

The Reformation **Messenger**

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



"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." Luke 12:6,7

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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Crocuses in spring

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Messenger

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Character And Reputation



There is a Bible text that is usually given to young people as an encouragement for them to be real followers of Jesus and an example in their churches. “*Let no man despise thy youth, but be thou an **example of the believers**, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.*” (1 Timothy 4:12). It is easier to be an example to the people in the world because we do not do certain things they do and do not have certain habits they have, but it is not so easy to be a light among believers who have very high expectations.

We all know that we should be a light in this world and that every single thing we say or do has an influence for good or for bad upon others and is weighed in the heavenly balance. Therefore, it is very important to be an example, but we cannot pretend what we are not; we cannot hide what we really are. Our character will be revealed sooner or later, either through our words, acts or gestures. To be a follower of Jesus is to enter a character-building school under the supervision of the best Teacher so that we can become naturally kind, merciful, loving.

But, what did this heavenly Teacher once tell His disciples? “*Woe unto you, when all men speak well of you.*” (Luke 6:26). How come Jesus does not tell them, “Pay attention to what you do and say, keep up your reputation so that nobody has anything to say against you?” Should not these be the words of a teacher to his students? Instead, He says, “*Woe to you when all men speak well of you.*” Is this not a contradiction to what Paul tells Timothy?

The one topic we should like to consider today is character and reputation. These are two very different things. God is interested in our character, but people care about our reputation. Character is what we really are while reputation is what other people think we are. A person can have a bad character and a good reputation and vice-versa. Some people appear to be much better than they really are, while others are better than what they appear to be. Most people are more concerned about their reputation than about their character; and sometimes we ourselves as believers are more concerned about what others may think about us than whether we reflect the love of Jesus. The pursuit of a good reputation as an only goal may lead to compromises that can be detrimental to our spiritual life and jeopardize our salvation.

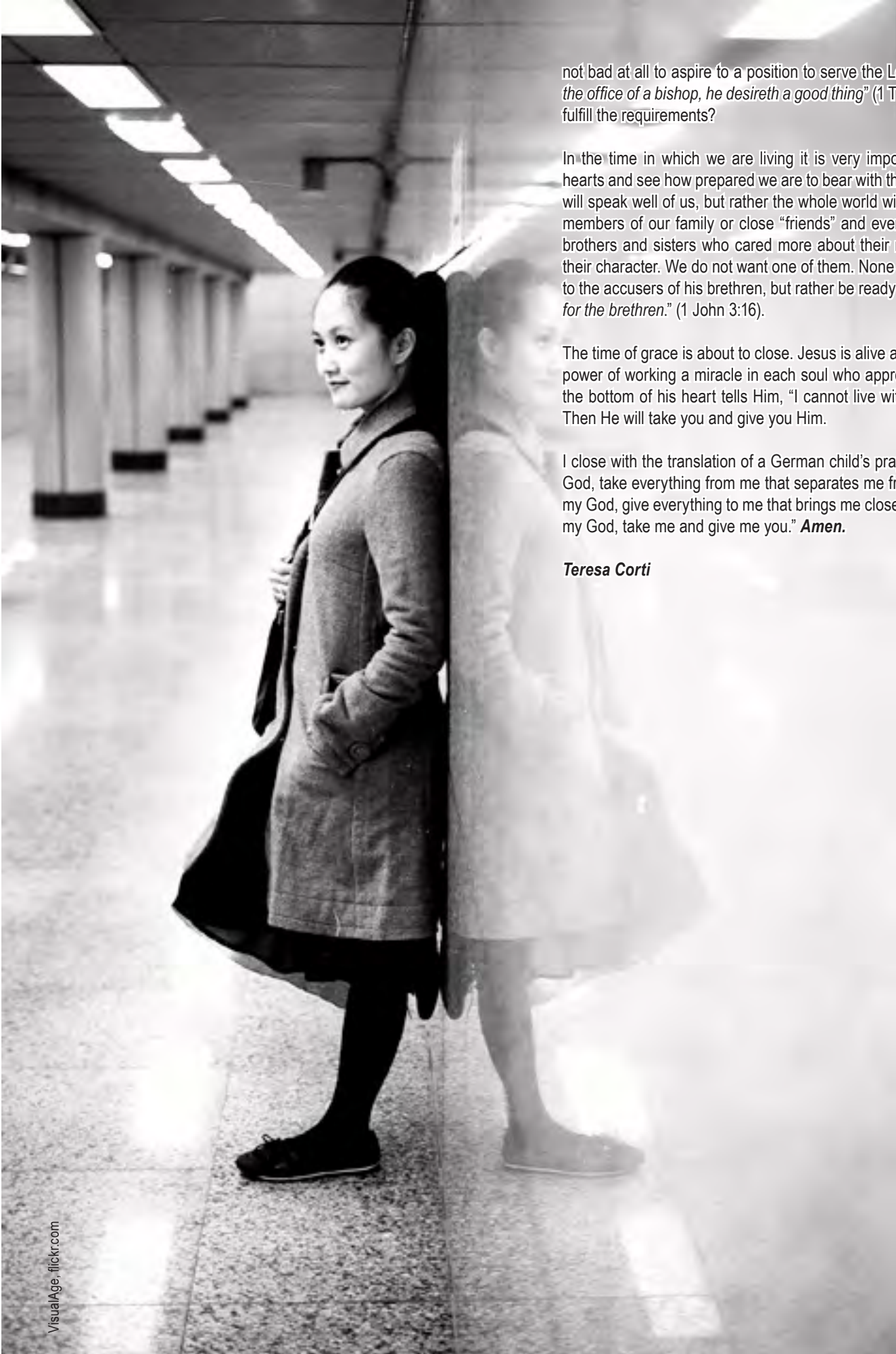
Our happiness does not depend on what people think we are, but on

what we really are. Reputation is measured by big deeds, while character is seen in little things. Reputation speaks to the eyes, but character can move hearts. The Pharisees were well-reputed men; they behaved properly, dressed properly, spoke the right words, smiled at the right time (if they ever did), while Jesus’ disciples were rough men, without such good manners and some of them were called “the sons of thunder” because of their explosive temperaments. Is it pleasant to live with someone with a fiery temperament? In Proverbs 21:19, we read, “*It is better to live in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman*” (read also man). Was it easy for Jesus to live among His disciples? He was certainly tested all the time and it is a real wonder that He did not sin. He was fully under the control of the Holy Spirit dwelling in Him. But who really got on Jesus’ nerves? Not so much His disciples, but the Pharisees.

In chapter 23 of Matthew we can read harsh words spoken by Jesus to the Pharisees. We do not see the sweet and soft-spoken Jesus that we imagine Him to be. He always responds to the Pharisees’ accusations of His deeds of love with the word “*hypocrites*”. Did Jesus ever express anger against His disciples? Yes, indeed. There was a time in which He was sick and tired of being with them and exclaimed “*O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you?*” (Matthew 17:17). What is it that exasperates Jesus on this occasion--His disciples’ character? No, but their unbelief. Jesus had given them all power to cure the sick, to cast out demons, but when the moment came for them to exercise that power in faith, they were unable to do it. Why? Because they were concerned about their position in order to obtain a reputation.

Who was the man with the most exemplary character upon this earth? Jesus. Did he have a good reputation? Indeed He did. Wherever He went people spoke of Him, of His deeds of mercy and love and the crowds followed Him. He was the light of this world, but He did not have a good reputation among the Pharisees. They could not stand His righteous character. Jesus was crucified because of His character. Why was Jesus not so concerned about His disciples’ character yet He was so angry about their lack of faith? Because He knew that He had the power to change their character if they only had faith and lived it out.

How is our faith? Have we allowed Him to change our character? Do we still have fits of temperament that cause others to fear or mistrust us? Do we still aspire to a position so that we may gain a good reputation? It is



not bad at all to aspire to a position to serve the Lord. *“If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desireth a good thing”* (1 Timothy 3:1), but do we fulfill the requirements?

In the time in which we are living it is very important to examine our hearts and see how prepared we are to bear with the fact that not all men will speak well of us, but rather the whole world will hate us, even some members of our family or close “friends” and even more painful, those brothers and sisters who cared more about their reputation than about their character. We do not want one of them. None of us wants to belong to the accusers of his brethren, but rather be ready *“to lay down our lives for the brethren.”* (1 John 3:16).

The time of grace is about to close. Jesus is alive and willing. He has the power of working a miracle in each soul who approaches Him and from the bottom of his heart tells Him, “I cannot live with myself any longer.” Then He will take you and give you Him.

I close with the translation of a German child’s prayer: “My Lord and my God, take everything from me that separates me from you. My Lord and my God, give everything to me that brings me closer to you. My Lord and my God, take me and give me you.” **Amen.**

Teresa Corti

Scripture Reading: *“Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end [is] it for you? the day of the Lord [is] darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him. [Shall] not the day of the Lord [be] darkness, and not light? even very dark, and no brightness in it? Amos 5:18 -20*

How well do you cope with things that go wrong in your life? When some gross disasters and catastrophes happen, do you cope? In your family conflicts, do you cope? When you are affected negatively financially or even with bankruptcy, do you cope? When you are mistreated by other human beings when they are nasty to you after you've been kind to them and you expect a bit of propriety, but you don't get it, do you cope? When circumstances are truly negative around you, how do you cope?

The message for this hour is “How to Cope in the Day of the Lord.” Do you fall apart temporarily when things go wrong? When difficulties surround you do you lose your cool? Do you get irate and frustrated? Our scripture reading describes dire experiences.

The day of the Lord is going to be a day of darkness and not light. It's going to be a situation according to verse 19 like you're being chased by a lion and as you're running for your life and you just manage to escape the lion's claws and you come around the corner and there is a bear. Then you run in another direction for your life and you're being chased by a bear and a lion and you run into the house and there is a serpent which bites you. After you've managed to escape all those dangers and now you're bitten by a serpent.

“Fear, and the pit, and the snare, [are] upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, [that] he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake. The earth is utterly broken down, the earth is clean dissolved, the earth is moved exceedingly. The earth shall reel to and fro like a drunkard, and shall be removed like a cottage; and the transgression thereof shall be heavy upon it; and it shall fall, and not rise again.” Isaiah 24:17 -20

Who does that include? Do you inhabit this earth?

Utter catastrophe in every respect is the day of the Lord. Reference is made also to Revelation with more descriptions of this terrible day.

“We hear now of earthquakes in divers places, of fires, of tempests, of disasters by sea and land, of pestilence, of famine. What weight do these signs have upon you? This is only the beginning of what shall be. The description of the day of God is given through John by the Revelator. The cry of the terror-stricken myriads has fallen upon the ear of John. ‘The great day of His wrath is come; and



How To Cope In The Day Of The Lord

who shall be able to stand?' The apostle himself was awed and overwhelmed." {TM 444.2}

Loved ones crushed under falling buildings. All their buildings they have labored for, they have worked for years to establish, are to be destroyed. Woe unto you who look forward to the day of the Lord. What is it in there for you? As we consider the context of these statements especially in Amos 5, as we consider the conditions we have been reading about and the lead up to it, how do you cope now? What sort of internal sensations are running through you now?

Consider the lead up to these horrors that are coming. Already the earthquakes and disasters are multiplying. One of the big disasters was the First and then the Second World War, then the Twin Towers, all the wars and bloodshed that are rampant around the world at this time. Horror. People have lost their ability to cope in those places.

"They hate him that rebuketh in the gate, and they abhor him that speaketh uprightly." Amos 5:10.

Those who speak uprightly who rebuke in their gate, what is their experience? They are being hated and abhorred.

"Forasmuch therefore as your treading [is] upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat: ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. For I know your manifold transgressions, and your mighty sins: they afflict the just, they take a bribe, and they turn aside the poor in the gate [from their right]. Therefore the prudent shall keep silence in that time; for it [is] an evil time." Amos 5:11 -13

This is the line up to it. An evil time even before the day of the Lord. The prudent need to understand how to behave as it's going to get worse.

"Therefore is judgment far from us, neither doth justice overtake us: we wait for light, but behold obscurity; for brightness, [but] we walk in darkness." Isa. 59:9

We hope for a better situation, we look for light but we get more darkness.

"We grope for the wall like the blind, and we grope as if [we had] no eyes: we stumble at noon day as in the night; [we are] in desolate places as dead [men]. We roar all like bears, and mourn sore like doves: we look for judgment, but [there is] none; for salvation, [but] it is far off from us." Isa. 59:10, 11

Can you identify? You are looking for a way out and there is nothing that relieves you by circumstance. Things seem to be getting worse and worse and we are suffering inside.

For our transgressions are multiplied before thee, and our sins testify against us: for our transgressions [are] with us; and [as for] our iniquities, we know them." Isa. 59:12

King David said my sin is always before me. Very depressing.

"In transgressing and lying against the Lord, and departing away from our God, speaking oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. And judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off: for truth is fallen in the street, and equity cannot enter. Yea, truth faileth; and he [that] departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw [it], and it displeased him that [there was] no judgment." Isa. 59:13-15.

We hope for a better situation, we look for light but we get more darkness. Can you identify? You are looking for a way out and there is nothing that relieves you by circumstance. Things seem to be getting worse and worse and we are suffering inside.

As you go for help in the courts of justice, there is none.

We see these things and we pray to God, "please change our circumstances," and nothing changes. Things get worse. Your own faults and sins come up before as you see cause to effect and you realize, it's been my own doing and it depresses you more. The more it depresses and you look for a way out and you can't see a way out. Indeed, this is the lead up to the day of the Lord. The final conflagration is worse still.

The final conflagration is just like Jacob's experience. His life since he left home wasn't getting better. He hoped to get a wife and he ended up with two. He hoped to have a happy home and it was constant conflict. Then on his way back, he was being met by Esau with an army. The Lord had promised him that things were going to be alright. Circumstances didn't testify. This is exactly the same for the people living up to the day of the Lord living now.

"For thus saith the Lord; We have heard a voice of trembling, of fear, and not of peace. Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? wherefore do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness? Alas! for that day [is] great, so that none [is] like it: it [is] even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it." Jer. 30:5-7.

Here is a little note: "But he shall be saved out of it." We'll deal with that soon but let it truly come into our understanding that the time of the final conflagration, the day of the Lord, is as serious for the believer as it is for the wicked. The line-up is already understood to some degree by us.

Let us read some of the detail that the time of Jacob's trouble, which includes: "As Satan accuses the people of God on account of their sins, the Lord permits him to try them to the uttermost. Their

confidence in God, their faith and firmness, will be severely tested. As they review the past, their hopes sink; for in their whole lives they can see little good. They are fully conscious of their weakness and unworthiness. Satan endeavors to terrify them with the thought that their cases are hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes so to destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations and turn from their allegiance to God." {GC 618.3}

While they are going through this terrible conscious hopelessness which Satan really stirs up, they go through this:

"Though God's people will be surrounded by enemies who are bent upon their destruction, yet the anguish which they suffer is not a dread of persecution for the truth's sake; they fear that every sin has not been repented of, and that through some fault in themselves they will fail to realize the fulfillment of the Saviour's promise: I "will keep thee from the hour of temptation, which shall come upon all the world." **Revelation 3:10.** If they could have the assurance of pardon they would not shrink from torture or death; but should they prove unworthy, and lose their lives because of their own defects of character, then God's holy name would be reproached." {GC 619.1}

Can you see the mental anguish? The enemies are who? It was Esau, his own brother, remember. It was his own brother that he had wronged.

"Kings, governors, and great men will hear of you through the reports of those who are at enmity with you, and your faith and character will be misrepresented before them." {Mar 253.2}

"Many will have to stand in the legislative courts; some will have to stand before kings and before the learned of the earth, to answer for their faith." {Mar 253.4}

Those who know you will report you. These men in high position don't know you. It is the people that you know, our friends, church members, people who know our mistakes and sins, they will report us. Can you imagine the mental pressure? They will report us and talk to the authorities about our sins. Our faith and character will be misrepresented.

"They will have the privilege of bringing the light before those who are called the great men of the earth, and if you have studied the Bible, if you are ready to give an answer to every man that asketh you of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear, your enemies will not be able to gainsay your wisdom." {Mar 253.2}

What? I'm being oppressed and overwhelmed by circumstances and I'm going to have to speak in my defense to the glory of God? These are all areas I can hardly cope with now, how do you like the idea of having to go into court for no fault of your own and you're overwhelmed with your shortcomings?

These are the realities that we already have some experience of to some degree and our own sins come up before us and all these horrible situations are oppressing us now, only to get worse.

"Therefore the Lord, the God of hosts, the Lord, saith thus; Wailing [shall be] in all streets; and they shall say in all the highways, Alas! alas! and they shall call the husbandman to mourning, and such as are skilful of lamentation to wailing. And in all vineyards [shall be] wailing: for I will pass through thee, saith the Lord." Amos 5:16, 17.

Why do we go through all this detail in a divine service like this? Because those who honestly love God He informs.

"Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." Amos 3:7

Everything I have been reading this far is revealed by his servants the prophets. He doesn't permit things to come up on us without showing us what will come.

"I have overthrown [some] of you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and ye were as a firebrand plucked out of the burning: yet have ye not returned unto me, saith the Lord. Therefore thus will I do unto thee, O Israel: [and] because I will do this unto thee, prepare to meet thy God, O Israel." Amos 4:11, 12.

What is prophesied in the day of the Lord?

"For, lo, he that formeth the mountains, and createth the wind, and declareth unto man what [is] his thought, that maketh the morning darkness, and treadeth upon the high places of the earth, The Lord, The God of hosts, [is] his name." Amos 4:13.

Here in this divine service, we are here to worship God. Who is the one that treadeth down. Who will permit all the evils that we have done before Him to come to haunt us by the circumstances that those things have created? As God foreshadows these things to come, Jesus our Saviour is in the darkness with us. We read the description of this terrible dark day where justice is not there anymore.

"Yea, truth falleth; and he [that] departeth from evil maketh himself a prey: and the Lord saw [it], and it displeased him that [there was] no judgment. And he saw that [there was] no man, and wondered that [there was] no intercessor: therefore his arm brought salvation unto him; and his righteousness, it sustained him. For he put on righteousness as a breastplate, and an helmet of salvation upon his head; and he put on the garments of vengeance [for] clothing, and was clad with zeal as a cloak." Isa.59:15-17.

Here is Jesus. As God foreshadows and prophesies the terrible oppression of the last days, Jesus sees it and becomes part of it. Therefore, prepare to meet thy Lord.

What did Jesus do in the experience of the darkness? How did he express it? "My God, my God why hast thou forsaken me?" Isn't that how a person feels? Jesus was right there and there was no man to comfort him. He felt forsaken of God, His father. That is how God's people feel in the day of the Lord.

God presented Jesus in this so that when it happens to us, we will know: "I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am [he]." John 13:19.

What is the purpose of our gathering week by week as we fellowship here? This is why we keep encouraging people not to stay away at any cost in these last days. To prepare for that day. Prepare to survive this oppression, this horror. Prepare for this event. We need every ounce of revelation to be able to survive and to be able to be among the people of Jacobs's trouble that will be delivered out of that. If we are not prepared, how can we survive if we can hardly cope now by keeping our minds stable upon the Lord?

Here is the purpose for the studies of God's word, for meeting together and learning the details, learning where to find them so we can study for ourselves to prepare: "Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life." {GC 620.1}

Here is preparation.

"Satan leads many to believe that God will overlook their unfaithfulness in the minor affairs of life; but the Lord shows in His dealings with Jacob that He will in no wise sanction or tolerate evil. All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. The more exalted their profession and the more honorable the position which they hold, the more grievous is their course in the sight of God and the more sure the triumph of their great adversary. Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless." {GC 620.2}

God in His mercy shows us what is ahead, shows us the horrible experience of Jesus in the midst of that and says now, "prepare." If you are not prepared and you feel your case is hopeless, it will be hopeless. You won't be able to survive. If you can hardly cope now, you won't cope then.

The reason for this message is because my life came up before me several weeks ago and I was tempted to go down into a terrible depression. As I was looking at all the consequences and details, the light of God's mercy shone upon me as I'm going to share with you, how to cope. If only I am prepared, I can survive that time.

"Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict unprepared will, in their despair, confess their sins in words

of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. These confessions are of the same character as was that of Esau or of Judas. Those who make them, lament the result of transgression, but not its guilt. They feel no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. They acknowledge their sin, through fear of punishment; but, like Pharaoh of old, they would return to their defiance of Heaven should the judgments be removed." {GC 620.3}

We need to come to a correct appreciation of the developments that are right before us and the darkness that is already being experienced and how to meet it when it finally comes down in all its crushing blow.

"I was shown that a most solemn work is before us. Its importance and magnitude are not realized. As I marked the indifference which was everywhere apparent, I was alarmed for ministers and people. There seemed to be a paralysis upon the cause of present truth. The work of God seemed stayed. Ministers and people are unprepared for the time in which they live, and nearly all who profess to believe present truth are unprepared to understand the work of preparation for this time. In their present state of worldly ambition, with their lack of consecration to God, their devotion to self, they are wholly unfitted to receive the latter rain and, having done all, to stand against the wrath of Satan, who by his inventions would cause them to make shipwreck of faith, fastening upon them some pleasing self-deception. They think they are all right when they are all wrong." {1T 466.1}

They don't even understand what I must do to prepare. I have seen this, and I tremble at my own self. The only way I can see my way clear is to open my heart to the revelations of God.

"Are the youth in a position where they can with meekness and fear give an answer to every man that asketh a reason of their hope? I saw that the youth greatly fail of understanding our position. Terrible scenes are just before them, a time of trouble which will test the value of character. Those who have the truth abiding in them will then be developed. Those who have shunned the cross, neglected the word of life, and paid adoration to their own poor selves will be found wanting. They are ensnared by Satan, and will learn too late that they have made a terrible mistake." {1T 507.4}

Indeed, there needs to be preparation. Therefore, I want to spend the last part of this message to understand the preparation.

The Preparation

"Transgression has almost reached its limit. Confusion fills the world, and a great terror is soon to come upon human beings. The end is very near. We who know the truth should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise." {8T 28.1}

It was overwhelming in the First World War, people were in absolute

dismay. Many lost their faith in God and many couldn't cope. It will soon come upon us with an overwhelming surprise.

Let us now explore the preparation detail that is going to take us through this disastrous period in every respect and not to lose our coping mechanism.

Here is what the Lord revealed to me and comforted me and took me out of my deep oppression, of realities that were zooming through my system.

"Hear ye this word which I take up against you, [even] a lamentation, O house of Israel. The virgin of Israel is fallen; she shall no more rise: she is forsaken upon her land; [there is] none to raise her up. For thus saith the Lord God; The city that went out [by] a thousand shall leave an hundred, and that which went forth [by] an hundred shall leave ten, to the house of Israel. For thus saith the Lord unto the house of Israel, Seek ye me, and ye shall live." Amos 5:1-4.

Seek ye Me. Not the truth, not the facts of the Bible; seek ye Me and you shall live.

"But seek not Bethel, nor enter into Gilgal, and pass not to Beersheba: for Gilgal shall surely go into captivity, and Bethel shall come to nought. Seek the Lord, and ye shall live; lest he break out like fire in the house of Joseph, and devour [it], and [there be] none to quench [it] in Bethel." Amos 5:5. 6.

Here is the key. We often miss the point of everything we have studied in God's word. As this person rang me yesterday, they told me, "I was reading the Bible but I wasn't getting anything out of it." Yes, when the oppression strikes, what is it that you need? God says, "you need Me."

"[Seek him] that maketh the seven stars and Orion, and turneth the shadow of death into the morning, and maketh the day dark with night: that calleth for the waters of the sea, and poureth them out upon the face of the earth: The Lord [is] his name." Amos 5:8.

Seek him who can turn the shadow into morning. What are we learning here? Seek Him who is the one who controls the darkness, the circumstances, He is the master over it all. He can look down upon it. Seek Him. Consider again what we read in that dreadful state. Observe where lies our safety in this terrible dark day:

"If such scenes as this are to come, such tremendous judgments on a guilty world, where will be the refuge for God's people? How will they be sheltered until the indignation be overpast? John sees the elements of nature--earthquake, tempest, and political strife--represented as being held by four angels. These winds are under control until God gives the word to let them go. **There is the safety of God's church.** The angels of God do His bidding, holding back the winds of the earth, that the winds should not blow on the earth, nor on the sea, nor on any tree, until the servants of God should be

sealed in their foreheads." {TM 444.3}

What's to be sealed in the forehead? The name of God, His character, your relationship with Him. That needs to take place before this dark day comes. The winds of strife are being held back until we have learned to cope. Our safety is in the God that can control that strife. To keep our spirits buoyant in physical, mental, social and physical darkness, we must see God. We must have an experiential knowledge of God in our own psyche so that whatever darkness is around, we have an appreciation of Him. It is imperative we don't lose this sense:

"Could mortals view the amazement and sorrow of the angels as they watched in silent grief the Father separating His beams of light, love, and glory, from His Son, they would better understand how offensive is sin in His sight. As the Son of God in the Garden of Gethsemane bowed in the attitude of prayer, the agony of His Spirit forced from His pores sweat like great drops of blood. It was here that the horror of great darkness surrounded Him. The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead, as a transgressor of His Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. (Sufferings of Christ, pp. 17, 18)." {5BC 1124.3}

Jesus experienced the darkness of the wicked. There He was in the midst of the darkness that is coming upon us and He couldn't see the Father. It is mind activity that is involved here. When God's rays of light are not there, it's horror. I know it. Abject horror. You're ready to choke. Brain cramp. Horror. Jesus was surrounded in it with our darkness that we will experience when the conflagration takes place, so that when we come to that darkness and we can't cope and we have a deep sense that the rays of light of God's promises are not on us, when that has a full impact upon our mind, by beholding Jesus we can see God in the darkness.

When Jesus cried out, "My God, why hast thou forsaken Me?" What was the reality?

"With amazement angels witnessed the Saviour's despairing agony. The hosts of heaven veiled their faces from the fearful sight. Inanimate nature expressed sympathy with its insulted and dying Author. The sun refused to look upon the awful scene. Its full, bright rays were illuminating the earth at midday, when suddenly it seemed to be blotted out. Complete darkness, like a funeral pall, enveloped the cross. 'There was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.' There was no eclipse or other natural cause for this darkness, which was as deep as midnight without moon or stars. It was a miraculous testimony given by God that the faith of after generations might be confirmed." {DA 753.3}

What must be confirmed?

"In that thick darkness God's presence was hidden. He makes

darkness His pavilion, and conceals His glory from human eyes. God and His holy angels were beside the cross. The Father was with His Son. Yet His presence was not revealed. Had His glory flashed forth from the cloud, every human beholder would have been destroyed.” {DA 753.4}

Jesus trod the winepress alone and yet, God was there. Why is this given? Because when we go through that dark time of the day of God, and we have prepared for it by understanding this, we may, as was stated, benefit because in that darkness, by understanding this truth we will know our God is right there who has control over it. Let the earth rock to and fro, let this whole thing grow to a full sense of hopelessness. The way to cope is to know that God is right there next to us as He was with His Son.

In the darkest hour of our experience we can know that God is right there with us. Right there on this planet, we know while the Earth is in a bad way, the sun is still there, above it all.

The only reason why I am coping is because I have made it mine. You have to make it yours, too. You won't survive, I promise you. If I didn't have this knowledge I wouldn't be standing here, I would be a hobo.

“We have seen clouds interpose between us and the sun, but we did not mourn and clothe ourselves in sackcloth for fear that we should never see the sun again. We manifested no anxiety about it, but waited as cheerfully as possible until the cloud passed away and revealed the sun. Just so in our trials and temptations. Clouds may seem to shut from us the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness; but we know that the face of our Redeemer is not forever hidden. He is looking upon us with love and tender compassion. Let us not cast away our confidence, which hath great recompense of reward, but when clouds hang over the soul, let us keep our eyes fixed where we can see the Sun of Righteousness, and rejoice that we have a living Saviour. Think how beautiful was the light which we enjoyed, keep the mind stayed on Jesus, and the light will again shine upon us, and dismal thoughts will flee. We shall have joy in Christ, and shall go singing on our way to Mount Zion.” {OHC 65.4}

It is exactly what happened to me. When you see these realities and your whole trust is in the forgiving grace of God, your depression goes.

“You have not dared to trample under foot the commandments of God, and have stepped out on unpopular truth, let the result be what it may. Will the Saviour ever turn away to leave you to struggle alone? No, never. But He never told His disciples that they should have no trials, no self-denial to endure, no sacrifices to make. The Master was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. ‘Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.’ We thank God that in your poverty you can call God

your Father.” {Ev 240.3}

“Brethren, God is our Father in times like that. Poverty is coming upon this world, and there will be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation. There will be wars and rumors of wars, and the faces of men will gather paleness. You may have to suffer distress; you may go hungry sometimes; but God will not forsake you in your suffering. He will test your faith. We are not to live to please ourselves. We are here to manifest Christ to the world, to represent Him and His power to mankind.--Manuscript 37, 1894.” {Ev 240.4}

Is He my father? Do I believe He has forgiven my sins? Do I believe what Jesus went through? Have I surrendered to that? Have I truly depended in total dependence upon my Heavenly Father as Jesus did?

Therefore to cope with the darkest hour of oppression, we must prepare now at this time. We need to familiarize ourselves with God's personal presence. You must not only know what is coming, and prepare yourself by obeying his word, but that isn't quite enough; you might be doing everything right, you still won't survive. The only way to survive is to be familiar with your Heavenly Father here in your heart. I must prepare myself for that time by coming to a perfect understanding of a personal God.

Who is God pleased with?

“Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise [man] glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty [man] glory in his might, let not the rich [man] glory in his riches.” Jer. 9:23.

Our wealth, strength and wisdom comes from God. Although you've got it, don't glory in it.

“But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I [am] the Lord which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these [things] I delight, saith the Lord. Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will punish all [them which are] circumcised with the uncircumcised.” Jer. 9: 24, 25.

Do you personally know and understand God? When you really understand what God delights in, when you are groveling around in the sensations of the details of the past that are ever before you, as you are groveling in the darkness that Jesus groveled in, to know in that darkness, God exercises loving kindness. That He delights in. That is His nature. This is the reason why Jesus was able to cast Himself on His Father's nature. You and I must do that. Even those who are the circumcised by faith and have done the right thing are going to be punished who don't cast themselves upon God.

“Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all [that are] in the utmost corners, that dwell in the

wilderness: for all [these] nations [are] uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel [are] uncircumcised in the heart." Jer. 9:26.

If you understand the revelation of Jesus, if you believe as Jesus did, you will be saved out of it. It will be indeed like a dark cloud with the sun behind it and the dark cloud will pass away and we will be saved.

In our preparation how do we come to know God like that? What do we need to do when it overwhelms the world in a terrible surprise? Here is the answer when it comes as a terrible surprise upon the world. We need to be sure that this personal reality of a personal Father is going to carry us through:

"Christians should be preparing for what is soon to break upon the world as an overwhelming surprise, and this preparation they should make by diligently studying the word of God, and striving to conform their lives to its precepts. . . . God calls for a revival and a reformation.--Prophets and Kings, p. 626." {ChS 41.3}

By diligently studying the word of God, what do we begin to know? We begin to know Him. This is why we study the Bible. Have you ever had to visit a person who was crying and they asked you to come pray with them? They were reading the Bible but the tears wouldn't go away. They were reading beautiful Scriptures but it wasn't relieving them. Then you can read this to them:

"You need and I need that the spiritual vision shall be cleared and intensified to behold the scheme of redemption as we have never viewed it before. We want that our hearts should feel the mighty throbs of a Saviour's love. In searching the Scriptures, in feeding upon the words of life, O consider it is the voice of God to the soul. We may be confused sometimes over the voice of our friends; but in the Bible we have the counsel of God upon all important subjects which concern our eternal interests, and in temporal matters we may learn a great deal. Its teaching will be always suited to our peculiar circumstances and calculated to prepare us to endure trial and fit us for our God-given work." {ML 283.2}

"The Bible is God's voice speaking to us, just as surely as if we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe we would open God's Word and with what earnestness we would search its precepts. The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One." {ML 283.3}

You won't just come to the Bible and pore through the material. You're coming into the audience chamber of God Himself. It's His voice speaking to you. We must prepare for the darkness of the future by reading the Bible like that. We open the Bible with a sincere desire to know the will of God concerning us.

"We are to open the Word of God with reverence and with a sincere desire to know the will of God concerning us. The heavenly angels will direct our search. God speaks to us in His Word. We are in the

audience chamber of the Most High, in the very presence of God. Christ enters the heart." {ML 283.4}

I must prepare for that dark day by studying the Bible like that. Then I will have a personal God illuminating my mind.

As you think about this, appreciate it. It brings tears to my eyes every time. This amazing privilege, the audience chamber of the most high God; in the darkness He has control over it all.

"Communion with and love for God, the practice of holiness, the destruction of sin, are all pleasant. The reading of God's Word will not fascinate the imagination and inflame the passions, like a fictitious storybook, but softens, soothes, elevates, and sanctifies the heart. When in trouble, when assailed by fierce temptations, they have the privilege of prayer. What an exalted privilege! Finite beings of dust and ashes, admitted through the mediation of Christ, into the audience chamber of the Most High. In such exercises the soul is brought into a sacred nearness with God and is renewed in knowledge and true holiness and fortified against the assaults of the enemy." {CG 467.3}

Brethren and sisters, if we are not preparing to achieve this, the darkness that I described and our incapability to handle the disastrous experiences we are already meeting, we will not cope then. The Lord in His mercy is holding back those horrible winds of strife as the Lord knows we need that skill. He doesn't want us to have the inability to cope then. There is knowledge you must grasp hold of and obtain.

He will not neglect us. He is orchestrating the events of the earth; that's why we are going through it. Eternal bliss is for those who cling to Him.

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." Jer. 29:11.

It is not for us the oppression of total hopelessness. He has hope for us as He had for His Son and everyone of us who do not tread down the word of God. If we have failed to prepare we will not cope. May God complete in us this work and may we diligently apply ourselves to it.

John Thiel, Australia

"For all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and its flower falleth away." 1 Peter 1:24

Any Message?

Here, Apostle Peter, the Lord's mindful messenger, was perplexed, confused. What message could he give appropriate to a time when the nation, Zion, was suffering because of its sins? What message was there for Sodom and Gomorrah in the "day of doom?" Ah! Here is a question and a topic to arouse one to preach or write about with zeal for the honor of His Lord, the welfare of his fellow creatures, and for the equally confusing and evil times we are living in today – what message for today?

The hideous fleshy religion of the Jews was in its prime! Phariseeism was stalking the streets in all its pomp and ceremonies. Spiritual religion was at its lowest ebb. Here and there might be found an Anna or Simeon. But, for the most part men knew nothing about a spiritual religion. "But," they said in their hearts, "we have Abraham, our Father," and this is enough! What a stir John the Baptist caused when he called the Pharisees "a generation of vipers!" (Luke 3:7).

When our Lord appeared on Earth, He came into a withered land. All the glories had left! The authority of Judah was gone! A foreigner sat on David's throne. The Romans called the land their own. The lamp of prophecy was almost out—but, still dimly burned. No Isaiah or Jeremiah were there to weep over their apostasy. The priesthood was disorganized. Luke tells us there were two high priests at once, Annas, and Caiphas, a strange thing, next to the laws of Moses.

Fading Flower

Ah! But then the worldly sanctuary came to a close. The Lord finished His work. The curtain was torn in two, and animal sacrifices were abolished, and the Holy Spirit revealed spiritual things. Now, this is all very interesting and we know these events. Such are the facts of history. There is no need to elaborate on them further. But, you see, today I am coming to your own personal histories; to the experience of every child of God. Admittedly, in every one of us it must be fulfilled, that all of the flesh in us is like grass, and must be "withered!" Furthermore, the beauty, or what we see as agreeable, or pleasing to us must be destroyed. The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. Oh! What a stupendous and withering change in an age of vanity and aesthetics!

The Spirit of God, like the wind, must pass over the field of our souls and cause our beauty to be as a fading flower. He is to so convince us of sin and so reveal ourselves to ourselves, that we shall see that the flesh is of no profit, nothing; a fallen nature of corruption. For, "they who are in the flesh cannot please God." (Rom 8:8). So, the main topic is the withering work of the Holy Spirit on the souls of men.



*Flesh
And
Grass!*

1. WORK OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Let us observe together that the work of the Holy Spirit on the soul of man in withering up the flesh is:

Unexpected – Even in the text of Isaiah he taught of God, cried out, “what shall I cry?” Even he did not know that in order to comfort his people there must first be a trial or affliction experienced. You see, many forget that the Law is the schoolmaster to bring men to Christ. “Too many try to sew without a sharp needle of the convincing power of the Holy Spirit.” It is our duty, therefore, to preach Jesus Christ, even to self-righteous sinners. Ah! But you understand, it is certain that Jesus Christ will never be accepted by them while they think themselves in high esteem or have a high opinion of themselves! Why, only the sick welcomes the physician. The Holy Spirit’s work is to convince men of sin, and until they’re convinced, they’ll never be led to see the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

Now, when the real work of grace starts on a soul, it begins by pulling down! Yes, down! The Holy Spirit doesn’t build on the old foundation of wood, sand, or hay. In fact, when all this is gone, He will build our souls on the precious corner stone of Jesus. Can you see, also, that before you are clothed you need to be “stripped-down?” Is it Christ’s righteousness outside, white as ever, and your own filthy rags hidden inside? No, No! They must be put away! In Greece the white sheep on a mountain slope are a beautiful sight. Ah! But, when it snows, at times, they appear gray and dirty. They need to be “sheared!”

Not only does the Holy Spirit come **unexpectedly** but, it is:

Suddenly, and Frightening— When this happens, it can cause anxiety for some – surprising! But, the Lord answers us, “comfort me, comfort me my people.” (Isaiah 40:1) But, it first makes us hear the cry, “all flesh is grass, and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field.” Further, if we consider God’s way of doing things we shouldn’t be surprised when terrible and weird things in righteousness happens in our lives. Just look at creation for a moment. What was there in the beginning? Why, nothing!! “Without form and void.” The Hebrews say, Tohu and bohū, disorder and confusion – chaos!

So it is in our new creation. He makes all things new, borrowing nothing from the old man.

We are spiritually without form, empty, in the darkness on the face of our hearts. Another example: when man fell, how did the Lord bring him to the gospel? “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.”(Gen 3:15).

Moreover, how did the Lord clothe our parents? Not until He first asked, “who told you that you were naked?” The fig leaves didn’t

work, failed; He then made them coverings of skin and wrapped them in it.

We can see some things of this sort with God’s acts of dealing with men. Noah’s ark showed us a wonderful type of salvation. Noah and his family were saved from death. All hope for Noah was gone. Then his ark rose up on the water. Remember the redemption of the children of Israel out of Egypt? It happened when they were in the saddened worst state and their cry went up to heaven, and the Lord heard their prayers and brought them out. Everywhere, before salvation there comes the humbling of man; man’s human hope is overthrown – falls. Ah! But all of this working of the Holy Spirit is also:

Universal – It is universal on all hearts. This withering is a withering of what? On part of the flesh and some tendencies? No, No! “For all flesh is like grass, and all the glory of man like the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and its flower falleth away.” (1Peter1:24) Now, does any of the grass live? The grass withers! All of it! Well, what about the flower? Will that live; so fair and beautiful? No! It fades, and falls away! So, whenever the Holy Spirit breathes on the soul of man, there’s a withering of all flesh. To be carnally minded, then, means, death!

When the Spirit of God breathes on us; the sweet becomes bitter and that which is bright becomes dim! A man cannot love sin and cherish it and also have the life of God. Oh! Of the things we once enjoyed, and delighted in, we say, “vanities of vanities, all is vanity.” (Eccl 1:2) To be sure, have you seen the faithless, infantile “pleasures” in your life fade away before your very eyes? It must be so. If not, the Holy Spirit hasn’t affected your soul; you have not abandoned them, in fact! Before the Holy Spirit comes we think we’re as good as the best! Ah, we think “I’ve kept the commandments of God; what do I lack? I’ve been a moral, upright person; religious, faithful in my tithes and offerings.”

We confess we have some faults and shortcomings, but we think they are excusable, allowable sin in our wicked pride! Ah, but when the Spirit of God blows on the pleasure and beauty of the flesh, its beauty will fade like a flower or leaf, and you will have another idea of yourself. You’ll not find any language severe enough to describe your past character. Think about it! When you see your motives and reasons, you said and acted the way you did, you’ll cry out. “God be merciful unto me, a sinner.” So, what else should be withered up in us by the Holy Spirit? Oh! There is much more to be destroyed and abandoned.

Decisions – Away must go the boosted power of making your own decisions or achievements, of solving problems. Many think they can turn to God whenever they decide, saying, “I have a strange mind. If I decide to be religious, I can begin; I haven’t any difficulty with this.” Ah! but, the “Holy Spirit illuminates the mind, brings needed truths to men’s remembrance, increases vitality, arouses man’s moral powers, fills the heart and mind with Bible imagery.”

(ChS 253; 6T 260; MM 12; DA 355).

You see, the Holy Spirit, "is obtained only by earnest and persevering prayer, so that one depends more on the efficiency of the Holy Spirit." (7T 32; TM 215). But, "Satan works with all souls not under the Holy Spirit, and controls the mind not under its influence. Man cannot resist evil without it, and preaching is of no avail. (TM 79; 2SM 51; SC 52; GW 284).

Yet another says, "I can correct mistakes of the past and start a new life anytime I choose." You see, these are just decisions of the flesh, but all good flowers must all fade. Our will is not God's will and plan!

Still another says, "I believe and have within myself an enlightened conscience and intelligence that will guide me. I have the light of nature and its power within me. So, if I wander off somewhere or somewhat, I'll find my way back again." This is all fleshy thinking, since once the Spirit of God moves over the fleshy mind, we then learn the word, "without Me you can do nothing." (John 15:5)

The humbling account of one poor struggling soul might just be one of us: "When I was first seeking the Lord, I believed I could not pray without divine help. But in my soul I felt I could not pray. Then I could not even feel right, or mourn or groan. I could not even feel I needed Him as I ought to feel it." You see, this heart was as hard and unyielding, as dead as those that rot in the grave! He continues: "Oh! What I would have given for a tear! I wanted to repent, but could not. I wanted to believe but could not. I felt tied up, paralyzed." This was, in fact, a humbling revelation of God's Holy Spirit, but one that was needed. Clearly then, the flower of the flesh must wither and die! The heirs of Heaven are not born of blood, not the will of the flesh, nor of man, but of God! In addition, if the work in us is not the Spirit's working, but our own, it will fade and die, when we most need its protection and end up as **grass!**

Completeness – The withering work has a completeness of it. Does the grass droop? No, it withers! The flower hangs its head a little? No! Isaiah says it "fades." Peter says it "falls away." No revival with showers. It came to an end. Ah! But one again asks, "can't the fleshy mind be improved?" No! For the "carnal mind is enmity against God." (Rom 8:7). "God desires to refresh His people by the Holy Spirit. God can give us nothing greater or better than the Holy Spirit" (ChS 251-2; MB 132). Again, the question arises, "can you improve the old nature?" No! You must be born again! Furthermore, "can the carnal mind be taught heavenly things?" No! "The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God for they are foolishness." (1Cor 2:14)

The old nature does not improve; it is as earthly and sensual and devilish in the saint of 80 years old as it was when he first came to Jesus. It just lies dormant, waiting to be "energized!" For you see, the Spirit and flesh are contrary to one another. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit and Spirit against the flesh." (Gal 5:17) That is why

it is so important to be closely connected to Jesus and obedient to His commandments until He returns.

Painful – This withering work in the soul is, furthermore, painful! For, "all flesh is grass." It is a work that has to be done. Those that experience the work of the Holy Spirit are thankful, happier, much brighter, more at peace, and even from longevity studies.... live longer! Ah! But those that come into the truth too fast, converted too easily, and come to Christ with little knowledge of their own depravity, corruption, immorality, have to learn again afterwards, and stay a long time as babes and confused with problems, that would not trouble them if they had a deeper work at first. The old walls of self-trust, will have to come down; sooner or later; the laths, the plaster, the roof, the foundation!

Jesus never puts old wine into new bottles as it will burst; or new clothes on old garments. See, it is a great mercy for a man when God sweeps away all his own righteousness and strength. When He makes him feel that he is nothing, and can do nothing and drives him to confess Christ must be **all in all!**

Inevitable – It is inevitable because the old is corruptible and must go; it is all that simple!

2. An Unwithering Hope

The Apostle Peter's words elicit hope. Although the flower falls away, yet in the children of God, born again, not of corruptible seed (it grows in soil where the curse has fallen), but incorruptible, by the Word of God, "it endures forever." The Gospel is useful for us because it is not of human origin. It is superhuman, divine, spiritual. If you have a gospel which you have thought up by yourself, or new doctrine, or philosophical gospel, which comes from the brain of man.... it is of the flesh!

The only word that can bless you is the Living Word of the eternal Spirit. The seed (the life in Jesus) must be planted there by the Holy Spirit. Did you receive it? Do you jump up and say, "I believe it?" Also, "God incarnate is my hope?" Or, "I am reconciled to God by the blood of Jesus?" If yes, then you have the Living Seed in your soul.

What is the result of all of this... of it? Well, a new life! It is as if you never existed and for the first time created! Observe closely now as we come to the close. To get the good seed out of a true believer's heart and to destroy the new nature in him is a thing attempted by the earth and Satan. But yet, never achieved! Why? "And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand." (John 10:28). You have a natural life... that will die. You have a Spiritual life... as it is written, "whosoever believeth in me shall never die." So, if you have this, God liveth in you, and you in Him, in peace, happiness and joy. Now, remember this, that if you don't have this, you shall not see life. What then? Shall you be destroyed... annihilated? Ah!

No! But, the wrath of the Lord is upon you. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." (Heb 10:31). Wait, it gets worse! "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness." (Rom 1:18). You will exist, but not live, nor will you flourish or prosper. Furthermore, you will not know anything of life, for that is the gift of God, in Jesus Christ. You will be "wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked." (Rev 3:17). Worse even, you will be "cast into the lake of fire, which is the second death." (Rev 19:20; 21:8). You'll be one of those "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." (Mark 9:44)

May God and the blessed Spirit visit you. If today you must confess that you are not born again or have a true conversion, or have any unconfessed sins or, importantly, the need to forgive, then be humbled by it. Go to Jesus at the foot of the cross to save you. Everything is in the Word, by which the Gospel is preached to you. Respect it, believe, and receive it.

"He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." (Mark 16:16). Again and again, Isaiah pointed to the infinite power of God, by encouraging them to believe that the glorious promises might still be theirs.

The great mistake of the professed people of God was that they took their eyes away from their Lord and Maker, and looked to themselves instead. Isaiah, having seen God himself, was to henceforth help the people to see Him also. Only then could they have life and hope. The grandest work ever given to man is that of calling lost men and women to behold their Redeemer.

May the Lord bless you for the sake of Jesus. You are not the **Flesh and Grass**, but unwithered grass; pure, full grown, lush, gentle, fruitful, springing up.... and trembling. **Amen**

John Theodorou, USA



*Br. Nkumbula of
Lucenje Village, Zambia*

Circumcision And Baptism Compared

When God made a covenant with Abraham, He demanded a circumcision. "This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; every man child among you shall be circumcised." Gen. 17:10.

God declared the circumcision of the flesh to be the covenant sign, "He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with the money, must needs be circumcised; and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant. And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." Gen. 17:13, 14.

The circumcision was so important to God that He wanted to kill Moses, because he had not circumcised his son. (Ex. 4:24-26) Under Joshua God ordered the circumcision for all the sons which were born after the exodus. (Joshua 5:2-7)

"A short distance from Jordan the Hebrews made their first encampment in Canaan. Here Joshua "circumcised the children of Israel;" "and the children of Israel encamped in Gilgal, and kept the Passover." The suspension of the rite of circumcision since the rebellion at Kadesh had been a constant witness to Israel that their covenant with God, of which it was the appointed symbol, had been broken. And the discontinuance of the Passover, the memorial of their deliverance from Egypt, had been an evidence of the Lord's displeasure at their desire to return to the land of bondage. Now, however, the years of rejection were ended. Once more God acknowledged Israel as His people, and the sign of the covenant was restored. The rite of circumcision was performed upon all the people who had been born in the wilderness." PP 485.

"Joshua... circumcised all the people that had been born in the wilderness. After this ceremony they kept the Passover in the plains of Jericho. "And the Lord said unto Joshua, this day have I rolled away the reproach of Egypt from off you." 4T 158.

Paul, who was taught by God to be an apostle and teacher, wrote in reference to Abraham and to the circumcision, "And he received the sign of circumcision a seal of righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised; that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also." Rom. 4:11.

In the new covenant we have no commandment for the bodily circumcision. Now our hearts must be circumcised. Christ died for the circumcised and the uncircumcised. And now applies what Paul writes, "For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision, but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6.

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ." Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." "And you, being dead in your sins



and the uncircumcision of your flesh, hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses." Col. 2:11-13.

"As a precautionary measure, Paul wisely advised Timothy to be circumcised—not that God required it, but in order to remove from the minds of the Jews that which might be an objection to Timothy's ministrations. In his work Paul was to journey from city to city, in many lands, and often he would have opportunity to preach Christ in Jewish synagogues, as well as in other places of assembly. If it should be known that one of his companions in labour was uncircumcised, his work might be greatly hindered by the prejudice and bigotry of the Jews. Everywhere the apostle met determined opposition and severe persecution. He desired to bring to his Jewish brethren, as well as to the Gentiles, a knowledge of the gospel, and therefore he sought so far as was consistent with the faith, to remove every pretext for opposition. Yet while he conceded this much to Jewish prejudice, he believed and taught circumcision or uncircumcision to be nothing and the gospel of Christ everything." AA 204.

"The rite of circumcision was given to Abraham as a 'seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised.' Rom. 4:11. It was to be observed by the patriarch and his descendents as token that they were devoted to the service of God and thus separated from idolaters, and that God accepted them as His peculiar treasure. By this rite they were pledged to fulfil, on their part, the conditions of the covenant made with Abraham. They were not to contract marriages with the heathen, for by so doing they would lose their reverence for God and His holy laws; they would be tempted to engage in the sinful practices of other nations and would be seduced into idolatry." PP 138.

The Law and the Covenants

"Adam taught his descendents the law of God, and it was handed down from father to son through successive generations. But notwithstanding the gracious provision for man's redemption, there were few who accepted it and rendered obedience. By transgression the world became so vile that it was necessary to cleanse it by the flood from its corruption. The law was preserved by Noah and his family, and Noah taught his descendents the Ten Commandments. As men again departed from God, the Lord chose Abraham, of whom He declared, 'Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.' Gen. 26:5. To him was given the rite of circumcision, which was a sign that those who receive it were devoted to the service of God—a pledge that they would remain separate from idolatry, and would obey the law of God." PP 363:2.

No Circumcision, No Admission in the Church

"And certain men which came down from Judea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved." Acts 15:1.

"The controversy over circumcision—the Jews vindicated their position, which was in opposition to that of Paul, by showing that the course of the apostle, in receiving the Gentiles into the church without circumcision, prevented more Jews from accepting the faith than there were accessions from the Gentiles... They maintained that the Gentiles should receive circumcision before being admitted to the privileges of the church of Christ." LP 121, 122.

"Paul had dedicated himself and all his powers to the service of God. He had received the truths of the gospel direct from heaven, and throughout his ministry he maintained a vital connection with heavenly agencies. He had been taught by God regarding the binding of unnecessary burdens upon the Gentile Christians; thus when the Judaizing believers introduced into the Antioch church the question of circumcision, Paul knew the mind of the spirit of God concerning such teachings and took a firm and unyielding position which brought to the churches freedom from Jewish rites and ceremonies.

"For in Jesus Christ, neither circumcision availeth anything, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love." Gal. 5:6.

"In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen with him through the faith of the operation of God, who hath raised him from the dead." Col. 2: 11, 12.

Baptism

"And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth." "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." Matt. 28: 18-20.

"Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion." Letter 174 (1909)

"Baptism is the sign of entrance to the kingdom. Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God's spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, 'The Lord our righteousness.'

"Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptised in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the services of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King.

They have obeyed the command, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate... and touch not the unclean thing.' And to them is fulfilled the promise, 'I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.' 2 Cor. 6: 17, 18." 6T 91

"Baptism is the Christian's oath of allegiance—as Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance. They are baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Thus they are united with the three great powers of heaven. They pledge themselves to renounce the world and to observe the laws of the kingdom of God. Henceforth they are to walk in newness of life. No longer are they to follow dishonest methods. They are to obey the statutes of the kingdom of heaven. They are to seek God's honour. If they will be true to their vow, they will be furnished with the grace and power that will enable them to fulfill all righteousness. 'As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name.'" Letter 129 (1903)

Through Conversion to the Truth

The new covenant to the truth should be faithfully instructed in the plain, "Thus saith the Lord." The word of the Lord is to be read and explained to them point by point.

"All who enter upon the new life should understand, prior to their baptism, that the Lord requires the undivided affections... The practicing of the truth is essential. The bearing of fruit cannot bring forth evil fruit. The line of demarcation will be plain and distinct between those who love God and keep His commandments and those who love Him not and disregard His precepts. There is need of a thorough conversion to the truth." Manuscript 56 (1900)

Thorough Preparation for Baptism

"There is need of a more thorough preparation on the part of candidates for baptism. They are in need of a more faithful instruction than has usually been given them. The principles of the Christian life should be made plain to those who have newly come to the truth... None can depend upon their profession of faith as proof that they have a saving connection with Christ. We are not only to say, 'I believe,' but to practice the truth. It is by conformity to the will of God in our words, our deportment, our character, that we prove our connection with Him." 6T, p. 91. 92.

Examination of Candidates

The test of discipleship is not brought to bear as closely as it should be upon those who present themselves for baptism. It should be understood whether they are simply taking the name of Seventh-Day Adventists, or whether they are taking their stand on the Lord's side, to come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the

unclean thing. Before baptism there should be a thorough inquiry as to the experience of the candidates. Let this inquiry be made, not in a cold and distant way, but kindly, tenderly, pointing the new converts to the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Bring the requirements of the gospel to bear upon the candidates for baptism.

"One of the points upon which these newly come to the faith need instruction is the subject of dress. Let the new converts be faithfully dealt with. Are they vain in dress? Do they cherish pride of heart? The idolatry of dress is a moral disease. It must not be taken over into the new life." 6T 95-97.

Circumcision was a token that those who were circumcised "were devoted to the service of God and thus separated from idolaters, and that God accepted them as His peculiar treasure... They were not to contract marriages with the heathen; for by so doing they would lose their reverence for God and His holy law." PP 138 (for further study see PP 363)

Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. "Those who are baptised in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the services of Satan, and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command, 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate.'" 6T 91 (for further study, 6BC 1075; 2TT 396-397; DA 104; Ev 315; CG 499; 8T 116)

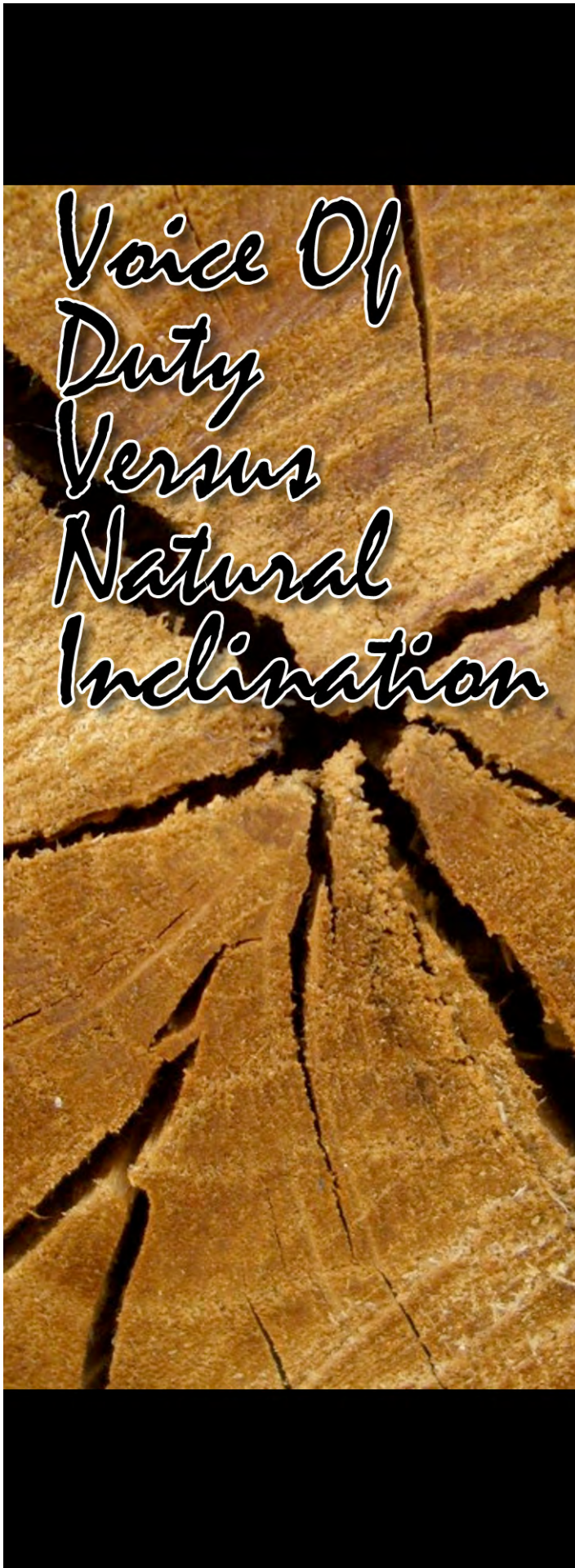
"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God." Col. 3:1-3.

"Put on therefore, as elect of God, holy and beloved bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any; even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body: and be ye thankful... And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus; giving thanks to God and the Father by Him." Col. 3: 12-17.

"Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." Acts 2:38.

"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Acts 22:16. **AMEN**

Golden Kayawa Hingabantu, Zambia



These are two enemies fighting against each other. And their battlefield is a lifelong war. Daily they are attacking each other. Our future and eternal life depends on which one gains the victory.

Long after we have become Christians the natural inclinations still try to control us. If you cut a piece of wood with an axe along the grain, it splits easily; but try to cut it across the grain, it is much harder.

We are born with natural inclinations, and it is easy to follow their dictates. But the voice of duty that God is telling us goes directly against our natural tendencies.

It is natural for us to like ease and comfort, and also luxury. Naturally we like certain foods and drinks. When the voice of duty tells us to go and do missionary work, our inclination tells us to stay home and rest. Also, should we go to the prayer meeting or relax at home? There is a war between reading the Bible or watching television. The love of money is very natural to us, and also seeking entertainment.

It was very natural for Peter to deny Christ, rather than be condemned to death with Him. It was natural for Jonah to go to Tarshish rather than to Ninevah.

If someone is hurting you or speaking evil of you, it is very natural to dislike him, even to hate him. But, the voice of duty tells you to suffer quietly, without defending yourself, and you are even to love your enemies; and love means to seek his company, to speak well of him to others.

Sister White writes, "The law of duty is supreme. It should hold sway over human reason." Test. Vol. 4, p. 163.

Solomon writes to us, "Because I have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out My hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at naught My counsel, and would none of My reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh; When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress and anguish cometh upon you. Then they shall call upon Me, but I will not answer; they shall seek Me early, but they shall not find Me." Prov. 1:24-28.

The counsel of God is the voice of duty to us; and if it is ignored in the time of peace, then in the time of trouble we will be without shelter and without help.

We need to realize the importance of the faithful performance of all what the Lord has spoken, and to live out the life of Jesus. It is not enough to stop doing wrong, we must learn to do good. We must obey the voice of duty, to fulfill the work that the Lord has laid before us.

Angels of God can protect us only when we overcome the natural

tendencies and obey the voice of duty.

“There will be terrible falls by those who think they stand firm because they have the truth, but they have it not as it is in Jesus. A moment’s carelessness may plunge a soul into irretrievable ruin... If we swerve a single inch from duty, we are in danger of following on in a course of sin that will end in perdition.” Test. Vol. 5, p. 540.

Many people have been years in the church, the school of Christ, without learning the lessons, and therefore there will be terrible falls in the end.

“Many a star that we have admired for its brilliancy will then go out in darkness. Chaff like a cloud will be borne away on the wind, even from places where we see only floors of rich wheat.” Test. Vol. 5, p. 81.

Many Christians are seeking happiness in worldly things. Young people often think that religion is boring and dull, that the world gives more joy and happiness, but this is a great mistake. “Real happiness is found only in being good and doing good. The purest, highest enjoyment comes to those who faithfully fulfill their appointed duties.” ML, p. 168.

“They should early learn that happiness is not found in selfish gratification; it follows only in the wake of duty.” CG, p. 206.

Why are there so many depressed, unhappy Christians? Only because they have neglected something they should have done.

“Every duty performed, every sacrifice made in the name of Jesus, brings an exceeding great reward. In the very act of duty, God speaks and gives His blessing.” S.T., May 19, 1898.

Our greatest need is Christ’s righteousness; without it we will be lost, and it is given us on condition that we fulfill every known duty.

“No man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties.” 1 Sel. Mess., p. 366.

Now that we are convinced that we must overcome natural inclinations and fulfill the voice of duty, we must have a clear understanding of what our duties are.

Let us begin with our thoughts. “You should control your thoughts. This will not be an easy task; you cannot accomplish it without close and even severe effort. Yet God requires this of you; it is a duty resting upon every accountable being. You are responsible to God for your thoughts. If you indulge in vain imaginations, permitting your mind to dwell upon impure subjects, you are, in a degree, as guilty before God as if your thoughts were carried into action. All that prevents the action is the lack of opportunity. Day and night dreaming and castle-building are bad and exceeding dangerous

habits. When once established, it is next to impossible to break up such habits, and direct the thoughts to pure, holy, elevated themes. You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thoughts from staining your soul.” Test. Vol. 2, p. 561.

Next comes the words what we speak. “There are many ways wherein we may acknowledge our Lord and many ways wherein we may deny Him. We may deny Him in our words, by speaking evil of others, by foolish talking, jesting and joking, by idle or unkind words, or by prevaricating, speaking contrary to truth. In our words we may confess that Christ is not in us.” Test. Vol. 3, p. 332.

Jesus gave clear counsel on speaking. “But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.” Matt. 12:36, 37.

Paul also wrote the same, “Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks.” Eph. 5:4.

God has given us the gift of speech that we use it to His honour.

Also, our duty is to rebuke the sins that others are doing. We are our brother’s keepers, and responsible for their salvation.

“But if the sins of the people are passed over by those in responsible positions, His frown will be upon them, and the people of God, as a body, will be held responsible for those sins.” Test. Vol. 3, p. 265.

“When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the wicked of his way to turn from it; if he do not turn from his way, he shall die in his iniquity; but thou hast delivered thy soul.” Hez. 33:8, 9.

We must love our neighbours as ourselves, and the best expression of love is to save your neighbour into eternal life.

“Here is our great sin. We are years behind. The ministers have been seeking the hidden treasure and have been opening up the casket and letting the jewels of truth shine forth, but the members of the church have not done a hundredth part of that which God requires of them. What can we expect but deterioration in religious life when the people listen to sermon after sermon and do not put the instruction into practice?” Test. Vol. 6, p. 425.

“There are conditions to the fulfillment of God’s promises, and prayer can never take the place of duty.” COL, p. 143.

Maybe now we understand why Sister White wrote that not one in one hundred understand Christ’s righteousness to themselves. They do not realize what the duty is that we must fulfill or all will be lost. Yet many do

not realize what their duty is as followers of Christ.

“Our duty will only be discerned and appreciated when viewed in the light which shines from the life of Christ.” Test. Vol. 3, p. 403.

Every night, ask the Lord, “Have I fulfilled my duty today?” If not, then try again the next day, and finally the natural inclination will be defeated, and the voice of duty will gain the victory.

And in the end, you will hear the words of the Lord, “Well done, thou good and faithful servant.”

May the Lord help us to be victorious in this daily battle and defeat the enemy that is out to destroy us, is my wish and prayer. **AMEN.**

Timo Martin , Canada

Recently we travelled to Meghalaya on a missionary trip. The area is full of jungles and hills. Even in these remote places, the people are able to read the books of Ellen White in their local languages. We gave Bible studies on a number of topics. In all, sixteen new souls were baptised. We were in Meghalaya for only a brief visit. If the Lord is willing, we will return for a longer time in the future. The Lord blessed our meetings, and it is my prayer that we will have countless souls in heaven from the country of India.

S. Raj Israel, India

Meghalaya India



(meditations by a Christian prisoner in Ethiopia)

“And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.” Luke 7:23.

When did the Lord say this to John the Baptist’s disciples? John was rotting in prison, unjustly thrown behind bars, and like most of us he was expecting a Cinderella story, that he would come out quickly if the Lord was there—surely He was on earth, too, for that? The day I shared this verse with my Christian fellow-prisoners, oh, the tears! Oh, the disappointment! Yes, it was so very frightening to think that the Lord might even will it that we rot in prison and die even as John the Baptist did. Isn’t a righteous man victim of the devil’s action?

So, why did the Lord allow things for no good reason—John’s mission on earth was finished. There are many of us who never came out, who came closer to the realities of death, of being willing to die and to see the Lord sooner—and some did die.

And those of us whose mission on earth has not been completed are no longer behind bars, but came out to tell others to praise Him, even though suffering.

Lord, there is a blessing in suffering, however hard it seems behind bars (physical, spiritual, mental). To change the values of one’s life, to be closer to You, to understand and serve others who suffer—teach us what You want us to learn.

There are many things to learn.

Meditation

Life’s Challenges

Jesus was a man of sorrows. He was poor. He knew the pains of hostility and rejection and loneliness. He suffered persecution and He died ignominiously.

Jesus was a man of joy. He was a happy man and He knew simple pleasures. He took delight in nature, seeing more beauty in the lilies of the field than in the gorgeous ceremonial clothing of royalty.

He liked children—and the fact that children responded warmly to Him shows that He had a demeanour of joy, for children are not warm towards those whose looks are sour and sad. He befriended outcasts and derelicts, and the rapport He obviously had with them is evidence of the warmth of His personality.

Jesus was a man of great sorrow. Jesus was a man of great joy. Commitment to Him makes for the kind of sensitivity that can bring



a person to sorrow—sorrow for his own sins and failures and the sorrow that comes of compassion towards the suffering of others. Commitment to Him also makes for great joy.

Followers of Jesus should not seek the kind of happiness that comes in complacency about self and from indifference to the needs of others. They can have another kind of happiness—the kind that results from coming to terms with troubles in the firm conviction that, in the long run, the purposes of God for us will not be frustrated.

A form of Christianity that specializes in gloom and foreboding, a Christianity that would turn its back on life's pleasures—that kind of Christianity is counterfeit.

Christian joy, the happiness that comes through faith, does not close its eyes to life's darker sides—but it refuses to allow the darkness to cut off the light. It is in no way an escape from the challenges and menaces of life in the busy world, as are some philosophies of happiness: it is an acceptance of life as it is.

*Written by Rev. J. A. Davidson
Submitted by Kathleen Ross*



Youth Canoe Trip Australia

GOD PUT YOU ON THIS TRAIN



CHILDREN'S CORNER

As a young boy Joseph Wheeler always loved trains. Thus when the opportunity came for him to travel from the western USA to the east coast for a speaking engagement, he decided to take some extra time and ride a train rather than take an airplane. As he boarded the train in Montana he felt a surge of joy within him, a joy that is rarely experienced on interstate freeways or transcontinental airlines. He found his row, leaned back and immersed himself in the experience of the train.

Soon the train was on its way. Day turned into night and night turned into day as they travelled eastward. He made new friends, dreamed, read books, thought, and regenerated.

And then,... he began to worry about his speaking appointment in western New York. It was the summer of the great Mississippi floods, and the news ahead was not good: if they made it across at all, they would most likely be the last train to do so for some time to come. Rumours swept down the aisles of the long silver snake. Some people were sure they would make it across; others were not so certain and some were sure they would NOT make it. All the passengers were deeply concerned as to how they would reach their destination.

Finally, over the loudspeakers came the verdict. There was near-total silence, except for the occasionally baby's cry, as they were given the news: the train could not make it across – the river was already too wide, and getting wider every moment. Amtrak personnel would be coming through the train to speak with all the passengers. And they were dreadfully sorry for the inconvenience. That was all. Hubbub followed, everyone talking at once, the sound track complete with laughter, anger, tears – as well as the unmistakably frightened high voice of children. Joseph had never experienced anything quite like it.

At last an Amtrak official entered Joseph's car, and all the conversation ground to a halt. Rather than talk to all of them at once, the official merely turned to those in the front seats, and then worked his way back. Since Joseph was in the back, it took some time before the official reached him.

"Well sir, how far are you going, and are you on a tight schedule?"

In other words, do you have any appointments you have to make, or are you flexible in terms of us rerouting you?"

Joseph certainly did not have the luxury of being rerouted, and he explained why, as well as where he was due in Western New York. The upshot of it all was that he was taken off the train at the next large town, flown across the raging Mississippi River to O'hare Airport in Chicago, shuttled to the train station downtown, and placed on board a train heading for New York.

By now he was no longer a "happy camper". He has royally irked. Worst of all, there was no one on whom he could take out his frustrations. Amtrak had lost plenty of money on him, and the Mississippi was safe from any puny retaliation from his corner. So, since insurance adjusters label such weather-induced disasters as "Acts of God," peevishly Joseph took it out on Him.

Compounding his wrath was the microscopic little "state-room" barely big enough for him to turn around in that he had been assigned to. He needed a shoe horn to insert his suitcase, hanging bag, cowboy hat, and multitudinous books, and close the sliding door. Shortly afterwards, the train jerked into motion and eased its way out of the station and then the city. It was now night.

Then there was a knock at the door.

Irritated, with a what-else-could-possibly-happen-now look on his face, he unlocked the door and opened it wide. There in the aisle stood the porter. Directly across from Joseph, a polished young woman slid open her door. He had met her while boarding the train, and she had been anything but friendly when he attempted to make small talk.

The porter told them that he was there to instruct them on the rules of the road, so to speak. They sat there in tandem, politely unresponsive. But he gave them his semi-canned spiel nevertheless. Then he paused, curious. Joseph must have appeared a strange sight to him: sitting on a cluttered bed (so short that his head would touch one wall, and feet the other), and his hand holding up a canvas bag stuffed with books perched precariously on the commode (the only place he found to put it on), and a big black hat jutting out from a shelf. As providence would have it, the book on top was his book titled, Remote Controlled. "What's that all about?"

asked the porter. Since the porter was concerned about the effects of television on his children, he forgot the rest of the passengers and leaped into an intense and sometimes emotional discussion. About twenty minutes later, he happened to look at his watch, and spurred to a stop. Promising to speak with Joseph later on about the matter, he moved on.

For some unexplainable reason, all during this discussion, the door across the aisle had remained open, although the young woman had not contributed a word to the conversation. Now Joseph looked across at her in the sudden stillness and wondered what to say. In a quiet, well-modulated voice, she asked if that was the only book he had written. Her question led them into an entirely different direction. By then she had told him of her interest in music, literature, and university study. Offhand-like she asked Joseph, "Do you have a story you've written in one of those books I could read?" Quickly his mind ranged through the stories, then concluded that with her interest in music and literature, probably she'd enjoy most, *Meditation in a Minor Key*.

"But it's a long story," Joseph warned her.

"I don't care," she signed resignedly, "What else do I have to do?"

He dug down into his bag and pulled out the book and passed it across the aisle to her. Not knowing her at all, or even knowing if she was a Christian, he told her nothing of the book's origins. Twice during the writing of the story he had come to a dead end, and each time he had given up, tossed the book on a shelf telling God, "I've come as far as I can with this book; Joe Wheeler can take it no further! If it's Your will that it be completed, You'll have to take it from here." In each case, the next morning he received the inspiration as to what to write next. This is why he had always told reporters that the Lord co-wrote the story. He didn't tell this to the woman.

After scanning the book she began to read. She said not a word, but merely stared intently at the point and occasionally turned a page. Meanwhile Joseph was ill at ease. What was he supposed to be doing while she was reading the book? She hadn't purchased it so it was still his book. So he just sat there and did nothing. He just sat and scanned his other books, muttering to himself.

After what seemed forever – but was not probably more than 45 minutes, across the aisle the pages ceased to be turned. She just sat there motionless. Finally Joseph concluded that he had put her to sleep and got up to walk across the swaying train aisle to find out for sure – only to discover that tears were streaming down her cheeks. She literally was incapable of speech. He handed her a handkerchief, and she wiped away the tears that just kept coming.

In time, the tears ceased – and the floodgates opened and torrents of words rushed through. They did not ebb until around 2 a.m. They soon decided to vacate their narrow quarters for the dining car. There, for a time, they were joined by the porter – but most of





the blasting heat, and he had to speak during the hottest part of the day - in a tent. By now, his Jonah act had hit full stride, and he was venting his anger and discomfort inwardly, angling it second-hand on the good Lord, whom he held partly responsible.

After he walked up to the information booth, wiped the sweat off his face, and introduced himself, the gentleman running it sighed with relief. "Oh Mr. Wheeler, am I glad to see you. We were worrying that you weren't going to make it. And there is a gentleman who has been looking for you all day - he says it's urgent. Let's see if I can take you to him... oh, here he comes."

There he came indeed, hurrying across the lawn toward him, heat or no heat. Joseph did not recognize him, but as soon as he found out who Joseph was he told Joseph to please wait there as he had something for him. The man ran off in the heat and came puffing back with one of Joseph's books. "All this fuss for an autograph," muttered Joseph to himself.

Then the man told Joseph the story. His younger sister was married to a man that she loved. They had four children, but she is dying of an incurable disease. At most she had two weeks to live. Being one of Mr. Wheeler's former students, she had entrusted her brother with this one responsibility: Travel some considerable distance to meet Mr. Wheeler, have him inscribe the book and ask him to pray for her. And get it back to her before she died. "Oh, thank God that you came. I don't know how I could have gone back to my sister without the inscription." They hugged and he strode quickly back to his car. He had made the long trip for that one reason alone; now he was returning to his sister, hoping and praying he would get there in time. He did.

The rest of the afternoon was a blur for Joseph. He spoke later in the afternoon. He didn't remember much of what he said, but he did remember sharing his experiences and praying for these two young women.

Joseph's life was not the same after this train trip. On it he gained a new sense of the fragility of life, and how quickly it can end. On his return trip he dumped his Jonah-self out the window as the train was leaving Grand Central Station - never to be seen again. By far most important of all was that God pulled back the curtains between him and heaven and revealed to his disbelieving eyes, a great truth. Every day, every night, God and His angels are, behind the scenes controlling events to the degree that we can be the greatest blessing for those around us. May God help us to see these "unfortunate" turns of events in our lives as the blessing God wants them to be.

the time they were alone together. She told Joseph, in capsulated form, the sad, dark, unhappy story of her life. How her life was a dead end, how all her romantic relationships had been failures, how her career track appeared to be sterile and lacking fulfillment, how she had lost faith in God, how she had increasingly wondered if life was even worth living, and how - on a mere whim - she had decided to board this train, hoping that on it somehow, some way, she might come up with solutions, answers, and to avoid the unthinkable.

Gradually, as the hours fled by, her face began to lose its hardness as a new softness came into her eyes, a new sense of purpose, a new willingness to accept God back into her life, a new joy.

Her last words to Joseph, as they said good-bye were, "Oh! What if God had not put you on this train?"

That night Joseph thought long and hard about the events on the train and how mightily the Lord had used his frail words to bring a wandering child back into the circle of His love.

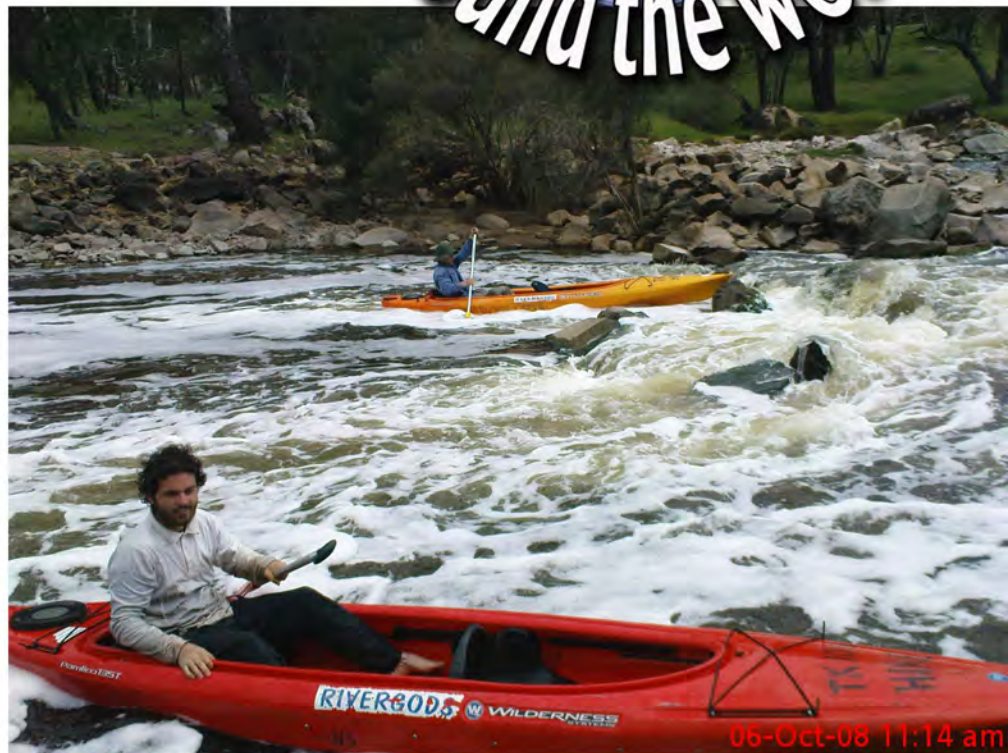
The next morning he arrived at the lakeside retreat where he was to speak in the afternoon. As soon as he got out of the car, it felt like he has just stepped into a furnace. The grass withered under



Missionary Trip To
Meghalaya



Youth Canoe
Trip In
Australia



06-Oct-08 11:14 am

The Bible shows us God in His high and holy place, not in a state of inactivity, not in silence and solitude, but surrounded by ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of holy intelligences, all waiting to do His will. Through channels which we cannot discern He is in active communication with every part of His dominion. But it is in this speck of a world, in the souls that He gave His only-begotten Son to save, that His interest and the interest of all heaven is centered. God is bending from His throne to hear the cry of the oppressed. To every sincere prayer He answers, "Here am I." He uplifts the distressed and downtrodden. In all our afflictions He is afflicted. In every temptation and every trial the angel of His presence is near to deliver.

Not even a sparrow falls to the ground without the Father's notice. Satan's hatred against God leads him to hate every object of the Saviour's care. He seeks to mar the handiwork of God, and he delights in destroying even the dumb creatures. It is only through God's protecting care that the birds are preserved to gladden us with their songs of joy. But He does not forget even the sparrows. "Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."

Jesus continues: As you confess Me before men, so I will confess you before God and the holy angels. You are to be My witnesses upon earth, channels through which My grace can flow for the healing of the world. So I will be your representative in heaven. The Father beholds not your faulty character, but He sees you as clothed in My perfection. I am the medium through which Heaven's blessings shall come to you. And everyone who confesses Me by sharing My sacrifice for the lost shall be confessed as a sharer in the glory and joy of the redeemed.
Ellen White, The First Evangelists, Pg. 357