unto Ezra the scribe to bring the book of the law of Moses, which the Lord had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And he read therein before the street that [was] before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people [were attentive] unto the book of the law.”* (Nehemiah 8:1–3)

And when the people had heard everything, they said “Amen”. What

do we learn from here? When we decide to leave Babylon and move to Jerusalem in order to receive God's peace, there are some steps we need to take: 1) to make a firm decision with our heart, 2) to abandon the confusion of this world with its heathen customs and to speak a prayer of repentance in the quietness of our room. *"But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."* (Mathew 6:6). A third step is to study God's law and to say "Amen" to what is written there and to take it as the guidance of our new life in Christ.

The law is the wall that separates us from this sinful world and protects us from Satan's attacks. The Ten Commandments are called the law of freedom; and when we leave Babylon we are free from the slavery to sin. Since sin is the transgression of the law, only obedience to every precept can preserve our freedom.

After God's people took all these steps, they built the wall of Jerusalem under the direction of Nehemiah. In chapter 6:15 of Nehemiah's book, we read that it took them 52 days to finish the wall.

The city had 12 doors, like the heavenly Jerusalem, and these doors were closed on Sabbath. The people of God had spent such a long time in Babylon that they had forgotten how to sanctify the Sabbath day. Some vendors came from Tyre on Sabbath to sell their products. That is why Nehemiah reacted. We read in 13:17, 18, *"Then I contended with the nobles of Judah, and said unto them, What evil thing [is] this that ye do, and profane the Sabbath day? Did not your fathers thus, and did not our God bring all this evil upon us, and upon this city? yet ye bring more wrath upon Israel by profaning the Sabbath."* It is interesting to see that the transgression of the Sabbath is the reason why there was so much evil in the city. What is the reason for so much evil in our time all over the world?

What decision did Nehemiah take for the protection of the inhabitants of Jerusalem? *"And it came to pass, that when the gates of Jerusalem began to be dark before the Sabbath, I commanded that the gates should be shut, and charged that they should not be opened till after the Sabbath: and [some] of my servants set I at the gates, [that] there should no burden be brought in on the Sabbath day."* A complete turning to God's commandments and a perfect observance of the rest day of the Lord can keep us free from the captivity in Babylon.

After all these steps were taken, on the second year of their arrival, they began to rebuild the temple. The temple was in ruins but the people worked with much zeal. In 1 Corinthians 6:19 we read, *"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost [which is] in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?"* Sin has destroyed our spiritual temple; that is the reason why we all have made the decision to move from Babylon to Jerusalem and take this journey, which entails many trials. We are almost at the end of the journey. Let us put away everything that can hinder our progress. When we have reached the point in which there is no covetousness or rebellion in our heart, we shall experience peace all the time and we may be a living temple in which the Holy Spirit lives in its plenitude. Let us read an important verse in Romans 8:11, *"But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."*

The Holy Spirit cannot dwell where there is sin. Sin is harlotry, unfaithfulness to God and we should be presented to our Bridegroom like

a chaste virgin. *"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present [you as] a chaste virgin to Christ."* (2 Corinthians 11:2)

Paul asks us, *"Know ye not that your bodies are the members of Christ? shall I then take the members of Christ, and make [them] the members of an harlot? God forbid."* (1 Corinthians 6:15). And Jesus says, *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other."* (Matthew 6:24).

"For upon the first [day] of the first month began he to go up from Babylon." We do not need to wait for the first day of the first month to make the very important decision not to give up, now that we are at the threshold of the holy city. Let us allow the Holy Spirit to clean us from all impurity and imperfection of character. Let us trust that the Lord can finish the work He began in us. Jesus is coming soon and we want to be prepared to enter the New Jerusalem.

May the Lord help us to choose the way of humbleness and obedience so that we can reach our goal. **Amen.**

Teresa Corti

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The Sweet Influence Of Christ's Righteousness

This world is full of sorrow and suffering. There is sickness and poverty which add to the misery of the people. Many are burdened under anxiety and perplexities, and often there is no one who cares for them.

Yet God has made a plan how to help these unfortunate men, women and children. He has placed His faithful children into this wicked world to relieve the suffering, and to comfort the sorrowing, and to save the lost human beings.

God has also given us tools and mediums to help us in our labour of love; and the greatest of them is Christ's righteousness. Without it our work can not be successful. Sister White gives a description of a true Christian. "And, amid all the corruption of the world, he is true and loyal to God. The sweet influence of Christ's righteousness surrounds him. His influence elevates and blesses." *Lift Him Up*, p. 276

"The lives of those who are connected with God are fragrant with deeds of love and goodness. The sweet savour of Christ surrounds them; their influence is to elevate and bless. They are fruitful trees. Men and women of this stamp of character will render practical service in thoughtful deeds of kindness, and earnest, systematic labour." *Daughters of God*, p. 155.

This sweet influence that surrounds the faithful children of God is a piece of heaven on the earth. The same happiness that we will have in heaven we can already have here in this sinful world. And those who enter into this sphere of heavenly influence which surrounds the true Christian will also feel its peace and comfort.

In another illustration, Jesus compared this blessing to living water. He said to the Samaritan woman, "If thou knewest the gift of God, and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water." John 4:10.

She was a religious woman, and also she had been seeking happiness for herself, but she did not know the gift of God that is available to everyone.

This applies to the majority of professed Christians, that they do not know the gift of God, and therefore they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked; while the fullness of joy and peace that passes understanding is available to them as a gift of God.

Jesus continued to explain this heavenly gift to the woman. "Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again: But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life." John 4:13, 14.

David also recognized this gift of God. He writes, The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Ps. 23:1.

How does this sweet influence of Christ's righteousness and the living water make us happy and full of joy in any condition? We find an example of it in the life of Paul:

"And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailer to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks. And at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God." Acts 16: 22-25.

Instead of complaining, they sang praises unto God. Therefore, Paul can say, "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice." Phil. 4:4.

Peter writes the same, "But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when His glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy." 1 Peter 4:13.

Jesus also said the same, "Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matt. 5: 11, 12.

The prophets and the messengers of God have been always persecuted, yet they did not complain, but rather they prayed for their persecutors that the Lord would forgive them.

Jesus did not promise anything different to His disciples, "These things I have spoken unto you, that in Me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

The sweet influence of heaven that surrounds the Christian will give him fullness of joy in tribulations, trials and even in the dying moment. When Paul prayed for healing, that the thorn of his flesh would be removed, the answer which he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness." 2 Cor. 12:9.

If this gift of God will satisfy us and make us happy in suffering, imprisonment and even in a martyr's death, how much more will it make us full of joy and peace in a normal life. We do not need worldly entertainment, shows, movies, literature, or any kind of vanity that Satan has inspired. The simple life that Jesus lived is sufficient for joy and happiness.

The soul hunger that the people in the world are suffering from is fully satisfied with the living water that Jesus gives us. But many professed Christians lose this sweet influence of Christ's righteousness when they seek enjoyment in worldly things.

A self-righteous person is miserable, always complaining because the atmosphere of heaven is not surrounding him. Even if we miss a life partner and live alone, Jesus has promised to take the place of a husband or a wife, and fill us with joy and happiness.

We sing in our gospel hymn:

"There is a place of quiet rest,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where sin cannot molest,
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of comfort sweet,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where we our Saviour meet,
Near to the heart of God.

There is a place of full release,
Near to the heart of God,
A place where all is joy and peace,
Near to the heart of God."

Do not live a miserable life, but come to the Saviour and drink the water of life, and you will not suffer soul thirst anymore.

When the garment of righteousness covers you, also the sweet influence of heaven surrounds you and others who come to you will feel it and they also receive the water of life from you.

Let the Lord be your Shepherd and you will lack nothing that is needed for a happy life, and it will continue even for all eternity. **AMEN.**

Timo Martin, Canada

INDEX TO THE MESSENGER

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Now Is The Accepted Time!

“For he saith, I have heard thee in a time accepted, and in the day of salvation have I succoured thee; behold, now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation.” 2 Corinthians 6:2

A CHOICE!

Which are the best times? Some say the old times. “There are many erroneous views.” (1T 411). Albert Einstein wryly said, “It’s very difficult to make a prediction, especially about the future.” What does Solomon say? “Say not thou, what is the cause that the former days were better than these? For thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this.” (Ecclesiastes 6:10). He says, in essence, it is **not wise!** So, **do not ask!** The prophet, Amos, was outraged at the violence done to the justice and righteousness of God, saying, “Therefore, the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it is an **evil time.**” (Amos 5:13).

Many, however, look hopefully to the future; that good times are coming, “wait just a while longer – look ahead! That time when the beast and the false prophet shall be thrown into the lake of fire, and then we will arrive at a **golden age!**” (Revelation 19:20).

Ah! But, also “the devils can foretell future events... at times, and Satan has the ability to foretell future events!” (1T 411; PP 687). “God’s purposes, however, for the future age were terribly clear and shown to the Apostle John and described in the book of Revelation. Moreover, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream reveals future events down to the **end of time!**” (SL 78; PK 498). “But, you Daniel, “shut up the words, and seal the book until the **time of the end.**” (Dan. 12:4, 9);... and there shall be one thousand two hundred and ninety days.” (Dan. 12:11). That **time is now.** So, to the faithful believer, there is no need to be in the darkness. (GC342). “For you shall rest, and will arise to your inheritance at the end of the days.” (Dan. 12:13). Therefore, the “future state of an individual depends on the **choice he makes!**” (1T 196). It’s a choice to lose or gain heaven!!

NOW, NOW, NOW!

Ah! But one thought to dwell upon. When we talk about the “**times and the seasons,**” it is **now, now, just now,** that second, that tick of the clock is the only time we have. We cannot sow into the future, prune or correct the past. The only time we have is now passing! Did I say we had it... it’s gone!? Yes, like a meteor in the sky, an eagle flying, a ship disappearing into the distant horizon! We are entering into the dawn of a New Year. Well, those moments we spoke of before are now present.... now!

So, no matter how you think of the past, or future, the present moment is the only time we have, may have, or ever can have. So, you see, it is important for us to center our thoughts on it. Why? Because one of our great Christian virtues is, “Wherefore, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if you do these things, ye shall **never fall.**” (2 Peter 1:10).

In our opening text we find the Lord God speaking to Jesus, the Messiah, saying, “in an acceptable time I have heard thee, and in the day of salvation I have helped thee.” Jesus, in tears and bloody sweat, in the garden of Gethsemane in prayer, was heard and accepted! Well, what does that mean for us... now? Jesus did not pray for Himself, but for us. So, there is an acceptable time for us. It began when Jesus was crucified, and said in the end.... “It is finished!” Jesus, the mighty Saviour said in essence, “therefore, to you, my people, to you, poor, lost, wandering sinners, to you, “now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation!”

1. THE NOW OF BELIEVERS

WHAT'S NEW?

As believers, “now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation,” so it is best for the believer to believe in the present time. I say, believer! Now, have you had any new virtues since you were “saved?” Has the grace of God led you on to go from faith to courage, courage to experience, experience to brotherly love, brotherly love to kindness, and from kindness to charity? Perhaps, yes.

Ah! But how often have we grieved, or offended the Lord, our love to Him, our faith in Him, mixed with unbelief? Wait, it gets worse! Has our zeal been buried with selfishness, our humility stained with pride, our patience buried with murmuring? Have we committed many sins, and look upon them with trembling? You see, all our good things are made worthless!! Oh! “Woe unto me!”

WHAT'S YOUR POSITION?

Now, the safest, happiest, holiest, position for the believer is at the foot of the cross! But, in fact, unclean birds are seeking to live in our hearts! What then, can we possibly do? Well, we can wash those sins in the Fountain of Life. The book of Galatians 2:20 writes, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” What else can we do? Say, “I live IN Jesus, ON Jesus, FOR Jesus, and WITH Jesus!” Where is our hope? For us to soon be conformed to His likeness. That's it!

Ah! But where are you today? Have you gingerly climbed so far above the poor thief on the cross? Come back down! It's dangerous at that altitude! Or, have you dived down and sunk so deep that you've forgotten to rest on Jesus to save you? Can you “fathom” that? “For as you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him.” (Colossians 2:6)

PASSIONATELY REMEMBER!

Let's look at that important word, “now”, again. Now as professors of followers of Christ, you're now in the House of God, the Sanctuary, singing holy hymns of praise, solemn prayers rising up to Heaven,

doing all as Christians and the saints must do, as believers, on the Sabbath Day in worship to God our Father. Very nice! But tomorrow morning some may go picking olives, gathering wood for the fireplace, walking by the sea, or visiting families or with families. Ah! But remember dear friends, that **now** where you are or where you are **then**, you're a Christian! Don't say I was a Christian yesterday, the Sabbath, but **now, now**, I am a Christian! “For you will be sure to go astray.” (3T 364).

Ah! But, now you're in the market place, the city, the work-place, the mall; there is much to plague or distract you. You'll think, “I cannot enjoy the presence of God here.” Oh! Dear brethren, “now is the accepted time.” Whatever you're doing; tending sheep, sewing clothes, plowing the field, picking grapes, teaching; now, now, now, is the “day of salvation.” You're still a Christian, a saint, so act as one!

It's true a Christian can't shake off his character. Although “it's revealed in the church members, acceptance in Christ can bring about a change by repentance. This requires faith.” (LHU 238:1; RC 346:2; 3 SM 391:3). “That ye may be perfect.” (James 1:4). But, as he is what he is; still he always must be a Christian!

RELIGIOUS COAT

There's a story about a Scottish moderate minister in the 18th century who was being provoked by one in the congregation. The minister stopped his sermon, and said, “if I wasn't a minister, I would give you a good thrashing.” The listener continued to further irritate him. The minister took off his coat, laid it aside, and pointing to it, said, “there is the minister – there he lies!” He rolled up his sleeves, walked down off the pulpit and gave him a sound thrashing! Maybe he deserved it, but that's not the point, but, is in the “there lies the minister, or there lies the church member!” You go home after the service, hang up your best clothes and say, “there lies the member of the church, there lies the Christian!” If you believe in, “there goes the church member,” then you have no religion at all, but you have the faith of devils. It's not a “religious coat” you are wearing, but a “renewed heart.”

Mordecai wore the King's robe, but soon took it off, saying, “I am not really a King.” Queen Elizabeth's counselor, not pleased with the cares of state, threw down his robe and said, “lay there, Lord Chancellor!” Many act by wearing the coat of religion in the house of God, and take it off at home!

How often many of men's religion is irksome, and they cheerfully put aside their restraints, but you who are really the Lord's, will not, cannot sin, because you are born of God, an heir of heaven; called of God!

BLOOD BEAT!

I don't know how you feel now; maybe tempted, sick, depressed,

anything but happy and with thousands of problems! But, remember, you're sons and daughters of God. You're justified and covered with His righteousness, washed in His blood. So, now this very moment you're accepted! Even if you're struggling and tormented with sin, but, if you lean on God's Son, His love flows out to you from Him to you. Think about this sweet thought, troubled one: The object of His love is YOU! Not only are you accepted, but in union with Him. You're a member of His body, flesh, and bones. At this instant – now, the life blood flows from Him to you -- even in the worse state of feeling or best, you're one with Jesus – an eternal union!

WHAT'S THE PRIZE?

Moreover, stop for a moment and realize the privileges you have now. We think of heaven that's to come, forgetting the heaven below! "Heaven is to begin on this earth." (The Faith I Live By, 367:1-2; 7T 131:4). "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." (Matt. 11:28).

Oh! Dear Christian, I know what you intend to do. You have plans for the future. God loves when you make plans so He can destroy them; and then you turn to Him for guidance. But, I don't care what you do tomorrow, but I care what you do today. Oh! Those daydreams we have! Always planning in the next year or two, to be "defenders of the faith, good soldier's of Jesus, winners of souls!" Ah! But what are you doing now? There goes that moment, that opportunity. It flew away! Are you doing anything now?

Someone, however, says, "**I don't know, not just now, but when the service is over and I get home I may do something.**" But, remember, "now is the accepted time." Think now! Speak to those in the church, or on the way home, or anyone you meet. Don't say, "Sabbath is over, I can't speak during the week."

You have an unsaved sister; pray for her! You have an unconverted brother; write to him – call him! A dying man needs your instruction – visit him! Do you have any talent? Use it now! "**No, one says, maybe in ten years.**" No, no! Now, now! "Now the day of salvation has come!" Again, I don't care what you do tomorrow. Give your God your now! Your tomorrow will be all right! When duty calls, treasure your now! **Your prize is the now!**

2. THE NOW OF THE SINNER!

TROUBLE, ADVERSITY, MISFORTUNE!

May the Lord give us power on the second point! The **now** as it respects the sinner!

The great harm or trouble man has is that they procrastinate! They decide to be saved tomorrow! Sinner! Whoever you are and wherever you are, you will soon pass away like flowers that wither away and insects that die in the winter. Now is the time to think of eternity and beyond! "For everyone and everything, everywhere,

will forever declare that God is love." (Revelation 5:13). "The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean." (GC 678:2-3).

Ah! But, a father tells his fledging son, "get a trade, learn a profession first, and then consider religion." So, you are giving your God the end of your life? Be careful, now, for there will be no age at all! Many candles that have been lit have been blown out! In the Greek Orthodox Church candles are bought and lit as one enters, but are momentarily blown and snuffed out by the caretaker; and then plunged into their porous base of sand! "But, seek ye first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all those things shall be added unto you. Be not anxious, therefore, about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for the things of itself. Significant unto the day is its own evil." (Matt. 6:33, 34). The Greek word here for anxious denotes trouble, adversity, misfortune. "Woe unto me!"

MORE TIME!

Or, would you rather as a lamb, be Satan's old, worn out, weak dying sacrifice and be laid on the altar of fire? No! No! Pluck the flower by the bud, and put it in the hand of Jesus. Seek the days of your youth. "They that seek me early shall find me. Diligently seek me. Seek me when I am near and can be found. Ask, seek, and knock, and the doors shall be open." (Matt. 7:7; Isaiah 6:6; Heb. 11:6)

Now here is the beauty of the text! As sinners, remember, "Now is the accepted time." But, many unconverted still do not believe! They say, "**I have many thoughts on religion, and do not believe now, and have to think about it.**" What? Think yourself into salvation? Does the gospel say, "think and ye shall be saved?" The commandment is, "now is the accepted time!" But, they answer, "**I don't think such things must be done in a hurry.**" "Hurry?" David said, "I made haste and did not delay to keep the commandments." (Psalm 119:60) Hurry? Man is on the edge of damnation, the edge of his grave; a case of life and death! Let's, fly like a flash of lightning! But, the unbelieving doubter continues, "**Well, I'm not prepared yet.**" What? Do you think disobeying God will make you more prepared? "**Yes,**" he continues, "**but my heart feels so hard.**"

Do you think you can soften your heart in one week, one month, or one year? Is there anything in the word of God that says, "soften your own heart?" Isn't this the mighty work of grace? When the Bible says "now is the accepted time" even the hard heart can soften still when it is touched by, "now is the accepted time." The grace of the Holy Spirit can penetrate the hardest heart... if one seeks and asks!

Ah, but the weak, bewildered one, continues, "**I don't feel convinced enough, yet.**" You do not think that "now is the accepted time?" Psalm 89:47 says, "remember how short my time is." Felix rejected the ministering counseling of the Apostle Paul,

saying, "no, not now, but at a more convenient time." (Acts 24:25)

A QUARREL WITH GOD!

Here, now, is the quarrel between God and you. He (God) says, "**now**," and you say, "**no!**" Saying further, "**it can't be true! I need to be more convicted.**" You are mistaken!! If you think about it, your heart becomes harder, not softer, in time. I've never heard of a heart that was made softer by waiting, and delaying! But, the poor one continues, "**yes, I'd like to go home and pray on it.**" The Bible text does not say an "acceptable time" is when you get home and pray on it. It says, NOW! When I find you in church, "now is the acceptable time." It doesn't say the "acceptable time" will last weeks, or months, but, now in a moment, acceptance is given! It doesn't say you will pump yourself into a high state of grace first.

Finally, he says, "**do you really mean it? As I am, in my filthy state, unprepared, that I can be accepted by trusting in Jesus Christ this morning?**" Dear friend, dear soul, it's not what I say, but what the Bible says, and means. It's not an event as the clock ticks, in fifteen, or thirty minutes or an hour and it is done, but NOW and it's done! So, dear soul, what do you say? Does, God and the Holy Spirit move you to say, "**Oh! Gracious Lord, I trust my soul with thee**".... and it's done!

GIVE ME A HAND!

If I could just take you by the hand, and say, "I may never have an opportunity of preaching this message to you again." There may not be another "season." You may be gone! Old Nabal said to David, (1 Sam. 25:3), "there may be many servants nowadays that break away from His Master." He was bad, but said something good! Has someone here broken away from his Old Master? Or, are you servants of Jesus and not Satan? If so, "now is the accepted time." Ah! But, you say, "**I've grown old and gray and have lived in sin for all my years!**" Or, "**I am too young!**" But, "now is the accepted time." Or, "**I've refused the invitation a thousand times.**" Still the grace of God says, "now is the accepted time."

Finally, Mathew 16:3 proclaims clearly, "And in the morning, it will be foul weather today; for the sky is red and lowering. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

Are you discerning the "signs of the times?" It's later than you think! What are you waiting for? Now, therefore, come forward, bow before the throne of Grace and... pray.

"Now Is The Accepted Time. Now Is The Day Of Salvation." Amen.

John Theodorou, U.S.A.

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*"Father,
Forgive Them;
For They Know
Not What
They Do!"*

Luke 23:34

These familiar words were spoken at Calvary a little less than 2000 years ago. Who Did Jesus ask to be forgiven by this statement? Was it the Roman soldiers? Was it the Jewish leaders? Was it the Gentiles? The common folk? The simple people?

While it is true that He did ask His Father to forgive all the people who were physically present at His crucifixion, is it not also true that we are all guilty of placing Jesus on the cross and thus the prayer is meant for us also? What a wonderful thought. Jesus died to redeem us from our sins. We do not have to carry that burden any more.

CALVARY

Let us take a closer look at the scene at Calvary.

"The Saviour made no murmur of complaint. His face remained calm and serene, but great drops of sweat stood upon His brow. . . . While the soldiers were doing their fearful work, Jesus prayed for His enemies, 'Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" DA 744

"That prayer of Christ for His enemies embraced the world. It took in every sinner that had lived or should live, from the beginning of the world to the end of time. Upon all rests the guilt of crucifying the Son of God. To all, forgiveness is freely offered. 'Whosoever will' may have peace with God, and inherit eternal life." DA 745

"Whenever we sin, Christ is wounded afresh. For us He lifts His pierced hands before the Father's throne, and says, 'Forgive them; for they know not what they do.'" SJ 142

We've heard this many times. Has it become a theory or a doctrine for us or does it still touch some sensitive chord in our hearts when we hear it?

Continuing Further...

"His mind passed from His own suffering to the sin of His persecutors, and the terrible retribution that would be theirs. No curses were called down upon the soldiers who were handling Him so roughly. No vengeance was invoked upon the priests and rulers, who were gloating over the accomplishment of their purpose. Christ pitied them in their ignorance and guilt. He breathed only a plea for their forgiveness,--'for they know not what they do.'

"Had they known that they were putting to torture One who had come to save the sinful race from eternal ruin, they would have been seized with remorse and horror. But their ignorance did not remove their guilt; for it was their privilege to know and accept Jesus as their Saviour. Some of them would yet see their sin, and repent, and be converted." DA 744

We need to frequently contemplate and dwell upon these themes. Jesus was our perfect example and He encourages us to follow in

His footsteps. We must learn this forgiveness because it is not an easy road that we are asked to travel. Jesus said "The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." John 15:20. And also, "because ye are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hateth you." John 15:18. And even more difficult is when close friends and family turn against you for the truth's sake. "And a man's foes shall be they of his own household." Matthew 10:36.

But yet in the midst of all this opposition and persecution, we are to learn forgiveness as Jesus taught and practiced, even as often as "seventy times seven." Mat. 18:22.

"Christ is our example. He placed Himself at the head of the human family to accomplish a work the importance of which men do not comprehend because they do not realize the privileges and possibilities before them as members of the human family of God. . . His mercy was not weakness, but a terrible power to punish sin. . . yet a power to draw to it the love of humanity. Through Christ Justice is enabled to forgive without sacrificing one jot of its exalted holiness.

"Christ taught us to pray, 'Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors,' and added, 'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive your trespasses.'" SD 153

This is the key. If we want to be forgiven by our heavenly Father, we must learn to forgive our fellow man

JOSEPH – family

In the Bible we can read many stories of faithful men who learned to forgive as Jesus forgave. We can learn from these examples.

The first example I want to address is the story of Joseph. Most of us are familiar with this story. In this story we see an example of the verse quoted in the last section, Matthew 10:36. "A man's foes shall they be of his own household." Many families have been broken due to a lack of forgiveness. Divorces occur, siblings get angry at each other, parents and children turn against each other. Society has become a mess. It has been said that the family is the building block of society. For this reason Satan is attacking and trying to divide as many families as possible. He has been very successful and this breakdown in families has significantly contributed to the chaos in society. Although family members may have hurt each other, (whether intentionally or unintentionally), the story of Joseph is a shining example of forgiveness and reconciliation.

"Then Joseph could not refrain himself before all them that stood by him; and he cried, Cause every man to go out from me. And there stood no man with him, while Joseph made himself known unto his brethren. And he wept aloud: and the Egyptians and the house of Pharaoh heard. And Joseph said unto his brethren, I [am]

Joseph; doth my father yet live? And his brethren could not answer him; for they were troubled at his presence. And Joseph said unto his brethren, Come near to me, I pray you. And they came near. And he said, I [am] Joseph your brother, whom ye sold into Egypt. Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life." Genesis 45:1-5.

What a beautiful example. Even though the brothers *were* guilty of selling Joseph, he did not place the blame on them at all. He had forgiven them long before. He knew by their words and actions that they had suffered many years because of the guilt of their sin and he did not want to place any more guilt on them. He explained that it was all in the providence of God. "It was God's design that through Joseph, Bible religion should be introduced among the Egyptians." YI Mar 11/97. What wonderful love and forgiveness. They had acted rashly in their youthful anger, not thinking of the consequences for their father and the guilty conscience they would have to live with for years. What a relief to have been forgiven by Joseph. If only all families today would learn from this example, what an improvement we would see in society.

DAVID – KING Saul – corrupt leader

David was King in Israel. He was God's anointed leader of His nation. Of David it is written, "I have found David the [son] of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, which shall fulfil all my will." Acts 13:22

Before David became King he was hunted as a wild animal. He had become a fugitive and, on two separate occasions, he had the opportunity to do harm to his enemy. His faithful friends encouraged him to put an end to the life of the man who was seeking his own life. "And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily. And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt. And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he [is] the anointed of the LORD." 1 Samuel 24:4-6

Although King Saul was a corrupt leader, and had proven himself wholly unfit to hold that position, David refused to lift his hand and harm the Lord's anointed leader. He would let God decide when it was time to remove Saul and place himself on the throne. I'm sure he didn't understand why the Lord allowed all these circumstances, permitting this man to remain on the throne so long, however, he refused to take matters into his own hands. He would wait on the Lord to sort matters out. "Those who seek to turn aside the purpose of God, and oppose his will, may appear for a time to prosper; but God is at work to fulfil his own purposes, and he will make manifest who is the ruler of the heavens and the earth." {YI, March

11, 1897 par. 2} David harboured no animosity in his heart for this man who was partially insane and not thinking clearly, who was seeking to take his (David's) life. He did not rejoice when King Saul finally perished, but rather he wept bitterly at his death and gave him an honourable burial. What kind of man can have this kind of forgiveness? Only through Christ is this possible. One who has allowed God to give him a new heart. The promise is that "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh." Ezek. 36:26. 24:17. "Rejoice not when thine enemy falleth, and let not thine heart be glad when he stumbleth: Proverbs 24:17. The forgiving heart of God will have this kind of love that will not rejoice when their enemy stumbles.

KING DAVID – Shimei – Subject in Kingdom

When David was finally king, he ran into trouble with his son Absalom, which resulted in him fleeing from Jerusalem. During his flight he ran into one of King Saul's kinsmen, who was not very supportive of the king in his plight. Here was the king of one of the mightiest nations on earth, the "man after God's own heart," being so abusively treated.

"And when king David came to Bahurim, behold, thence came out a man of the family of the house of Saul, whose name [was] Shimei, the son of Gera: he came forth, and cursed still as he came. And he cast stones at David, and at all the servants of king David: and all the people and all the mighty men [were] on his right hand and on his left. And thus said Shimei when he cursed, Come out, come out, thou bloody man, and thou man of Belial: The LORD hath returned upon thee all the blood of the house of Saul, in whose stead thou hast reigned; and the LORD hath delivered the kingdom into the hand of Absalom thy son: and, behold, thou [art taken] in thy mischief, because thou [art] a bloody man." 2 Samuel 19:5-8

This relative of King Saul was blatantly disrespectful of God's anointed leader. What a contrast from the way David had treated King Saul previously. This abuse did not sit well with David's nephews, who were leaders in the army. They wanted justice done for they did not believe that this was appropriate action on the part of this man. In almost any other nation on earth, Shimei would have met an instant death, but not with King David. David had learned forgiveness.

"Then said Abishai the son of Zeruiah unto the king, Why should this dead dog curse my lord the king? let me go over, I pray thee, and take off his head. And the king said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah? so let him curse, because the LORD hath said unto him, Curse David. Who shall then say, Wherefore hast thou done so? And David said to Abishai, and to all his servants, Behold, my son, which came forth of my bowels, seeketh my life: how much more now [may this] Benjamite [do it]? let him alone, and let him curse; for the LORD hath bidden him. It may be that the LORD will look on mine affliction, and that the LORD will requite

me good for his cursing this day. And as David and his men went by the way, Shimei went along on the hill's side over against him, and cursed as he went, and threw stones at him, and cast dust. "2 Samuel 16:9-13

Was David acting like a floor mat for others to walk all over? Perhaps he was a little too lenient with Absalom, which resulted in this trouble. Although he was a man of war, he was a man with a soft heart. He was raised in the countryside as a shepherd, tenderly caring for his sheep. If David had permitted this man's life to be taken, he would not have had an opportunity for repentance. Again, he was leaving matters to the Lord. When David was returning to Jerusalem, this man came and repented, fearing for his life for he knew that David had the power to take his life.

"And Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite, which [was] of Bahurim, hasted and came down with the men of Judah to meet king David. And [there were] a thousand men of Benjamin with him, and Ziba the servant of the house of Saul, and his fifteen sons and his twenty servants with him; and they went over Jordan before the king. And there went over a ferry boat to carry over the king's household, and to do what he thought good. And Shimei the son of Gera fell down before the king, as he was come over Jordan; And said unto the king, Let not my lord impute iniquity unto me, neither do thou remember that which thy servant did perversely the day that my lord the king went out of Jerusalem, that the king should take it to his heart. For thy servant doth know that I have sinned: therefore, behold, I am come the first this day of all the house of Joseph to go down to meet my lord the king." 2 Sam. 19:16-20.

And again, David's nephews wanted to kill this man, but David refused. "But Abishai the son of Zeruiah answered and said, Shall not Shimei be put to death for this, because he cursed the LORD'S anointed? And David said, What have I to do with you, ye sons of Zeruiah, that ye should this day be adversaries unto me? shall there any man be put to death this day in Israel? for do not I know that I [am] this day king over Israel? Therefore the king said unto Shimei, Thou shalt not die. And the king sware unto him." 1 Samuel 19:21-22. If he had been killed earlier he would not have had an opportunity to repent. David was a wise man, although some may have thought him a fool.

We need to learn to love our enemies, "But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you." Matt. 5:44. This David had learned to do.

STEPHEN – fellow believers

The experience of Stephen is a story of fellow believers turning against the faithful souls in the church. It was not the Romans who stoned Stephen. It was the Jewish leaders. Stephen was an elder in the church, caring for the widows and orphans. He was also a man with much wisdom and his fellow Jewish leaders did not like

being told that they were guilty of crucifying Jesus. They thought to silence him by stoning him.

Stephen held no animosity in his heart for these men. "And they stoned Stephen, calling upon [God], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep." Acts 7:59, 60

In the end of time, it is sad to say that our former brethren will be our greatest enemies. We need to be prepared for this and have the ability to forgive them as did Stephen.

"And at that time the superficial, conservative class, whose influence has steadily retarded the progress of the work, will renounce the faith, and take their stand with its avowed enemies, toward whom their sympathies have long been tending. These apostates will then manifest the most bitter enmity, doing all in their power to oppress and malign their former brethren, and to excite indignation against them." 5T 463. May God help us to be able to say "Father forgive them," and to really mean it from the bottom of our hearts.

ISAAC – worldly people

While living in the world we will daily be in contact with people who do not know the Lord. If they know of our faith and our standards, they may often test us to see if we will be true to our profession. If they know we are true and honest, it is possible that some may try to mistreat us or take advantage of us in business matters. What should we do in such instances? Fight for our rights? Although we need not let them continue to take advantage of us, we can peacefully walk away as did Isaac.

Isaac had learned great patience from his father and it was shown in his experience of the digging of the wells. The wells were rightfully his and God allowed these incidents to happen to test him. Isaac meekly forgave and quietly walked away, relocating to a new area.

"And Isaac digged again the wells of water, which they had digged in the days of Abraham his father; for the Philistines had stopped them after the death of Abraham: and he called their names after the names by which his father had called them. And Isaac's servants digged in the valley, and found there a well of springing water. And the herdmen of Gerar did strive with Isaac's herdmen, saying, The water [is] ours: and he called the name of the well Esek; because they strove with him. And they digged another well, and strove for that also: and he called the name of it Sitnah. And he removed from thence, and digged another well; and for that they strove not: and he called the name of it Rehoboth; and he said, For now the LORD hath made room for us, and we shall be fruitful in the land." Gen. 26:18-22

Water was a precious commodity and, although Isaac took the trouble to dig these wells, these worldly men forcibly took over.

Isaac's reaction was to walk away. They say it is more difficult to walk away from a fight, than it is to remain and fight. If he had fought for his rights, what would he have gained? Enemies, war, bloodshed, fear that someone may retaliate some day. But by his meekness and forgiveness what did he gain? Peace. Forgiveness always brings better results than retaliation.

ELISHA – worldly – open enemies

The experience of Elisha is another case when a man of God freely forgave those who were seeking his life. The Syrian soldiers were angry at Elisha for revealing their plans to the king of Israel. The Lord was the one who was actually revealing the secrets, but the Syrians were not believers in the true God and only thought of Elisha as their greatest enemy. Elisha was not afraid. God struck the Syrians with blindness and Elisha led them into the middle of the capital city of Israel. They could have been put to death, and the king was hoping to do so to these enemies, but Elisha had another important lesson to teach them; the lesson of forgiveness.

"And it came to pass, when they were come into Samaria, that Elisha said, LORD, open the eyes of these [men], that they may see. And the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and, behold, [they were] in the midst of Samaria. And the king of Israel said unto Elisha, when he saw them, My father, shall I smite [them]? shall I smite [them]? And he answered, Thou shalt not smite [them]: wouldest thou smite those whom thou hast taken captive with thy sword and with thy bow? set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink, and go to their master." 2 Kings 6:20-22. What did he gain? Peace for Israel from Syrian oppression. Peace cannot be sought through force or war. Elisha was trying to show the people that the only way to true peace is to show peace through forgiveness.

"Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Rom. 12:20, 21

WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

Learn to forgive as Jesus forgave. Should we only forgive when forgiveness is sought of us? When Jesus died and prayed to His Father, how many of those around Him were asking His forgiveness? Not one. What about Stephen? Did the Jewish leaders ask to be forgiven? No, yet Stephen forgave. Did the men who stole Isaac's wells seek forgiveness? There is no mention that they did.

The following paragraph is the key to true forgiveness. Read it several times over and let it sink into your mind. This is the true forgiveness of Jesus. If we want our sins forgiven, we must be willing to forgive others.

"Will you not, if any one has done you a wrong, and is too proud and stubborn to say to you, 'I repent,' go to the offender and say,

'I love you for Christ's sake, and I forgive you the injury you have done me'? Jesus will witness and approve of this deed of love; and as you do to others, it shall be done again to you." {SD 153.4}

If we cannot forgive, then self is alive. We are only thinking of ourselves and the harm done to ourselves. If we *are able* to forgive, then we are hiding in Christ and have the love of Christ in our hearts for perishing souls. The darts of the enemy are falling on Christ and not on us.

"We are to have a spirit of pity, of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. If they fail to repent and make confession, their sins will stand registered in the books above to confront them in the day of judgment; but if they say, "I repent," then . . . we are freely to forgive from the heart their trespasses against us." {SD 153.5}

"True happiness does not consist in the possession of wealth or position, but in the possession of a pure, clean heart, cleansed by obedience to the truth. . . . To everyone is given the opportunity to carry out the principles of heaven. The forgiving of injuries, not the avenging of them, is an exhibition of that wisdom which is true goodness. Christlike love for the men through whom the Lord has wrought is a manifestation of real transformation of character.

"The Son of God was rejected and despised for our sakes. Can you, in full view of the cross, beholding by the eye of faith the sufferings of Christ, tell your tale of woe, your trials? Can you nurse revenge of your enemies in your heart while the prayer of Christ comes from his pale and quivering lips for his revilers, his murderers,--"Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do?" {RH, August 2, 1881 par. 12}

WHEN HE WAS REVILED, HE REVILED NOT

"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps: Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed [himself] to him that judgeth righteously." 1 Peter 2:21-23

"How often we feel that we have been dealt with unjustly, that things have been said concerning us that were untrue, and that we have been set in a false light before others. When we are thus tried, we shall need to keep strict guard over our spirit and our words. We shall need to have the love of Christ, that we may not cherish an unforgiving spirit. **Let us not think that unless those who have injured us confess their wrongs, we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness.** We should not accumulate our grievances, holding them to our hearts until the one we think guilty has humbled his heart by repentance and confession." SD 144

"It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, **whether or not they confess their faults.**" MB 113

"However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries, but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God, so must we pardon those who have done evil to us. . . . When we are reviled, how strong is the temptation to revile in return, but in doing this we show ourselves as bad as the reviler. When tempted to revile, send up a silent prayer that God will give you His grace, and keep the tongue in silence. . . .

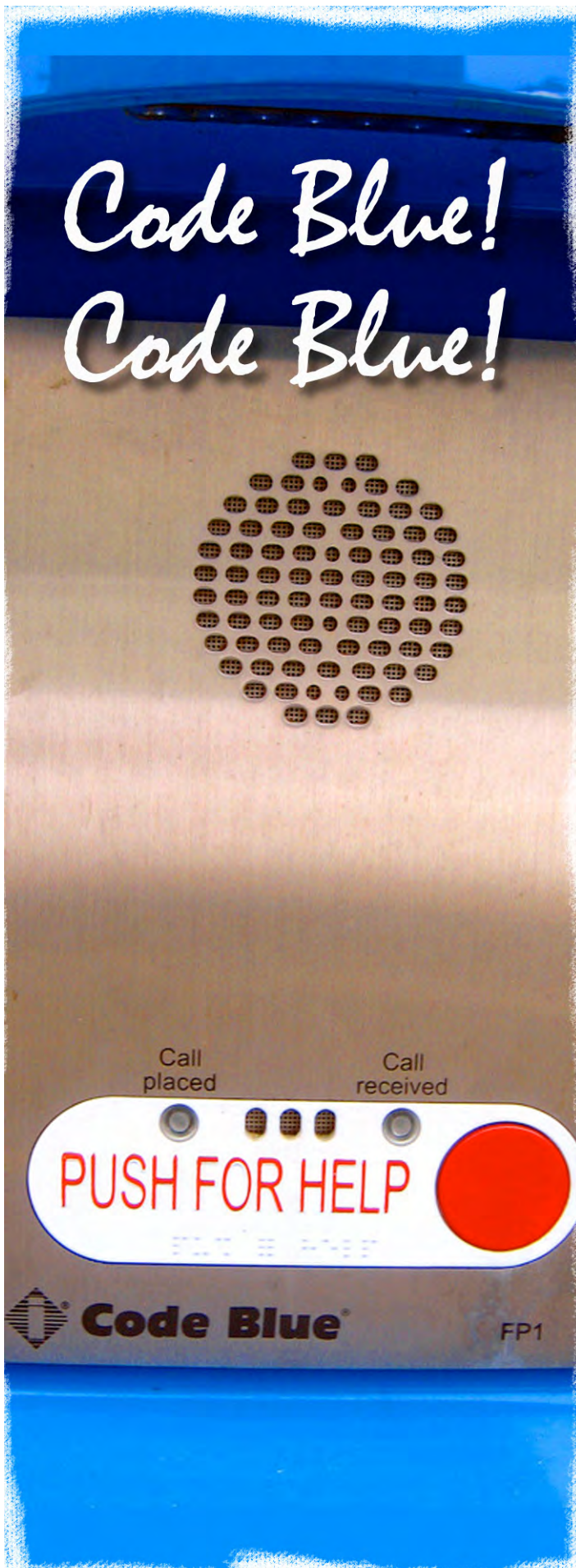
"Jesus has given us an example that we should follow in His steps, and manifest compassion and love and good-will toward all. Let us cultivate a kind spirit, a spirit of forbearance, and tender, pitying love toward those, who, when under temptation, have done us grievous wrongs. If possible, let us heal these wounds, and close the door of temptation by removing every barrier the wrongdoer has erected between himself and us. . . . The Lord delights to bestow His blessings upon those who will honor Him, who will acknowledge His mercy, and show that they appreciate His love to them by manifesting the same gracious characteristic to those around them." SD 144

"Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but [rather] give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance [is] mine; I will repay, saith the Lord." Rom. 12:19-21

May God help us to learn to put away our differences and learn what true forgiveness entails. It is only when the church is in perfect unity that the Latter Rain will fall on God's people. Those that cannot forgive will be shaken out before that time. It is my prayer that each one reading this would possess the true spirit of forgiveness and find that peace which heaven wishes to bestow upon them. **AMEN**

Wendy Eaton, Canada

If we cannot forgive, then self is alive.



Most of us at some point in time, having been in the hospital grounds are familiar with these words coming over the Hospital speaker system, resonating throughout the hospital, "CODE BLUE! CODE BLUE!"

What many of us may not know, it is a code calling a special emergency group of staff because someone's heart is stopping or has stopped. What you do not see are those said trained staff members rushing to the emergency unit hoping to resuscitate that individual, as it were to save that life. Blood is on hand. A special cart with every lifesaving device is also on hand.

Do you know that there is another group of people who are on the verge of death or clinically dead in the said hospital and NO code blue is sent out?

Why? Because there is a big sign at the top of their bed marked DNR. What does that mean? "Do Not Resuscitate". In other words they or their loved ones have requested that new life be not breathed into them. They do not want the life giving team to save them. This the doctor or nurses cannot override. It is a legally signed and binding document, so when they have a cardiac arrest or a life threatening situation they are left without any resuscitating aid, and death occurs shortly thereafter.

In a spiritual setting did you know that there are millions of people that are dying right now with an invisible DNR sign about their neck? Jesus the Great Physician and life giver can only look on; and while He wants to help, there is nothing He can do but wait to pronounce them eternally dead. Then the sting of the second death inevitably destroys or annihilates them forever. Why? Because the DNR order was there.

Are you one of them? Do you know that as it stands, not making the necessary provisions now, you can be deemed as having a kind of DNR in place? All you need to do is to remove the DNR order and instead of "Code Blue," it will automatically trigger a CODE RED. Why, because Jesus' blood was shed and is in place waiting for the go ahead. Jesus will not send another person. He personally will come to your aid.

Actually something very amazing will take place; your old heart will not be resuscitated. He promises: "a new heart will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh and I will give you an heart of flesh;" (Isaiah 36: 26) that is, one that is now clean, one that is softened, that can receive His love and give love, one that can forgive, one that is pliable that His Spirit can work with.

The whole host of heaven will be looking down in that operating room as the "Great Physician removes your old heart, after which there will be joy over you. You will not just be given flowers, but more than that. You will be given a wonderful gift--"eternal life"

As you lay on your sin sick bed of hopelessness, dying in your

trespasses and sins, He promises you something else, that you will walk. Note the following verse: "I will put my spirit within you and cause you to WALK in my statutes..." (Ezek. 36: 27) Amazing! Many a person who went into cardiac arrest survived because that resuscitation provision was there--they lived and walked out of there.

Jesus says "I am the resurrection and the life". No wonder He is the great Physician.

Dear Reader, He will answer to any CODE RED. All it takes is a whisper. He will hear the heart's cry as "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" remarked King David as he received his new heart. (Psalm 51:17)

Yes Jesus will indeed come, after which His heavenly team, who will rejoice because one sinner repents that was lost, that was on the verge of eternal destruction.

His RED blood will heal you. Essentially that is what CODE RED means.

Do you know what is even more remarkable? You do not have to be in a hospital. Right where you are you can be operated on. Just take away that DNR sign that only the Lord sees. Just say "Lord Jesus, operate. Please take away this stony bad heart and give me a new heart. Let Your life flowing power throb in me as I am dying in my sins. Oh, please forgive me of all my past sins. I believe that if I continue with this changed heart I will have this promised eternal life--that is, I will not have to die the second death. Please come today! **CODE RED! CODE RED!**

NB: He operates on professed Christians as well. It's up to you. **Amen**

Rose Powell, Canada

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"Prophetic Sketches of the Remnant Church"

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Arrival Thursday 9th evening

What was the origin of the great apostasy? How did the church first depart from the simplicity of the gospel? By conforming to the practices of paganism, to facilitate the acceptance of Christianity by the heathen. The apostle Paul declared, even in his day, "The mystery of iniquity doth already work." 2 Thessalonians 2:7. During the lives of the apostles the church remained comparatively pure. But "toward the latter end of the second century most of the churches assumed a new form; the first simplicity disappeared, and insensibly, as the old disciples retired to their graves, their children, along with new converts, . . . came forward and new-modeled the cause."--Robert Robinson, Ecclesiastical Researches, ch. 6, par. 17, p. 51. {GC 384.5}

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Grace: Divine Assistance

What is Grace and what does it do?

The grace of God is very often absent from the lives of the very people who profess to be God's people.

*Often the question arises, Why, then, are there so many, claiming to believe God's word, in whom there is not seen a reformation in words, in spirit, and in character? Why are there so many who cannot bear opposition to their purposes and plans, who manifest an unholy temper, and whose words are harsh, overbearing, and passionate? There is seen in their lives the same love of self, the same selfish indulgence, the same temper and hasty speech, that is seen in the life of the worldling. There is the same sensitive pride, the same yielding to natural inclination, the same perversity of character, as if the truth were wholly unknown to them. The reason is that they are not converted. They have not hidden the leaven of truth in the heart. It has not had opportunity to do its work. Their natural and cultivated tendencies to evil have not been submitted to its transforming power. **Their lives reveal the absence of the grace of Christ**, an unbelief in His power to transform the character. {COL 99.1}*

Bible grace is a topic upon which there is often shallow understanding. In the minds of many, grace is some sort of ill-defined goodness.

Grace is here defined. *Grace is unmerited favor. {AG 183.2}* Grace is undeserving favour shown to sinners as described in *Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.* More than that, the dictionary defines grace as: *favour of God, **divine regenerating** and inspiring influence {Oxford dictionary}* or as: **unmerited divine assistance given humans for their regeneration or sanctification** {Merriam Websters Online Dictionary}

To regenerate means to make new again or to be born again. Regeneration takes place through the agency of the Holy Spirit as can be seen in *Titus 3:5 "Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost."*

The divine assistance God provides humans comes via the Holy Spirit. In *Hebrews 10:29* the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of grace. Jesus imparts to his people the Spirit of grace to assist them to be regenerated or to be renewed in the mind. *Romans 12:2 "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."*

It is natural for sin to abound in fallen human beings. *Romans 5:20 "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound."* That is to say, where sin abounds in the human, divine assistance to renew the mind is much more abounding. God can give us abundant divine assistance in order that we may be free from sin. *"Abundant grace has been provided that the believing soul may be kept free from sin."* {AG 181.4}

John 3:8 "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit." The Spirit of grace, like the wind, works imperceptibly to renew the mind, to change the character, and to perfect the soul. We can't see this happening. But the effects of it working can be seen. It can be seen when the soul no longer continues a life of sin. Grace is doing its work.

Indulgent Grace

God's grace is not given to indulge us in sin. *Romans 5:20* "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: "What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid." *Romans 6:1, 2*. Shall we continue a life of sinful habits and practices when the Holy Spirit has been made so abundantly available to change our minds and transform our character? God forbid.

The Holy Spirit assists us to be sanctified and renewed so that we do not continue in sin. Jesus saves us from our sins not in our sins. God's grace is not indulgent.

The word "indulgent" can be exemplified by something introduced into the church in the middle ages called indulgences. Indulgences were a means of grace sold by vendors.

The doctrine and the sale of indulgences were powerful incentives to evil among an ignorant people. True, according to the Church, indulgences could benefit those only who promised to amend their lives, and who kept their word. But what could be expected from a tenet invented solely with a view to the profit that might be derived from it? The vendors of indulgences were naturally tempted, for the better sale of their merchandise, to present their wares to the people in the most attractive and seducing aspect. The learned themselves did not fully understand the doctrine. All that the multitude saw in them was, that they permitted men to sin; and the merchants were not over eager to dissipate an error so favorable to their sale. - J. H. Merle D'Aubigne, History of the Reformation, p. 18.

The multitude saw indulgences as a permit to sin, a license to sin. They could sin and purchase a certificate from the church that permitted that sin. Indulgences were well named because they indulged the people further in sin. The people thought they could continue a life of sin and that the means of grace provided by the church would allow them to do so.

However, the grace of the Bible does not indulge in sin. The grace of the Bible frees us from a life of continued sin by the regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit. *Romans 6:1, 2* "Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid."

Fallen from Grace

We profess to keep the law of God. Thus many accuse us of trying

to be saved by works of the law. By contrast they say they are saved by grace. The following texts are used to support the accusation: *Galatians 5:4* "Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." *Galatians 2:16* "Knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law, but by the faith of Jesus Christ."

Does this accusation have any merit? What were the Galatians doing that Apostle Paul addressed in the book of Galatians?

Galatians 3:2, 3. "This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are ye so foolish? having begun in the Spirit, are ye now made perfect by the flesh?"

The Galatians had received the Spirit of grace that would assist them to be sanctified or renewed in the mind. They had begun that way. It says, "having begun in the Spirit." But now they had fallen from grace. They were trying to be perfect by the flesh. They were trying to be sanctified by their own works without divine assistance, without the Spirit of grace.

Nicodemus had been doing the same. Jesus said to Nicodemus, "you must be born again. You need the regeneration and renewal of divine grace." *John 3:5, 6*. "Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit."

Those who accuse us as having fallen from grace believe we are doing as the Galatians did, trying to be perfect by the flesh. We may fall from grace if we try and keep the law in our own flesh without divine assistance. By the flesh alone, without the Spirit, we can never keep the law of God. We will always fail in some aspect.

On the other hand, God's grace is given to free us from sin, which by definition is the transgression of God's law *1 John 3:4*. "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law." The Spirit of grace works to free us from transgression. Divine assistance is given in order that we may keep the law of God. This teaching is found in *Romans 8:4* "That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit."

Those who say they are saved by grace yet reject the law of God are involved in a presumptuous mistake. *Romans 5:20* "Shall we continue in sin (shall we continue in transgression of God's law), that grace may abound?" *Romans 6:2* "God forbid."

Two Great Deceptions

There are two great deceptions arising from a misunderstanding of Bible grace. "It [the fallen church] is prepared for two classes of mankind, embracing nearly the whole world--those who would be

saved by their merits, and those who would be saved in their sins.”
{GC 572.2}

There are those who would be saved by their merits. They believe that the works of their own flesh are sufficient for salvation. They therefore work without the assistance of divine grace. They are like the fallen Galatians. They are like Paul before his conversion. They work without the Spirit of grace. *Philippians 3:4 “Though 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.”*

Additionally there are those who would be saved in their sins. They have not discovered the real grace of God. They continue in transgression yet they presume that some form of grace will save them. Fallen churches offer indulgent grace; they readily accept it, meanwhile they are continuing their lives as before. No real change is wrought by the Spirit of grace. Some in this class could be described as in *2 Timothy 3:4, 5 “lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.”*

Conclusion

Jesus saves us from sin. Even in this life He is working to save us from it. He has made grace abundantly available to mankind for that very purpose. It is available at this very moment to any soul who sincerely desires to no longer continue a life of sin. The Spirit of grace is willing to come to us to render the divine assistance that is needful in overcoming sin. **AMEN**

Glendon Higgins, Australia

"It Is Not for You to Know the Times and the Seasons."

"He showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen of them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God: and, being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence. When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power."

The disciples were anxious to know the exact time for the revelation of the kingdom of God; but Jesus tells them that they may not know the times and the seasons; for the Father has not revealed them. To understand when the kingdom of God should be restored, was not the thing of most importance for them to know. They were to be found following the Master, praying, waiting, watching, and working. They were to be representatives to the world of the character of Christ. That which was essential for a successful Christian experience in the days of the disciples, is essential in our day. "And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power. But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you." And after the Holy Ghost was come upon them, what were they to do? "And ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost parts of the earth."

This is the work in which we also are to be engaged. Instead of living in expectation of some special season of excitement, we are wisely to improve present opportunities, doing that which must be done in order that souls may be saved. Instead of exhausting the powers of our mind in speculations in regard to the times and seasons which the Lord has placed in his own power, and withheld from men, we are to yield ourselves to the control of the Holy Spirit, to do present duties, to give the bread of life, unadulterated with human opinions, to souls who are perishing for the truth.

Satan is ever ready to fill the mind with theories and calculations that will divert men from the present truth, and disqualify them for the giving of the third angel's message to the world. It has ever been thus; for our Saviour often had to speak reprovingly to those who indulged in speculations and were ever inquiring into those things which the Lord had not revealed. Jesus had come to earth to impart important truth to men, and he wished to impress their minds with the necessity of receiving and obeying his precepts and instructions, of doing their present duty, and his communications were of an order that imparted knowledge for their immediate and daily use.

Jesus said: "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent." All that was done and said had this one object in view,—to rivet truth in their minds that they might attain unto everlasting life. Jesus did not come to astonish men with some great announcement of some special time when some great event would occur, but he came to instruct and save the lost. He did not come to arouse and gratify curiosity; for he knew that this would but increase the appetite for the curious and the marvelous. It was his aim to impart knowledge whereby men might increase in spiritual strength, and advance in the way of obedience and true holiness. He gave only such instruction as could be appropriated to the needs of their daily life, only such truth as could be given to others for the same appropriation. He did not make new revelations to men, but opened to their understanding truths that had long been obscured or misplaced through the false teaching of the priests and teachers. Jesus replaced the gems of divine truth in their proper setting, in the order in which they had been given to patriarchs and prophets. And after giving them this precious instruction, he promised to give them the Holy Spirit whereby all things that he had said unto them should be brought to their remembrance.

We are in continual danger of getting above the simplicity of the gospel. There is an intense desire on the part of many to startle the world with something original, that shall lift the people into a state of spiritual ecstasy, and change the present order of experience. There is certainly great need of a change in the present order of experience; for the sacredness of present truth is not realized as it should be, but the change we need is a change of heart, and can only be obtained by seeking God individually for his blessing, by pleading with him for his power, by fervently praying that his grace may come upon us, and that our characters may be transformed. This is the change we need today, and for the attainment of this experience we should exercise persevering energy and manifest heart-felt earnestness. We should ask with true sincerity, "What shall I do to be saved?" We should know just what steps we are taking heavenward.

Christ gave to his disciples truths whose breadth and depth and value they little appreciated, or even comprehended, and the same condition exists among the people of God today. We too have failed to take in the greatness, to perceive the beauty of the truth which God has intrusted to us today. Should we advance in spiritual knowledge, we would see the truth developing and expanding in lines of which we have little dreamed, but it will never develop in any line that will lead us to imagine that we may know the times and the seasons which the Father hath put in his own power. Again and again have I been warned in regard to time-setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ. *RH March 22, 1892. E. G. White*

THE CAPTAIN WAS CONVINCED



CHILDREN'S CORNER

"I have been thinking that it's time we visited our friends at Topsham," James White said to his young bride one day.

Ellen was pleased with the suggestion. Early Friday morning James hitched the horse to the family sleigh, and they drove thirty miles to study the Bible with their friends. On Sabbath they met in the Curtiss home. They were glad to see among their old friends a retired sea captain named Joseph Bates. This man had heard Ellen relate her visions, but he was not certain they were from the Lord. He did not believe in modern visions.

Christians in those days heard much about the Mormon "prophet" Joseph Smith, and about Ann Lee, leader of the Shakers, both of whom claimed that God had sent an angel to talk with them. But the visions of these two were very different from visions given God's prophets in Bible times. Their teachings were contrary to the Word of God.

Because of these errors, many people were wary of anyone professing to have visions. They said God might have spoken to Isaiah, Daniel, John, and the other prophets in Bible times, but He did not speak to His people in that way nowadays. Ministers told their congregations that visions from heaven were a thing of the past.

But some Bible students believed God was still speaking to His people by visions, just as He had promised to do in the last days. Surely, they thought, while Satan is sending his angels to deceive men, God would be sending messages from heaven to warn and guide His church.

During the meeting in the Curtiss home Ellen White was given a vision, and Joseph Bates watched her intently. He was an honest man who wanted to know the truth. A bright smile was on her face as she moved about in the room, seeming to see something in the distance. Then he heard her speaking. But how strange! How wonderful! He could hardly believe his eyes and ears—she was speaking, but not breathing! In soft, musical tones, she was describing what she saw.

"I see four moons," she said. She spoke of seeing several planets,

one encircled with beautifully coloured belts or rings.

Captain Bates suddenly forgot he did not believe in visions.

"She's looking at Jupiter!" he said. As she went on describing what she saw, he said, "That's Saturn she's describing!" And later, "Now she's viewing Uranus!" She had not named any particular planet, but the seaman Joseph Bates had for years studied the heavens and read books about the stars. He knew what she was talking about.

After a time she began to describe the "opening heavens," an entrance into a more glorious region beyond, ablaze with light.

Captain Bates sprang to his feet. "How I wish Lord William Rosse were here!"

"Who is Lord William Rosse?" James White asked.

"He is the great English astronomer," came the enthusiastic reply. "I wish he could hear that woman talk astronomy, and hear her description of the 'opening heavens.' It's ahead of anything I ever read on the subject."

From that time Joseph Bates never doubted that Mrs. White's visions were supernatural; and as he compared their teachings with the Bible, he was convinced that the messages she brought were not her own, but the voice of God to His people.

At one time before this vision, Captain Bates had tried to discuss astronomy with Ellen but had found her unfamiliar with the subject. He knew she was telling the truth when now she said she had never opened an astronomy book. He also felt impressed that God had given this vision in his presence so that he might never doubt again.

In his study of the Scriptures, Captain Bates had learned that Jesus and His disciples did not change the Christian Sabbath from Saturday, the seventh day of the week, to Sunday, the first day, but that the change had been made by church leaders many years after Christ's ascension. He wrote a pamphlet giving his

reasons for believing that all Christians should keep the Sabbath of the commandment, but he had no money to pay for having it published.

When he retired from the sea, he sold his ship for \$11,000. He was considered a rich man for those days; but now he was poor, for he had spent his entire fortune in spreading the Advent message. However, the printer agreed to print the Sabbath tract and wait for his pay. When the tract was off the press, the bill was paid by a friend who concealed his identity, and Elder Bates had the pamphlet to pass out freely. He handed one copy to James White. (The retired sea captain was often called "Elder Bates" because he spent so much time preaching and giving Bible studies.)

James and Ellen read it very carefully. Perhaps Elder Bates was right! They must know exactly what the Bible said, for they certainly wanted to obey God in all things.

The pamphlet was printed in such small type that Mrs. White could not read it. It hurt her eyes and made her head ache. James would read a paragraph aloud, and then they would look up the texts; for although the pamphlet was small, it was packed full of Bible verses. Often while studying, James and Ellen would kneel and ask God to send His Holy Spirit, as He had promised, to guide them into the truth.

Their study convinced them that Jesus had never said anything about changing the rest day from the seventh to the first day of the week. Neither Jesus nor His disciples ever kept Sunday or taught others to keep it.

Again and again they read how God, after creating the world, blessed the seventh day and made it holy and gave it to Adam and Eve and all the people who should live in the world to remind them of His creative power. And they read texts stating that the Sabbath was to be a sign between God and His people forever. When James and Ellen understood how important the Sabbath was, they began observing it at once.

The cold winter passed and spring came. Often the Whites met with their friends at Topsham. Ellen has written about a vision she was given early that spring during a Bible study in the Howland home:

"As we prayed, the Holy Spirit fell upon us. We were very happy. Soon I was lost to earthly things, and was wrapped in a vision of God's glory." Then, she said, "an angel carried me from this earth to the Holy City. With Jesus I entered the temple in heaven.

"I passed into the Most Holy Place. There I saw the golden ark. . . . Jesus raised the cover of the ark, and I saw the tables of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments.

"I was surprised to see a soft halo of light encircling the fourth commandment, calling my special attention to it, and making it

shine brighter than any of the other nine."

Mrs. White studied carefully to see if the commandment had been changed. Did it say, "Remember the first day of the week to keep it holy?" She was sure that if God had changed the Sabbath He would have changed the writing on the tables of stone in the ark in heaven. But it still read, "The seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord thy God," the same as when God engraved it on tablets of stone for Moses to place inside the sacred ark.

James and Ellen and the other Adventist people had not started keeping the Sabbath because Joseph Bates was preaching it, but because they had learned it themselves by carefully studying the Bible. And now God had given this vision to assure them that they understood the Scriptures correctly, and that it was their duty to obey the fourth commandment and to teach others to obey it. Mrs. White wrote out the vision and the angel's instruction.

He told her that God has many children who keep the first day of the week because they believe that Jesus and His disciples changed the Sabbath. In these last days when great troubles are coming upon the earth, the Sabbath truth is being taught more fully. Many sincere Christians are giving up their man-made Sabbath and are beginning to keep God's holy day.

Someday soon this will bring them great persecution and suffering. Sabbathkeepers will be accused of causing the world's troubles. But Jesus will be with His loyal people; and before the final destruction of the world, He will come and save them.



Yours in the blessed hope
Joseph Bates



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OUR NEIGHBOURS

**Somebody near you is struggling alone
Over life's desert sand;
Faith, hope, and courage together are gone;
Reach him a helping hand;
Turn on his darkness a beam of your light;
Kindle, to guide him, a beacon fire bright;
Cheer his discouragement, soothe his affright,
Lovingly help him to stand.**

**Somebody near you is hungry and cold;
Send him some aid today;
Somebody near you is feeble and old,
Left without human stay.
Under his burdens put hands kind and strong;
Speak to him tenderly, sing him a song;
Haste to do something to help him along
Over his weary way.**

**Dear one, be busy, for time fleeth fast,
Soon it will all be gone;
Soon will our season of service be past,
Soon will our day be done.
Somebody near you needs now a kind word;
Some one needs help, such as you can afford;
Haste to assist in the name of the Lord;
There may be a soul to be won.**