

The background of the cover is a photograph of a lush garden. In the foreground, there is a pond with several large, grey rocks along its edge. A large, intricate sculpture of a dragonfly, made of thin, dark, woven material, stands prominently in the middle ground. The dragonfly's body is a vibrant orange-brown color. The background is filled with dense green foliage and trees under a clear blue sky. The title 'The Reformation Messenger' is written in a large, elegant, golden-yellow script font across the top. Below it, the volume and issue information is printed in a smaller, bold, golden-yellow sans-serif font. A small, white dove icon is positioned above the letter 'e' in 'Messenger'.

The Reformation
Messenger
VOLUME 23, NUMBER 9, SEPTEMBER 2016

The Saviour Who Redeems His People
Page 3

Stand Alone! Make No Compromise
Page 6

Abandoning Polytheism in all its Forms
Page 16

WE BELIEVE: The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides

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

IN THIS ISSUE:

3 The Saviour Who Redeems His People

6 Stand Alone! Make No Compromise

10 Fear God and Give Glory to Him

12 Greater is He That is in You

Canadian Field Conference 2016

16 Abandoning Polytheism in All Its Forms

20 Children's Corner: The Pond

22 Health Matters: Low Back Pain

23 Family and Youth Conferences USA 2016

PHOTO CREDITS

Front Cover Photo: Helen Marttinen, Boston, USA

Back Cover Photo: Wendy Eaton, Little River Canyon, USA

Inside Front Cover: Wendy Eaton, Little River Canyon, USA

The Reformation Messenger is published monthly. It is an Official Publication of the International Missionary Society the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Reform Movement, Canadian Field. Subscriptions can be paid online on the website or by mail.

- Telephone: 905-876-2518
- E-mail: imsessenger@yahoo.com
- Internet: www.imsessenger.org
- Mail: RR #3, 7899 15 Side Road Milton, ON L9T 2X7, Canada

COST:

Black & White x \$25.00 per year.

Colour x \$45.00 per year.

(Add \$10.00 North America and \$20.00 overseas shipping & handling)

Purchase all 22 years of the Messenger for \$200.00 (shipping included in price). Bound in books by year.

Catalogue is available upon request for all articles for 22 years.

The Saviour Who

Redeems

His People

“Wonderful is the work which the Lord designs to accomplish through His church, that His name may be glorified. . . . From the beginning God has wrought through His people to bring blessing to the world. To the ancient Egyptian nation God made Joseph a fountain of life. Through the integrity of Joseph the life of that whole people was preserved. Through Daniel God saved the life of all the wise men of Babylon. And these deliverances are as object lessons; they illustrate the spiritual blessings offered to the world through connection with the God whom Joseph and Daniel worshiped.”
—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 13

We have seen in previous articles how the Lord turned defeat into victory, in Daniel chapter one. Then in Daniel chapter two we read how the mighty God revealed the future to His people, helping them to get ready for His soon return. The kingdoms of this earth will soon come to an end and God’s kingdom will be set up for eternity. Daniel chapter three is about false worship and its enforcement upon those who diligently obey God’s voice and worship the Creator. The story of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego is a story we all know well. These three Hebrews were cast into the fiery furnace and came out alive. It is indeed a very well-known story in the Bible and when we read it again and again our faith grows as we become more acquainted with the Saviour who saved these three men.

In this article we will learn how a complete surrender to God will bring victory in our trials. The same God that saved the life of these three young, brave, and faithful Hebrews will save our life in the time of trou-

ble that is coming soon. The promises in the Bible are for you if you believe them and take God’s word just as it reads in its simplicity, applying its teachings to your personal life and talking about the blessings you received from other people.

The heart of God is filled with love for you and me, and our eternal destiny hinges upon the choices we make in this life. God’s love is revealed in a gentle pleading to our heart, but it is also revealed in solemn warnings. A loving, compassionate God reaches out to us daily. He is coming again for us and will put an end to sickness, disease, sorrow, hunger, pain, and death. However, a crucial test is coming; the conflict will revolve around true and false worship. The central issue is God’s eternal law.

I cannot write about Daniel 3 without reminding you about Revelation 13 where the plans of God are revealed, and the delusions of the enemy are unmasked. “And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him.” Revelation 13:12. In the Bible, a beast represents a kingdom. “And causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast.” Here you have the beast—a powerful kingdom (the United States of America)—causing the earth to worship the first beast (the Papacy). In Daniel 3 there is compelled

worship; in Revelation 13, there is compelled worship. In Daniel 3, there is a universal decree; in Revelation 13, there is a universal decree.

Every person has a choice to make who they will worship. The Creator or the Beast. I hope you



make the right choice in this life and worship the Creator. It is our faith that brings us victory, trusting God and His eternal word. There was trouble in Daniel's day, and there will be trouble in the end times also. Once again, a powerful world ruler will pass a universal decree uniting church and state. First will come an economic crisis. Revelation 13 says that nobody can buy or sell unless he has the mark of the image of the beast. There will be a counterfeit image, a counterfeit sign or mark of the beast's authority. The golden image on the plains of the Dura was a sign of the authority of Babylon, and worship of that image represented worship of Babylon. So also, there will be a sign, or mark, or symbol of the authority of Babylon that is connected to a state power. This will happen right at the time of the end. Those who do not go along with this church-state union, choosing to remain loyal and faithful to God, must have a faith that will face death and they must have unswerving loyalty to God. This is a faith similar to that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego.

In this chapter we read that Daniel's three friends were faithful while facing death, but nothing is said about Daniel who wrote the story. The events of Daniel 3 occurred several years after those of chapter 2, when Daniel interpreted King Nebuchadnezzar's dream of the great image and the king acknowledged Daniel's God as a God of gods. Although chapter 2 ends with Nebuchadnezzar apparently beginning to follow the true God, chapter 3 provides evidence that he has not given up his false gods. Nebuchadnezzar, like many of us, had not given up his former idols, yet we see how patiently God bore with Nebuchadnezzar, until he finally submitted to the true God.

These three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, took a strong stand for what was right. In Daniel 3:1 we read how Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold, whose height was threescore cubits (about 90 feet), and the breadth thereof six cubit (about 9 feet): he set it up on the plain of Dura, in the province of Babylon. Why would Nebuchadnezzar make an image of gold and put it in a place that everybody will see? What was behind that symbol? And why would the king invite the people of importance in the kingdom?

"Then Nebuchadnezzar the king sent to gather together the princes, the governors, and the captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, to come to the dedication of the image which Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up. Then the princes, the governors, and captains, the judges, the treasurers, the counsellors, the sheriffs, and all the rulers of the provinces, were gathered together unto the dedication of the image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up; and they stood before the image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Then an herald cried aloud, To you it is commanded, O people, nations, and languages, That at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king hath set up: And whoso falleth not down and worshippeth shall the same hour be cast into the midst of a burning fiery furnace." Daniel 3:2-6



Here we see the dedication of this image where Nebuchadnezzar commands all of his top officials in the empire to come fall down and worship the image. Notice here: A powerful world ruler, Nebuchadnezzar, passes a universal decree of forced obedience: "To you it is commanded, O peoples, nations, and languages." All are compelled to worship, and the central issue is worship.

For the three Hebrews, this counterfeit image stands in direct opposition to the truth of God. This is a great time of trouble, greater than any they have ever experienced, because their lives are at stake. But these three Hebrews, as we shall see, have a very strong faith and they experience a miraculous deliverance.

Think about that in the context of worship. If we believe that all the commandments of God are important, we will take an example from them. While all are important, we will choose one of them as an example here. We will choose the fourth commandment. If you believe that the seventh-day Sabbath is still important to God and His people, but if everyone else is believing and teaching that it does not matter which day is the Sabbath, that God really does not care, and if you just remain eloquently silent, saying nothing, this is, in reality, a violation of your conscience. It does not make God

happy. If we know what is right and do nothing about it, it brings us right under the shadow of sin.

“Therefore at that time, when all the people heard the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and all kinds of musick, all the people, the nations, and the languages, fell down and worshipped the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar the king had set up.” Daniel 3:7

Those who failed to worship the image were to be cast immediately into the midst of a burning fiery furnace. That was a death decree. “Then Nebuchadnezzar in his rage and fury commanded to bring Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Then they brought these men before the king. Nebuchadnezzar spake and said unto them, Is it true, O Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, do not ye serve my gods, nor worship the golden image which I have set up? Now if ye be ready that at what time ye hear the sound of the cornet, flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, and dulcimer, and all kinds of musick, ye fall down and worship the image which I have made; well: but if ye worship not, ye shall be cast the same hour into the midst of a burning fiery furnace; and who is that God that shall deliver you out of my hands?” Verses 13–15

Nebuchadnezzar then said he would give them another chance. He gave them a chance once, and now he was willing to give them a second chance. When the music began, they would be expected to be bowing down this time. “Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego answered and said to the king, O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer you in this matter.” Verse 16. Some decisions in life must be settled in your mind before you are required to act. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego went as far as they could. They went to the dedication. But they had decided before the event even happened that they were not going to yield from their conscientious convictions. They would be loyal to God. So they said to the King that they do not need to talk about it. He would not have to give them time to think, as they had already thought about it and made up their minds. If it were not for those three young and brave men there, I would not have written this message today. Have you ever felt like compromising? Compromising your faith? If my life were in peril, I would hope before God that I would take a firm stand for the truth and nothing but the truth. It would have been so easy for those men to have compromised.

Let us think for a moment. The more truth that a person understands, and the greater his convictions, the more responsible he is before God. The trial of these three young men will soon be our trial, and what will

be the outcome if we do not have a genuine faith in Christ? Some people have the idea that with faith, if you pray, you will never get sick, you will never be in debt, or you will never get discouraged. Their whole idea is that faith is like a little cloud that you sit on and ask God for whatever you want. But that is not the case. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego recognized that their faithfulness to God might lead them into the burning, fiery furnace. Faith does not deliver from the fire; it takes you through the fire. It is a strong belief in God, whether things go bad or good.

These three young and faithful Hebrews gave us a wonderful example of what faith means. They were committed to serving God, regardless of the consequences. May our faith be like that of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, so that we are committed to serving the Lord and demonstrating faith in the face of fire and death. Let us never forget when this happens, and you go through the flames of life, God is there. Jesus has a wonderful plan for us. When the time of trouble for you is not in the future but it is today, He is there. When you get a routine physical and discover that you have terminal cancer; when you are going through the flames of your life, and it seems that you are going to be consumed with discouragement and depression, look through your tears; because in the flames of your life, He is there. In the heartache of your life, He is there. In the disappointment of your life, He is there. What a great and mighty God we have my dear brothers, sisters, and friends.

Are you going through some flames in your life today? Are you going through some sorrow in your life? Are you going through some heartache or disappointment in your life? Let us never forget, when this happens and you go through the flames of life, God is there. Jesus has such a wonderful plan for us. He wants you to develop a loving, trusting, confident, obedient relationship with Him and He wants to help you with it. We cannot have this relationship unless He dwells in the heart. The first place to begin is to invite Him to come into your heart. And then as He comes into your heart, you begin to spend time with Him, in His Word, in prayer and with His people. I want to be ready for Jesus' coming. I wish all of you would be ready for His coming. And we can be if we let the Savior enter our heart right now.

Nicholas Anca



had been expressly forbidden to eat. Daniel was brought to a severe test. Should he adhere to the teachings of his fathers concerning meat and drinks, and offend the king, and probably lose not only his position but his life? Or should he disregard the commandment of the Lord, and retain the favor of the king, thus securing great intellectual advantages

and the most flattering worldly prospects? Daniel did not long hesitate. He decided to stand firm in his integrity, let the result be what it might. He "purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank." Daniel 1:8

"Thou shalt not follow a multitude to do evil." "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God, and the LORD hath chosen thee to be a peculiar people unto Himself, above all the nations that are upon the earth." Exodus 23:2; Deuteronomy 14:2

It is human to stand with the crowd; it is divine to stand alone. It is manlike to follow the people, to drift with the tide; it is godlike to follow a principle, to stem the tide. It is natural to compromise conscience and follow the social and religious fashion for the sake of gain or pleasure; it is divine to sacrifice both on the altar of truth and duty. When Christians begin to compromise elements of truth, sacrificing biblical moral principles for the sake of achieving peace, it can be eternally fatal. In the words of Martin Luther; *"Peace if possible, truth at all cost." All compromise is not bad. But if it concerns sin, "stand alone and make no compromise."*

For the dedicated Christian, it is impossible to have both the acceptance of the world and the approval of our heavenly Father. Jesus said, "No servant can serve two masters" (Luke 16:13). And James put it this way: "Know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God." James 4:4. Thus, according to God's Word, it is impossible for a Christian to enjoy the acceptance of the world and all its sinful pleasures while simultaneously enjoying the peace and assurance that comes from a saving relationship with Jesus. "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" Amos 3:3. The sad truth is that millions of professing Christians around the world are searching for a way to strike a comfortable compromise between their convictions and the wicked world in which we live.

For Daniel, among the viands placed before the king were wine, flesh, and other meats which were declared unclean by the Law of Moses, and which the Hebrews

"WRITTEN FOR OUR ADMONITION"

"No man stood with me, but all men forsook me" (2 Timothy 4:16), wrote the battle-scarred apostle Paul in describing his first appearance before Nero to answer for his life for believing and teaching contrary to the Roman world. Was he alone? Noah built and voyaged alone. His neighbours laughed at his strangeness, foolishness, and then they perished. Abraham wandered and worshiped alone. "In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. . . . His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred." – *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126. Daniel dined and prayed alone. Elijah sacrificed and witnessed alone. Jeremiah prophesied and wept alone. In the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, the Jews began to rebuild the temple that had been destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. In Ezra 4:1–2, the Bible records, "Now when the adversaries of Judah and Benjamin heard that the children of the captivity builded the temple. . . . and said unto them, Let us build with you: for we seek your God, as ye do; and we do sacrifice unto Him." But the Jews knew these neighbouring nations that were coming combined the worship of the true God with their Assyrian pagan gods. How did Israel

respond? They “said unto them, Ye have nothing to do with us to build an house unto our God; but we ourselves together will build unto the LORD.” Ezra 4:3. They made the right choice, refusing to let unconverted pagans influence them in how they built the Lord’s holy temple. Jesus lived and died alone. And of the lonely way His disciples should walk He said, “Strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.” Matthew 7:14. Of their treatment by the many who walk in the broad way He said, “If ye were of the world, the world would love his own: but because ye are not of the world, . . . therefore the world hateth you.” John 15:19

The church in the wilderness praised Abraham, and persecuted Moses. The church of the Kings praised Moses, and persecuted the prophets. The church of Caiaphas praised the prophets, and persecuted Jesus. The church of the popes praised the Saviour, and persecuted the saints. And multitudes now, in both the church and the world, applaud the courage and fortitude of the patriarchs and prophets, the apostles and martyrs, but condemn as stubbornness or foolishness like faithfulness to truth today. Wanted, today, men and women, young and old, who will obey their convictions of truth and duty at the cost of fortune and friends and life itself.

To the reproaches of his enemies, who taunted him with the weakness of his cause, Luther answered: “Who knows if God has not chosen and called me to perform this needed work, and if these babblers ought not to fear that by despising me, they despise God Himself? They say I am alone; no, for Jehovah is with me. In their sense, Moses was alone at the departure from Egypt; Elijah was alone in the reign of King Ahab; Isaiah was alone in Jerusalem; Ezekiel was alone in Babylon. Hear this, O Rome: God never selected as a prophet either the high priest or any great personage; but rather, He chose low and despised men, once even the shepherd Amos. In every age the saints have been compelled to rebuke kings, princes, recreant priests, and wise men at the peril of their lives.’ ‘I do not say that I also am a prophet; but I do say that they ought to fear precisely because I am alone, while on the side of the oppressor are numbers, caste, wealth, and mocking letters. Yes, I am alone; but I stand serene, because side by side with me is the Word of God; and with all their boasted numbers, this, the greatest of powers, is not with them.’” — *The Great Controversy 1888*, p. 142

COMPROMISING THE CONSCIENCE—FOLLOWING THE MULTITUDE

Wanting to appease the majority, Pilate explains that he

will have Christ beaten and then released. Yet if Jesus is innocent, why have Him beaten? The answer is, once you begin to walk down the road of compromise, no matter where you stop, the devil will pick you up and complete the walk for you. You have already signaled your weakness to him by displaying a willingness to negotiate with wrong if the price is right. Once you begin sacrificing your convictions, it is very easy to slide down into ruin. Sensing Pilate’s weakness, Satan used the crowd to press the vacillating ruler all the way for crucifixion. Pilate started down the road of negotiating with evil, and that is where the devil wanted him. That is why when Pilate attempted to outsmart the devil, it backfired. He offered them Barabbas as a compromise instead of Jesus. Pilate paraded the cold-blooded killer in front of the throngs as an example of real evil to contrast with the example of a sinless Christ. He must have thought to himself, “They just want to see a crucifixion so I will offer them a compromise, and they will obviously pick Jesus.” He never dreamed they would ask him to release Barabbas, but that is exactly what they did.

Finally, Pilate’s little concession of compromise got to the place where it was completely out of his hands. In vain, “When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.” Matthew 27:24. But was he really clean? He had declared the Saviour just, but conformed his sentence to the pressure of the crowd.



Likewise, when we begin to compromise with truth, and our actions finally get out of hand and the consequences come full and hard, we will not be able to claim innocence either. So once you start thinking of going down the road of compromise, remember Pilate. Remember that Jesus died because someone thought they could compromise truth.

DO NOT COMPROMISE WITH SIN; CLOSE YOUR MIND TO CONFORMITY

When you are being tempted by someone or something to compromise your convictions, steer as far away as you can from the edge of the evil. Do not let sin work on you, whittling down your resolve. Eve wandered too close to the forbidden tree and then waited to hear Satan’s rationalizations. As soon as she saw the tree and heard the serpent question God’s truth, she should have

run for cover. The Word of God commands us to flee from temptation (1 Timothy 6:11).

When it comes to compromising the Word of God, do not have an open mind. You are going to be called a conservative for not accepting the standards of the world. But do not be intimidated when you are accused of being “close-minded.” It is good to be closed-minded regarding the commandments of God. I have a wife with whom I have covenanted—I am not open-minded about anything that would destroy that promise. The devil is setting up the church in the last days by preaching a message of unity through compromise. Little by little, he is softening our resolve, encouraging us to make little concessions and compromises so that when that big test comes, he has us where he wants us.

Read Daniel 3 and bear with my loose paraphrase. Nebuchadnezzar said to Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, “So you didn’t bow down? I’ll tell you what: I don’t want to lose you; you’re good workers. I’ll give you another chance and have the band play the music one more time. Perhaps you just want a little different song? But when you hear the sound, you need to bow down.” But the three young Hebrews resolutely told the king he need not waste his time on them. “O Nebuchadnezzar, we are not careful to answer thee in this matter. If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king.

But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up.” Daniel 3:16–18). They did not negotiate, even when the devil tried to engage them. The devil would rather have you die after you have disobeyed than die a martyr and be a victorious example. But if you die in this world, upholding the Word, you will live in the next. So today, we need to be faithful in that which is least. We may not think the little tests we face now are a matter of life and death, but if we cannot learn arithmetic with pennies, we will never understand it with dollars. If we compromise and conform now in the little

things, with no death threat hanging over our heads, what are we likely to do when we are threatened with imprisonment or death?

BE “A SPECIAL PEOPLE”

The Spirit of Prophecy is clear: “Make no compromise with those who have apostatized.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 9, p. 363. “We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the cause of men and angels.” —*Evangelism*, p. 179. “Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In our opinions and faith there must not be the

least appearance of wavering. The world has a right to expect something of us.” —*The Review and Herald*, January 31, 1893. “The Lord would have his people a separate and peculiar people. ‘For thou art an holy people unto the Lord thy God,’ He says, ‘the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a special people unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth. The LORD did not set His love upon you, nor choose you, because ye were more in number than any people; for ye were the fewest of all people; but because the LORD loved you, and because He would keep the oath which He had sworn unto your fathers, hath the LORD brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen.’” —*The Youth’s Instructor*, August 25, 1898 (see also *Pastoral Ministry* p. 58)

William Jennings Bryan said,

“Never be afraid to stand with a minority that is right, for the minority which is right will someday be the majority. Always be afraid to stand with the majority that is wrong, for the majority that is wrong will someday be the minority.”

Ellen White, inspired, wrote:

“The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold, men who in their inmost souls are true and honest, men who do not fear to call sin by its right name, men whose conscience is as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men who will stand for the right though the heavens fall.” —*Education*, p. 57

PREPARING CHILDREN TO STAND ALONE FIRMLY

“Those who have seen the truth and felt its importance, and have had an experience in the things of God, are to teach sound doctrine to their children. They should make them acquainted with the great pillars of our faith, the reasons why we are Seventh-day Adventists—why we are called, as were the children of Israel, to be a peculiar people, a holy nation, separate and distinct from all other people on the face of the earth. These things should be ex-



plained to the children in simple language, easy to be understood; and as they grow in years, the lessons imparted should be suited to their increasing capacity, until the foundations of truth have been laid broad and deep.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 495

BE COURAGEOUS!

The students of one military academy in America would recite the Cadet’s Prayer in the chapel: “Make us to choose the harder right instead of the easier wrong, and never to be content with a half-truth when the whole truth can be won. Endow us with courage that is born of loyalty to all that is noble and worthy, that scorns to compromise with vice and injustice and knows no fear when truth and right are in jeopardy.” That kind of noble resolve is something you scarcely hear about anymore. It is believed by many to be virtuous to compromise truth in the name of unity, but not according to the Bible.

Refusing to buckle to the pressure of compromise requires divine courage. The Lord told Joshua, “Only be thou strong and very courageous, that thou mayest observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded thee: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that thou mayest prosper whithersoever thou goest.” Joshua 1:7

We do not need to worry that God will not forgive us if we sincerely repent of our compromise and turn the other way. But when we sin, when we stumble into error, we train ourselves to go down that road again. God can give you a new heart, but do not think you can continue to compromise and not reap the consequences. Continued compromise can numb your conscience, until it is the fruit of conformity with the world.

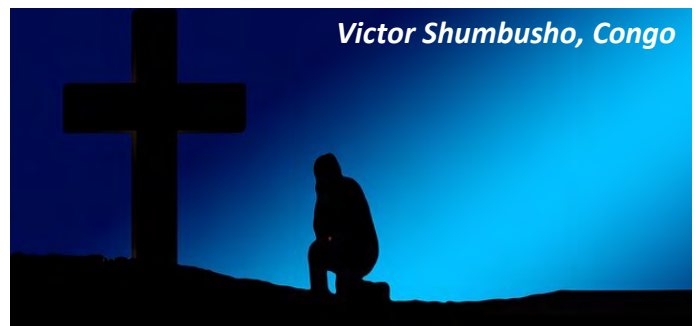
In every age, God has called His servants to lift up their voices against the prevailing errors and sins of the multitude. Noah was called to stand alone to warn the antediluvian world. Moses and Aaron were alone against kings and princes, magicians and wise men, and the multitudes of Egypt. Elijah was alone when he testified against an apostate king and a backsliding people. Daniel and his fellows stood alone against the decrees of mighty monarchs. The majority are usually to be found on the side of error and falsehood. The fact that doctors of divinity have the world on their side does not prove them to be on the side of truth and of God. The wide gate and the broad road attract the multitudes, while the strait gate and the narrow way are sought only by the few. “Make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.” Romans 13:14. Once we know that something is right according to God’s Word, our responsibility

is to take our stand. God will do great things for those who stand up for Him. He is looking for representatives who will trust Him. “For the eyes of the LORD run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to shew Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him.” 2 Chronicles 16:9

When you stand firm for truth, your life will be a saving witness to your family, your friends, your neighbours, and even the heavenly agencies. God will look down from heaven and say, “Hast thou considered My servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, . . . one that feareth God and escheweth evil?” Job 1:8. However, do not miss this important reality. If you stand up for what is right and do not get involved in apostate alliances, you will be persecuted for it. First, the devil’s approach will be, “Let’s just work together. Let’s all love each other. Compromise a little on your convictions; we’ll compromise a little on ours, and then we’ll be united. After all, unity is so important!” If you don’t fall for that trap and take a stand for truth, they will become your worst enemy, which really tells you where their hearts were in the first place.

This is a vitally important lesson as we head into the last days, because eventually all the world’s religions will make concessions to form a united religious front that will ultimately promote the worship of the beast power. If we are developing a pattern now of sacrificing our convictions for the illusion of peace, we are paving the way in preparation to worship the beast. “Those who have yielded step by step to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will then yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision, insult, threatened imprisonment, and death.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 188

With God all things are possible, including living a life without worldly conformity and compromise. Resolve now by His grace to stand on the Rock and resist the waves of compromise that are sweeping God’s children from the shores of salvation. And always remember that when you take your stand, you do not stand alone. Jesus stands with you. So, you are “alone but not alone.” Amen.



Victor Shumbusho, Congo



Fear God and Give Glory to Him

“Saying with a loud voice, Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come: and worship Him that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Revelation 14:7

This is our message to the world, which should make people tremble. It has been proclaimed since 1831, and now we are closer to the end of the judgment, which determines the destiny of every human being. The purpose of this message is to prepare the people for the judgment hour. But only a few people take this message seriously. Most do not give glory to God; instead of giving glory to God, they give it to men of talent, to the sportsmen, and to the wisest, and most educated, and to the wealthiest—and God is forgotten.

“When men cast off the fear of God they are not long in departing from honour and integrity.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 557

Those who have lost the fear of God have no respect for the word of God; it is neglected and ignored. Neither have they respect for the house of God, because they do not feel the presence of God; therefore, the sanctuary where we meet God is to them a common house where they can play, whisper, and turn their minds to other themes.

“Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is My throne, and the earth is My footstool: where is the house that ye build unto Me? and where is the place of My rest? For all those things hath Mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at My word.” Isaiah 66:1–2

God will look to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at His word.

“For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness,

and darkness, and tempest, And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard in-treated that the word should not be spoken to them any more: (For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart: And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake:) But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.” Hebrews 12:18–24

We are not only meeting people in our church, but we are in the presence of the eternal, mighty God and His angels, and the Holy Spirit. The question comes, who shall be able to stand before God in the storm that is before us, and in the judgment hour?

The answer is, only those who have heeded the warning to fear God, and give glory to Him: who made the heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters. This time our faith and loyalty will be tested to the utmost, and only a few will remain faithful in our churches. It is lack of knowledge that causes many professed Christians to lose their faith. “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee.” Hosea 4:6

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge.” Proverbs 1:7

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom.” Psalm 111:10

Many professing Christians do not have the fear of the Lord. In secret, in their private life, sins are committed,

which human eyes may not witness, but God who sees all turns away from such professors of religion.

Moses realized that God was with him, watching his every step, listening to his every word, and reading his every thought. "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:27

What does the fear of the Lord do to us? "The fear of the LORD is to hate evil: pride, and arrogancy, and the evil way, and the froward mouth, do I hate." Proverbs 8:13

"The fear of the LORD prolongeth days." Proverbs 10:27. The fear of the Lord gives us a long life, even life eternal.

"In the fear of the LORD is strong confidence: and His children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." Proverbs 14:26–27

"By humility and the fear of the LORD are riches, and honour, and life." Proverbs 22:4

But, what happens to those who fear man? "The fear of man bringeth a snare: but whoso putteth his trust in the LORD shall be safe." Proverbs 29:25

When the people of Israel had come to Mount Sinai, to the presence of God, they trembled with fear. Even Moses said, "I exceedingly fear and quake," so terrible was the sight. We have come also to the presence of God the Father, Jesus, and the angels.

How respectful we must be in the presence of all these heavenly beings. The prophets were filled with solemn awe in the presence of an angel, and cast themselves to the ground. But many did not have this fear of God, they had fear of men.

Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron did not fear God; they brought strange fire into the sanctuary to satisfy men. "And Nadab and Abihu died before the LORD, when they offered strange fire before the LORD, in the wilderness of Sinai." Numbers 3:4

Also, Uzza did not fear God; he touched the ark of covenant which God had forbidden. "And when they came unto the threshingfloor of Chidon, Uzza put forth his hand to hold the ark; for the oxen stumbled. And the anger of the LORD was kindled against Uzza, and He smote him, because he put his hand to the ark: and there he died before God." 1 Chronicles 13:9–10

The men of Bethshemesh did not fear God; they looked into the ark of God, which was forbidden. "And He smote the men of Bethshemesh, because they had looked into the ark of the LORD, even He smote of the people fifty thousand and threescore and ten men: and the people

lamented, because the LORD had smitten many of the people with a great slaughter. And the men of Bethshemesh said, Who is able to stand before this holy LORD God? and to whom shall He go up from us?" 1 Samuel 6:19–20

"When the Israelites first settled in Canaan they acknowledged the principles of the theocracy, and the nation prospered under the rule of Joshua. But an increase in population and intercourse with other nations brought a change. The people adopted many of the customs of their heathen neighbours and thus sacrificed to a great degree their own peculiar, holy character. Gradually they lost their reverence for God and ceased to prize the honour of being His chosen people." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 603

Let us not forget that we do not stand before a man, but we stand before God; to Him we must answer and give account. Often we do not have a clear picture of the greatness of God, neither of His holiness. Yet the Bible and nature reveals to us a glimpse of Him.

I read in an astronomy book about the stars and galaxies. In the Milky Way, to which we belong, there are 70 billion stars, and there are billions of these galaxies. Some galaxies they have found to be more than 15 billion light years away—light, which travels seven times around our world in one second. More than 15 billion years ago, Christ made this galaxy and now the light is reaching our planet. "To whom then will ye liken Me, or shall I be equal? Saith the Holy One. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things, that bringeth out their host by number: He calleth them all by names by the greatness of His might, for that He is strong in power; not one faileth." Isaiah 40:26

Christ knows them all by name; He made them all and cares for them. Yet He has time to attend to us, to listen to our prayers, and care for us, and to be with us to the end. Yet, many tell Christ to wait; they are too busy now with other things. They say, later when I have time, I will come to You. They have the attitude that Christ is their servant; when they have need, they will call on Him.

They say, "Protect me, bless me, and in return I give you a few hours of my precious time, and also even some of my money." Will such people be in heaven one day? No—never. Yet this is a common attitude toward God. People love themselves more than they love God.

Let us fall before the great and holy God, trembling, and with solemn respect.

Fear God and give glory to Him. This is the message which we must proclaim to the world. All who fear God lose their fear of men. Amen. **Timo Martin**



“Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world.” 1 John 4:4

This was the theme of the Canadian Field conference 2016 (July 29–31, 2016). Each of the messages presented gave a view and progression on how we can overcome and continue to walk in the paths of light.

Brother Morris Lowe opened the conference by giving us a message regarding “The Greatest Battle” that we have to face. Although this battle may seem severe at times, we have to remember that “Greater is He that is in you.” As long as we are alive we are engaged in this battle. No one is exempted; all are involved, from the day of birth to the day of death. There is no release from this battle.

The battle originally began with a terrible war in heaven (Revelation 12:7–9). Satan and his followers lost this battle completely and were cast out. Their homes are now vacant. The wicked angels take this battle personally as the saints will one day dwell in their homes which they vacated. Today, Satan is very angry as he knows he only has a short time. “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Peter 5:8. War is not for cowards. In this battle supernatural power is needed as we are all weak and fragile. Our only hope is through the Holy Spirit, the indwelling of Christ (1 John 4:4). This is the only way we can gain the victory. The power of God is greater and is infinite. Although the battle against the powers of darkness is a

severe battle, the greatest battle is the warfare against self. “Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots? then may ye also do good, that are accustomed to do evil.” Jeremiah 13:23. Although the condition of man appears seemingly hopeless, with God all things are possible. We can live a victorious Christian life. “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 40

The subject “The Snares of Satan” was shared with us by Elder Hernandez. He told of the story of Cortez in the 16th century who came to Central America. When he came, there were people who emerged from the jungle. The indigenous people were friendly and took him to meet their king. Cortez killed the king and overcame the people and took their gold. Why were they overcome so easily? They believed that the gods would come in ships and shining armor to save them. Their own ideas misled them. We can only wonder how some could be misled so easily.

Today, Satan has many snares for the believers in Christ. Many are seemingly misled so easily by their own ideas. Satan has lasted for 6,000 years on this earth and he knows his time is short; so his activity has intensified and become more subtle. He sets many snares for God’s people. Today, one of his most common snares is that it does not matter what people believe; as long as they believe in Jesus they will be in heaven. However, “the devils also believe, and tremble” (James 2:19), and they will not be in heaven. We

must believe and practice all of the words of Jesus in the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy. Satan will tell half truths as he told Eve. Truth is only relative, not absolute, he says. We can see that the state of society today has declined with all its “acceptable” beliefs such as life after death, remarriage, homosexuality and so on, which are all considered acceptable beliefs for Christians. Satan has other snares, such as keeping people very busy so that they have no time for prayer, Bible study and church attendance. The unconverted heart does not see the true importance of church fellowship and has a general distrust of God. When trials come, these people doubt God’s leading. They lack sincere faith. Satan has many more subtle snares that he is using to his utmost to draw the people of God away from a true commitment. We must place our hearts in the hands of Jesus to be free from these snares.

On Sabbath morning, Brother Pablo Hunger, from the General Conference, gave us a message of “Victory Through the Indwelling Christ.” The Lord gives His people power against all the difficulties in life. He showed in His ministry how victory is possible. We read in the story of the demonic in the Bible (Mark 5:1–8), that only Jesus could set him free. No chains could hold him any more. Jesus was not afraid to meet this man as were the disciples because He knew that His power was greater. This power is available for us also.

We have all been born under the bondage of sin and only Jesus can set us free. He is greater than all our problems. The Lord wants to transform us and give us power. The things that were temptations for us in the past can no longer be temptations, in Christ. The Apostle Paul came to this conclusion when he wrote, “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but

Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20. We may think that today we are strong, but when the storm comes, we will see the reality. It was during a storm that Martin Luther gave himself to the Lord. The Lord wants to give us His power and blessing. And this power is for the purpose of transforming our characters, to give us victory over sin; this is only possible through the indwelling of Christ in our lives.

The transformation of character is also described as “being born again.” Brother Oscar Oviedo shared this subject in the afternoon. “The new birth is a rare experience in this age of the world. This is the reason why there are so many perplexities in the churches. Many, so many, who assume the name of Christ are unsanctified and unholy. They have been baptized, but they were buried alive. Self did not die, and therefore they did not rise to newness of life in Christ.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 12, p. 51. The Lord has given us all things that are needed to be born again. God is calling us to reach the high standard of perfection. Satan loves to make you doubt, but even when surrounded by difficulties and temptations, we can have victory in Christ. Once we have gained the victory, we are born again. It is a daily experience.

For Sabbath closing, Brother George Gowie, visiting from Jamaica, shared with us the subject of “Guarding the Avenues of the Soul.” Man was created perfect in the image of God. But man fell when Eve saw something she loved. She took it and ate and gave to Adam, who also ate. Why? She started to see the fruit as something to be desired. She looked, and lost her senses. We cannot play with the devil. We have the example of Joseph who was faithful in the face of great temptation. He saw a beautiful woman and did not fall. David, on the other hand, looked, and fell. There is seeing, and then there is seeing. There is evil all around us and it all depends on how we look at it. Two men can be walking down the street and see a beautiful woman dressed promiscuously—one will look away in disgust and put it out of his mind, while the other looks with longing and desire. The two men see her differently.

We cannot do good unless good is inside of us. “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he.” Proverbs 23:7. We are all sick with sin; when we tell God honestly who we are then we are on the way to heaven. We must die and then we can guard who we are. Satan has made many inventions today to



keep people looking at evil—from the TV to the iPad to the smart phone. These can all be used as tools of the devil to keep people looking at evil whenever they want during the day. These tools can also be used for good; however, more often than not, they are used for selfish purposes only, to distract people’s minds from the reality of the evils in this world and the time in which we live. There are many distractions that have been created by the prince of evil, such as evil music, which is also destroying many people.

We are to guard carefully so that the things of this world do not attract us. We were made in the image of God, to live forever; and when man sinned, Jesus came to save us. We are to look to Him daily so we can become like Him. Jesus encourages the youth to keep the fires burning. As we read the stories in the Bible of the crossing of the Red Sea and the Hebrew worthies in the fiery furnace we should remember that this same God is with us today. May God help us to walk the other way when we see sin and guard all the avenues of our soul.

On Sunday morning seven dear souls made their covenant with God in baptism. The gates of heaven were rejoicing as these souls turned their backs on the world and decided to go forward with Jesus.

Following the baptism, Brother Nicholas Anca, shared with us the subject of “Faith is the Victory.” “Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8. This indicates that true faith is scarce. Although we read, “God hath dealt to every man the measure of faith” (Romans 12:3), it should ever be our prayer to increase our faith. Faith is as a plant. It must be watered in order to grow. And how can it grow? “So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” Romans 10:17. Studying the Word of God must be a priority in our lives. But it is not enough just to familiarize ourselves with key Bible verses; it must be put into practice. Some people listen and then lose what they have heard because they do not mingle what they read with faith. Faith is not only praying for personal things, but it is praying for others. That faith must be exercised daily and kept—do not let anyone take it away from you. Share what Jesus has done for you and the Lord will open up opportunities for you. Faith is the key to victory. Believe that the Lord will do as He said He will. Never doubt.

Once we have received the light and been born

again, we must not stand still. We must walk. Brother Renzo Suarez shared with us the importance of walking in the light. There are two essential items in this subject. We must have the light, and we must walk in the light. And this light is found in, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” Psalm 119:105. We have light and we have a path. Jesus said, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” John 8:12. When the light is in us, we will be a light to the world. We are not to give our own light as we have none to give, but to share the light we have been given. You are a precious pearl, you are His child. The power of light is more powerful than the power of darkness. Satan has deceived many in the world to think that the powers of darkness are stronger. Through the many movies that have been created, evil often seems to triumph.

Darkness, in reality, is disorder. Everyone has their own rules. Sometimes this sentiment can enter God’s church. For example: some questionable foods, “This food is ok for me, but not for you.” “This dress is ok for me, but not for you.” And so on. There can be a variety of standards, but this is not as it should be. God wants to bring light and order. No amount of darkness can turn off a candle. The smallest candle can dispel the greatest darkness. Any light that we can bring will



cause the darkness to flee. God can show us the path, but we are the ones who have to walk in it and follow the light. And light is to continue to grow. "But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day." Proverbs 4:18. The purpose of the light is to destroy the darkness. It is designed to reach others, our families and friends. Light also produces heat. The Laodicean Christian is seen to be in a lukewarm state and needs heat to become hot. When the truth comes it burns. The men on the way to Emmaus ++stated, "Did not our heart burn within us, while He talked with us by the way, and while He opened to us the scriptures?" Luke 24:32. The light of a radiant Christian heats the hearts of those that are listening. There is nothing that can separate us from the Love of God.

All too soon it came time for the closing address by Brother Pablo Hunger. We may be departing, but we have something that unites. We are all one family. "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will." Ephesians 1:5. We are adopted and Jesus promised to receive us as His children. We have a Father that cares for us. The love of God is not a mere sentiment, but it is power. The man who does the will of God shows love.

We all have responsibilities in this life and we begin

with our family with our parents. Even if we are adults, we are to love and respect our parents. If the love of Christ is in us, we will do practical things. Help your parents, not just by giving them a flower in the cemetery, but take time for them today. In marriage, husbands are to protect the home and the wife; the wife is to support the husband. Some families are such in name only. The centre of every family is to be God. It is not enough to just go to church but to bring God into the home. When love disappears in some families and there is a separation, God has promised to be our husband and father. We were encouraged never to miss an opportunity to go to a conference. Sometimes we may think it is too much money, but later you will suffer greater when your children go to the world. Make your children your priority. We must be decided in our purpose to follow the Lord and walk in the light. This is the only way we can have true love in our home, in the church, and to those around us.

Although we may face many trials as we make a firm decision to follow the Lord in every aspect of our lives; however, if we invite the Lord into our hearts, we *will* gain the victory over every sin, temptation, and snare that Satan puts in our way, by the indwelling of Christ, by faith. Remember that, "greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world." 1 John 4:4.

Amen.





Abandoning Polytheism in All Its Forms

Idolatry is worshiping anything that ought to be used, or using anything that ought to be worshiped.

Hideyoshi, a Japanese warlord who ruled over Japan in the late 1500s, commissioned a colossal statue of Buddha for a shrine in Kyoto. It took 50,000 men five years to build, but the work had scarcely been completed when the earthquake of 1596 brought the roof of the shrine crashing down and wrecked the statue. In a rage Hideyoshi shot an arrow at the fallen colossus. "I put you here at great expense," he shouted, "and you can't even look after your own temple."

First of all, what is polytheism? Polytheism is the worship of multiple gods, and in many cases it is the worship of hundreds of gods. With polytheism the gods can either be autonomous and acting individually, or they can be emanations of a creator god. In this second case it is believed that all the other gods flow out from the creator god and display different aspects of the creator god's character.

One key aspect with Polytheism is that, despite what some may say, there is really no unity between the gods; and their characters are, in many cases, quite contradictory. They in no way represent a single absolute idea or uniform set of character traits/attributes. Even if they argue that their many gods are simply many emanations of a creator god, this creator god they are referring to is one that does not stand for any one set of principles, and is actually quite a fickle god, sometimes being filled with love and compassion and other times given to fits of rage. This sort of god would have someone living in fear and in constant suspense.

Using the example of the gods of the ancient Greeks, they had their twelve gods and these gods represented various aspects of the human experience. They actually had more than twelve gods, but in the times of antiquity the twelve supreme gods were rather fluid and the deification or honour of certain gods would change over time. This is evidence that these gods are merely an invention of the human mind because, according to the time or place, different gods were regarded as supreme. In addition, the same gods wor-

shipped in different cities tended to take on slightly different characteristics, according to the regional preference.

Their god, Ares, was the god of war, bloodshed, and violence. Then you have Aphrodite, the goddess of love. You also have Dionysus, the god of wine, parties, festivals, and chaos. Then you have the goddess Athena who is the goddess of skill, intelligence, and peace. These are very contradictory character traits and attributes. And if you look at the 12 gods/goddesses of the Greeks closely they sum up all parts of the human experience, and all the human emotions one could feel. It is clear that they are inventions of the human mind because they take on human attributes. The human mind could logically only create gods that they could understand in human terms, and by giving these gods human characteristics they are easily understandable to the average person. This is a far cry from the God of the Bible who says, My thoughts are higher than your thoughts and My ways higher than your ways (Isaiah 55:8-9). A far cry from the God of the Bible whose ways are often mysterious to us.

The Christian religion has been accused of being a polytheistic religion because they have God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Christians state that they are Monotheistic, but their opposers say that three Gods certainly seem to imply plurality. The truth is that the Christian faith has no similarity to the polytheistic religions, because the true God is perfectly united within the Godhead and all work in perfect unity together, standing for the same one belief system, the same code of morals and ethics, the same doctrinal basis, and the same standards and expectations. Serving this God is pure joy, because you never have to fear or be in suspense or wonder what is coming next. A fickle nature is the territory of humans and all false gods.

We will now use the example of Nebuchadnezzar, this great king who we believe will be saved. What a stunning picture we have of King Nebuchadnezzar, the most powerful man on earth in his time, reduced to eating grass as an ox (Daniel

4:30–33). Do you think it would make headline news if President Obama was reduced to this same level?

We can only speculate as to what Nebuchadnezzar's exact diagnosis was. Was this a somewhat common malady at the time, or was it a unique experience? One thing we do know for sure is that there is one example in the archeological record of a man in ancient times, who ate grass like a cow, and this is on an unpublished cuneiform tablet in the British museum.

Why did Nebuchadnezzar have to go through this terrible experience? Many of us know the answer to this and say that he was clearly lifted up in pride, and it was necessary for him to go through this experience in order to humble himself and recognize the authority of Jehovah. But I believe we can go a little deeper than that. What caused him to be so lifted up in pride in the first place? People do not get lifted up in pride in a moment, there is a process that occurs before someone gets so lifted up in pride that God must bring them down through specific experiences, in order to humble that pride. When an individual goes through these experiences they can either fall on the Rock that is Christ and be broken, or they can resist God's call to mercy and allow these experiences to crush them. So what exact process did Nebuchadnezzar go through that caused him to be so lifted up in pride?

Firstly, King Nebuchadnezzar was extremely thankful that Daniel was able to interpret his dream of the image that had troubled him so much (Daniel 2:47-48). Nebuchadnezzar then refers to the fact that Daniel's God is a God of gods, and a Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets. What we can imply from Nebuchadnezzar's exact words is that, in his mind, this God of Daniel's was only one God amongst many. Saying that he is a God of gods may even suggest that He is in the upper echelon of gods, but certainly not the only god or the one true God.

From Nebuchadnezzar's words that Daniel's God is the Lord of kings and a revealer of secrets (seeing as how He was able to reveal this secret) we see that he is trying to find a niche for this new God, alongside and within the framework of all the Babylonian gods. He is trying to identify the character traits and attributes of this God in order to pigeon hole God.

In the very next chapter (Daniel 3) we find Nebuchadnezzar building this image to himself in order to bring honour and glory to himself and the gods of Babylon, suggesting that his kingdom will last forever. If Babylon was to last forever the natural implication is that God's kingdom, as represented by the stone cut out without hands, will never come. This whole scenario was a very pro-active measure on the part of Nebuchadnezzar to put man's authority and the authority of those gods created by man over God's authority.

The result of this whole scenario was that the three He-

brews, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego were cast into the fiery furnace because they showed their faithfulness to the one true God by refusing to bow the knee before the authority of man, and all that is created by him.

But God had other plans. "Then Nebuchadnezzar the king was astonished, and rose up in haste, and spake, and said unto his counsellors, Did not we cast three men bound into the midst of the fire? They answered and said unto the king, True, O king. He answered and said, Lo, I see four men loose, walking in the midst of the fire, and they have no hurt; and the form of the fourth is like the Son of God." Daniel 3:24-25. These words are very powerful because they tell us what results when man tries to exert his authority. The great God that we serve used the very scenario that Nebuchadnezzar was attempting to use to display his superior authority and the superior authority of Babylon's gods, to prove how weak and futile the authority of these entities was compared to the one true God. God often does this because, sometimes it is hard for men to think in absolute terms about God and His power. However, when He displays His power in relative terms, as relative to the weakness of false gods and humans, this contrast assists us in understanding a little of God's greatness and authority.

If God had allowed these three faithful followers of His to die in the fiery furnace, His name would not have been vindicated in the powerful way it was. Make no mistake about it, this was a powerful vindication of the strength and power of the one true God, and in the very process of trying to prove the strength of man and false gods, their weakness and futility was revealed. Nobles and representatives from the whole earth were there on that occasion and they brought this astonishing story with them back to their respective homes. In this way the inhabitants of the whole earth heard about the one true God and had the opportunity to serve Him.

Nebuchadnezzar replies at the conclusion of this event by saying, "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither. Then Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, came forth of the midst of the fire. Nebuchadnezzar now speaks, and says, Blessed be the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, who hath sent His angel, and delivered His servants that trusted in Him, and have changed the king's word, and yielded their bodies, that they might not serve nor worship any god, except their own God. Therefore I make a decree, that every people, nation, and language, which speak any thing amiss against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, shall be cut in pieces, and their houses shall be made a dunghill: because there is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Daniel 3:26, 28–29. He recognizes that this miracle can be attributed to the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, and because of the service they have offered to their God, the King's word has been changed. This indicates that there has been a progression in Nebuchadnezzar's un-



derstanding of the true God.

Although the king's understanding of the true God had progressed and improved, was his understanding of the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego perfect? When Nebuchadnezzar says, "Ye servants of the Most High God, come forth, and come hither," he is no longer saying to them that your God is a God of gods, but rather he is saying that He is the Most High God. Now Nebuchadnezzar recognizes Jehovah as being the most powerful God but He is still one among many. Just like the Greeks called Zeus their "Ho Hup-sistos Theos" or "the highest god."

Nebuchadnezzar also mentions that no other God would be able to deliver anyone out of a similar scenario as Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego found themselves in. Again, his understanding of God has progressed, because he makes reference to His great power, over not just kings but over all gods; however, by saying that there is no other god that could do this, he clearly still believes that there are many other gods that can accomplish many things.

It is important at this stage to understand that there are various forms of Polytheism. Henotheism, as a form of Polytheism, is basically the idea that the individual worships one deity while accepting the existence of other deities. Kathenotheism is another form of Polytheism in which the individual worships one god at a time, but does not always consistently worship the same god. Rather in Kathenotheism the individual worships different gods at different times.

Going back to Nebuchadnezzar, we see that despite the fact that his understanding of God's character has progressed, he has held onto his polytheistic ideals. Maybe we can say that he was beginning to lean towards henotheism, but he certainly was not monotheistic at this stage. He was not at the stage where he believed in Jehovah as being the one and only true God.

Nebuchadnezzar was given one more opportunity to recognize the authority of Jehovah, the one true God, when Daniel interpreted the dream of the tree that was cut down (Daniel Chapter 4).

"And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Acts 17:30. Prior to the time when he received the knowledge of the true God from Daniel, Nebuchadnezzar was in ignorance

and God was merciful to him. However, when he received the knowledge he had a duty to accept the true God and repent. As a result of recognizing the one true God but not fully rejecting the false gods and idols these idols/false gods retained a foothold in Nebuchadnezzar's heart and grew into a more prominent role over time and undoubtedly took precedence in his life over the worship of Jehovah.

It is said that:

1. Every person is serving god(s) in their life.
2. Every person is transformed into an image of their god.
3. Mankind creates and forms the structure of society according to their own image

Nebuchadnezzar became more and more like the false gods that he served, so it is only natural that he would be lifted up in pride and vanity, because that is what many of these false gods represented. As a result, he was made to suffer an extremely humbling experience.

There are other examples in the Bible of people paying lip service to God and perhaps proclaiming Him as the Most High God, but still cherishing false gods. "And he walked in all the ways of Asa his father; he turned not aside from it, doing that which was right in the eyes of the LORD: nevertheless the high places were not taken away; for the people offered and burnt incense yet in the high places." 1 Kings 22:43. Although there may not have been short term consequences of this course of action; nonetheless, long term we know that the people of God had to suffer Babylonian captivity. These sorts of precedents of worshiping God but not fully leaving the other gods that were present in Judah would ultimately lead to spiritual ruin if not put away.

The Rich Young Ruler (Mark 10:19–22) and Balaam (Numbers chapter 22–23) both claimed to love the true God, but also had a god of money, which brought about their destruction.

Solomon (1 Kings 11:4–7) loved the true and living God, but he also loved his women. They were an idol to him—another god. From his life we see how one cherished idol, one god that is held in high esteem in one's heart is enough to lead to eternal ruin; because it will grow until it takes over the entire life and destroys all spirituality and connection with the true God. The cherishing of one idol (or one god) will lead to compromising in other areas and then the cherishing of more idols. Solomon placed too much importance on his heathen wives (he never should have married them in the first place), and this led him down into the depths of accepting the gods of pagan worship and building high places to these false gods. The cherishing of one idol (false god) led him down a slippery slope to deeper iniquity.

In *The Wounded Healer*, Henri Nouwen retells a tale from ancient India: Four royal brothers decided each to master a

special ability. Time went by, and the brothers met to reveal what they had learned.

“I have mastered a science,” said the first, “by which I can take but a bone of some creature and create the flesh that goes with it.” “I,” said the second, “know how to grow that creature’s skin and hair if there is flesh on its bones.” The third said, “I am able to create its limbs if I have flesh, the skin, and the hair.” “And I,” concluded the fourth, “know how to give life to that creature if its form is complete.”

Thereupon the brothers went into the jungle to find a bone so they could demonstrate their specialties. As fate would have it, the bone they found was a lion’s. One added flesh to the bone, the second grew hide and hair, the third completed it with matching limbs, and the fourth gave the lion life. Shaking its mane, the ferocious beast arose and jumped on his creators. He killed them all and vanished contentedly into the jungle. We too have the capacity to create what can devour us. Goals and dreams can consume us. Possessions and property can turn our hearts away from God and destroy us. We must first seek God’s kingdom and His righteousness, and allow Him to guide and be the centerpiece of all our plans and ambitions.

Regarding the end of the story of Nebuchadnezzar we read, “For seven years Nebuchadnezzar was an astonishment to all his subjects; for seven years he was humbled before all the world. Then his reason was restored and, looking up in humility to the God of heaven, he recognized the divine hand in his chastisement. In a public proclamation he acknowledged his guilt and the great mercy of God in his restoration.

“God’s purpose that the greatest kingdom in the world should show forth His praise was now fulfilled. This public proclamation, in which Nebuchadnezzar acknowledged the mercy and goodness and authority of God, was the last act of his life recorded in sacred history.” —*Conflict and Courage*, p. 253

In conclusion, the return of Nebuchadnezzar’s reason is said to have come with his recognition of the true God as the only God. When the humbled king prayerfully looked up to heaven he was elevated from the condition of a brute beast to that of a being bearing the image of God. The one who for years had helplessly lain on the ground in his debasement was once more lifted up to the dignity of manhood which God has granted His creatures formed after His likeness.

Each time a sinner is converted this exact same process occurs. The person decides to stop serving all other gods in their life and accepts Jehovah as their only God. As they start to serve God they are transformed into God’s image and are able to reach the full dignity of manhood and womanhood. The false gods lose their influence in the person’s life.

Remember those three ideas that: 1. everyone is serving a god; 2. we are transformed into the image of that god(s); and 3. when we look at society we can see what humans have become, because they shape society according to what they are and the values that they hold.

Let us not fall into the trap of condemning Polytheistic religions for having many gods but then serving many other gods ourselves while claiming allegiance to the one true God. We do not want to be Polytheistic, Henotheistic, or Kathenotheistic because we read in the Bible that Jesus is the Way the Truth and the Life and no man cometh unto the Father but by Him (John 14:6). How many Christians would scoff at the idea of Henotheism or worshipping one deity while accepting the existence of other gods, but then in their private lives they have these pet idols that are akin to gods that they choose not to give up. How many Christians would laugh at the idea of Kathenotheism, the idea that you worship different gods at different times, but then they go through phases where they live only for themselves and their own pleasure, forgetting about the one true God. Many young people say that they will worship the one true God later, but during their youthful years, while they believe in the true God, they will enjoy life and serve the gods of this world. Let us be very careful not just to condemn false religions and Polytheistic ideals with our words, but also with our actions and example.

The test that Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego went through will be repeated at the end of time, when Sunday worship (representing man’s authority) will be opposed to Sabbath worship (representing God’s authority). Will we be found to be like all the other Hebrew nobles who bowed down (a continuation of their previous compromise in eating meat from the King’s table) and worshipped the golden statue, or will we be found like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego who answered with a firm “thus saith the Lord” and had no fear of death? “We are not careful to answer thee in this matter” (Daniel 3:16), were the powerful, courageous words spoken by them. In other words, our case rests with God and we do not have to answer to any man, because our example speaks for itself and God will fight our battles for us.

Let us stand faithful in the fiery tests and trials of this life and be unwavering in our allegiance to the one and only true God. Amen.

Richard Eaton



CHILDREN'S CORNER



Have you ever looked into a pond? What did you see?

The water in some ponds is so clear you can see to the bottom. You can see plants growing, maybe a fish, and the squishy pond bottom under your toes. Some ponds are so covered with lily pads and other plants you can barely see the water. Some ponds have a thick green scum on the top with lots of interesting insects and maybe a black and yellow water snake making his way along.

When Kelly was a little girl, there was a "green scum" pond near where she lived. The water wasn't deep, but it was mysterious. It was a favorite place for all the children in the neighborhood. There were some logs that had fallen out over the pond. The children would carefully slide out on the logs on their bellies and poke long sticks down into the pond to see what they could feel. They would stir the green scum, trying to see what was underneath. Sometimes they would make up stories about what would happen to children who fell off their logs and disappeared under the mysterious green scum.

A pond is a really interesting place. All kinds of wonderful creatures live there. Some are big like the great blue heron you may have seen standing as still as a statue at the water's edge until he sees the fish he wants for dinner. Some are little one-celled creatures, so small you can't see them without a microscope. Yet they come in all kinds of colors and shapes. And some, like an amoeba, can even change its shape to move itself along.

Kelly especially liked to watch the water striders. These bugs, with their long, slender legs, can stand right on the water. They have large flat feet which are lined with a velvety coating of waxy hairs that repel water. They can walk, run, skate or skim on top of the water in

search of something to eat. Even more amazing, they can jump six inches into the air. In human terms, this would be like your being able to jump from the ground to the roof of a five story apartment building!

While the water striders skate on top of the water, the crayfish is a pond-bottom dweller. He looks like a miniature version of a lobster. He eats a wide variety of food, including partly-rotted plants that would otherwise fill up the pond. Catfish also clean up little bits of plant and animal matter that would build up and make the pond smelly and unpleasant.

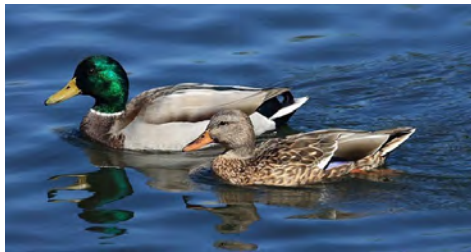


For the salamander, however, the smell of the pond is very important. A salamander is a lizard-like creature that hatches from eggs in a pond, but lives its adult life in the woods. The unique smell of the pond in which it was hatched as a baby is the way the salamander finds its way back to the pond to breed. When it's time, the male and female return to the pond of their birth and do a nose-rubbing mating dance. Then the female releases her eggs by the two-hundreds into the pond just as her mother did, and her mother before her.

The fire-red water mite lives among the pond plants. You could line 10 bright red water mites up on your ruler side by side and all ten would measure about one inch. They can get themselves around by using the hairs on their legs as paddles. But most often they hitch a ride on insects, worms, and other creatures that pass

by. And they not only don't provide any thanks for the ride, they slowly suck out the other creatures life juices through a long, sharp beak while they are traveling along!

Ducks love ponds. Have you ever noticed that a male duck is usually much more brightly colored than the



female? One reason Jesus made them this way is that the female usually cares for the young, and her dull colors

don't attract the attention of predators who might make a meal of her little chicks.

Plant life in a pond is very important to all the creatures that live there. The tall slender-stalked cattails which fringe the edge provide a protected home and a place to hide from harm. Did you know that cattail leaves are so strong they can bend and twist without breaking, even in the fiercest wind? The sweet smell of the water lily lures all kinds of creatures to live safely under its big umbrella leaves and in its folds.



Tiny drifting plants and animals known as plankton are so small that a single drop of water contains thousands of them. But they are the source of food for many other creatures like the waterflea. The waterflea swims by paddling one of its two pairs of antennae. The tiny wa-

terflea is clear as glass. You can see all of its internal organs, including a small yellow heart which pumps colorless blood around its body.

Ponds are so interesting that many scientists have spent their entire lives learning about just one of the creatures that live there. Scientists are now learning that it can be even more interesting to study how all the animals and plants living in a pond affect one another. They are interested in things like who eats what, and who protects what, and who cleans up after whom. That's because in order for a pond to stay alive and well, all the plants and animals have a part to play. The salamander needs the algae to smell. The waterflea needs the plankton to eat. The ducklings and their mother need the cattails to nest and hide in. The fire-red water mite survives by stealing a ride and nourishment from another insect or worm. And everybody needs the crayfish and catfish to clean up after them. Every plant and animal has its effect on everything else. And each is dependent on the pond as a whole to survive.

People are like that too. Your family at home, your friends, and our family here at church. Everything we do and say affects the others around us. And we all need each other to stay alive and well. When you wake up in the morning and decide to be grumpy today, it's harder for the people around you to be cheerful. When you smile and offer to help your friend with a hard math problem, people around you might find themselves smiling and helping too. The Bible says, "Encourage one another and build each other up." See what you can think of to make your family and our church a happy place this week.

LOOKING FOR YOU . . .

If you are interested in submitting an item for publication in *The Reformation Messenger*, please submit by email or mail.



Submit: Drawings, Announcements , Reports, Articles, Poems, Photos, Personal Testimonies and Experiences.

Low Back Pain



Low back pain is a universal human experience—almost everyone has it at some point. Most people experience back pain for the first time in their 30s. As people get older, back pain tends to increase. The lower back, which is located below the ribcage, is called the lumbar region. Most low back pain gets better on its own. But, when it does not, there are ways to treat low back pain.

The symptoms of low back pain range from a dull ache to a stabbing or shooting sensation. The pain can be so intense that it can make it difficult to move or even stand up straight, affecting many aspects of one's life. Acute back pain comes on suddenly, often from an injury involving heavy lifting, a fall, or playing sports. Pain that lasts greater than three months is considered chronic.

Typically, back pain caused by heavy lifting or exercising too hard is caused by muscle strain. But sometimes back pain can be related to one of the discs in the spine that bulges or ruptures. The vertebrae of the spine are cushioned by gel-like discs that are prone to wear and tear from aging or injury. When a disc weakens, and is damaged it puts pressure on the spinal nerves, causing intense pain. If this damaged disc presses on the sciatic nerve, pain may run down the leg, a condition known as sciatica.

Your job may contribute to back pain if it involves lifting, pulling, or other activities that twists the spine. With heavy items, always lift with your legs, not your back. However, even sitting at a desk all day comes with its own risks for back pain, especially if your chair is uncomfortable or if you tend to slouch. Bad posture is a culprit in chronic back pain. Your back supports your weight best when you have good posture. When sitting, it is helpful to have a chair that provides good lumbar support. Sit with your shoulders back with feet resting on a low stool. Change positions often and take breaks from sitting at your desk. When standing, keep your weight evenly balanced on both feet.

Another cause of back pain is wearing a purse, backpack, or briefcase over your shoulder. The lower back supports your upper body, plus any additional weight that you carry. A heavy bag can strain the lower back, especially if you carry one day after day. A better alternative is to switch to a wheeled briefcase.

A person who tends to be physically inactive, and then

overdoes an activity such as sports, snow shoveling in the winter, or gardening in the spring—the muscles, not used to being used so vigorously, can be overextended, leading to low back pain. Physical inactivity can also lead to weak muscles, which contribute to back pain. Many who are inactive are also overweight. Even a small loss of excess body weight, especially in the midsection will help reduce stress placed on the back.

Back pain due to a muscle strain will get better on its own; however, you can take steps to make yourself more comfortable. Initially, ice is the most effective, as it numbs the pain and decreases inflammation and swelling. Leave it on for 20 minutes at a time. After 72 hours, a heating pad or warm bath, using Epsom salts will provide pain relief. Creams such as arnica can be applied externally. In the past, doctors would recommend bed rest for back pain. However, this has been shown to actually make the pain worse and reduce muscle tone and flexibility. Now with injuries such as muscle strain, it is recommended to return to your normal activities as soon as possible. The golden rule of any joint health is, the more you move, the less stiffness you will have. Only when back pain lasts for more than six weeks, is worsening, or has other significant symptoms such as loss of bladder or bowel control, numbness around the buttocks and groin, leg weakness, or fever, is it necessary to contact a doctor to determine the cause.

Stretching exercises help relieve back pain. Natural treatments such as massage, acupuncture and chiropractic adjustments may also relieve chronic back pain when combined with exercise and stretching. The best choices for exercise are activities that do not create an impact on the back, such as walking, bicycling and swimming. Another way to reduce back pain is to strengthen the core, the abdominal muscles, which help to support the back.

Regular exercise, including strength training will help your back become stronger overall, reducing risk of injury or pain. Two types of strength-training exercises that benefit the lower back are flexion and extension exercises, either bending forward to stretch the muscles of the back and hips or bending backwards to develop the muscles that support the spine. One example is doing leg lifts while lying on your stomach. Avoid quick, repetitive movements. Do all exercises slowly. It is normal to have some aching muscles after exercise, but if the pain persists after 48 hours, you may have overdone it. Exercising further through the pain can lead to injury or damage.

Calcium and Vitamin D help back health by strengthening the bones. Eat lots of green leafy vegetables. Supplements such as glucosamine can ease joint pain.

Low back pain is very common, but with simple preventative measures and remedies, it does not have to become a chronic condition.



Moving Forward— Beyond this Moment

FAMILY AND YOUTH CONFERENCES, CEDARTOWN, GA USA



In the month of July (17–23), the General Conference headquarters in Cedartown, Georgia hosted two conferences simultaneously. At the headquarters, a family conference was conducted with approximately 80 participants; 20 minutes away, at Hightower Falls Camp site, approximately 60 young people attended the youth conference.

On the evening of July 17, 2016 Brother Joel Barnedo, the General Conference youth leader, gave the opening address to both the family and youth conferences at the headquarters building.

What is the mission of the youth? All those in attendance were told they had been blessed from the day they were born. God knows each person individually and the direction you are taking in your life. He knows where you live, but He will never force you to follow Him. He knocks and waits for you to open. The Lord needs the youth. The purpose of the conferences were not to preach at the attendees, but to motivate and inspire them to become helpers for the Lord. All have talents that the Lord can use, and all should be constantly seeking to improve themselves. “And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out My spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your

young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out My spirit.” Joel 2:28–29

Sister Raquel Orce, the General Conference Family Department leader, then gave her opening address also to both the families and the youth. The theme of the family conference was, “As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD.” Joshua 24:15. “Day by day God labors for man’s sanctification, and man is to co-operate with Him, putting forth persevering efforts in the cultivation of right habits. He is to add grace to grace; and as he thus works on the plan of addition, God works for him on the plan of multiplication.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 532. The family is linear (addition), man+woman+children = family. But God is circular (multiplication), with God in the center, and with all our social groups on the outside, facing in, from our families, to our relatives, and all other social groups.

The family is the basic building block of society and it is under attack today. It is our responsibility to take up our individual work within our families and to do our duty to keep it intact, according to God’s will.

Following the opening address, Brother Idel Suarez gave a talk on “Creation Proofs” to both groups. In the USA 80% of the people state that they believe in God

and less than 50% believe in evolution. Many teachers are now in support of creation being taught in schools. Brother Suarez quoted some prominent scientists in history who gave strong evidence for the fact that Creation is more scientific than is evolution.

In the evening the two groups separated with the youth going to the camp ground to have their conference and workshops, which were geared for the youth and the challenges they face in society. The theme of the youth conference was, "Moving Forward—Beyond this Moment."

As I was not in attendance at the youth conference, I cannot give you a detailed summary of the content of the workshops. I can only state that the youth appeared very encouraged and enthusiastic. Some of the subjects that they studied were: "Overcoming Temptations," "University Challenges," "Overcoming the Fear of Public Speaking," "Living Committed," "The First Commandment with Promise," "How to be a Successful Leader," "Spiritualism in the World," "Sex and Human Anatomy," "Yoga and Hinduism," "Fashion and Modesty," "A Surrendered Heart," "Study Techniques," and more. The theme of the youth conference was, "Moving Forward, Beyond this Moment," based on the Bible verse, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12

The family conference began with discussing the Family

Circle and its Identity. Home is an institution made by God. It is the centre of society—the heart of the society and nation. God created the family in Eden and Satan has been attacking it very strongly; the true family is losing its original identity. In the end we are told that every divine institution is to be restored, and we are to do our part in this restoration process.

The atmosphere in the family is the key to keeping the family together. The father and mother are the ones who create the atmosphere. Our feelings and moods can impact every family member. If we display anger our children will imitate us. Like an air freshener, we are to be a spiritual fragrance in our homes. To keep this atmosphere pure, prayer is of vital importance, both private and public. Not every member of the family is strong, and as parents it is important to identify the strengths and weaknesses in our children's characters and pray for ways we can help them achieve maximum results.

A successful family is also well ordered. Administration is a priority. Planning and preparation are of utmost importance. It is not correct to have a large family if you cannot afford to support your family. Discipline is also very necessary to guide the children in the right pathway. The most precious work that parents can do is to prepare their children for heaven, and this means taking time to spend with them as much as possible. While finances are important, they are not to be made the first priority. Being careful



YOUTH CONFERENCE

with finances, exercising thrift, and being faithful with tithes and offerings, will bring financial security. A well ordered family will bring happiness and satisfaction to all that dwell in the house. "And all this people shall also go to their place in peace." Exodus 18:23

When the Apostle Paul wrote his epistle to Philemon, he also greeted, "our beloved Apphia, and Archippus our fellowsoldier, and to the church in thy house." Verse 2. And to the believers in Colosse, "Nymphas, and the church which is in his house." Colossians 4:15. Every home should be a holy place that has open doors to invite others in. It is important to make plans as a family how you can share your faith; doing missionary work together.

In order to keep the family unit together, each member needs to be converted. Morning and evening worship is essential as a family unit. The dress of each one is also important as we would want to look well for those we love. Affections must also be continued. "behold, Isaac was sporting with Rebekah his wife." Genesis 26:8. Children learn love from their father; how their father treats his wife is how they learn love. They learn obedience and respect from their mother. Unfortunately, there are a lot of single parent homes in society today where one parent has to play the role of two. But with the help of the Lord, these homes may be a place of glory and honour for the Lord.

When the wife of Manoah was told she would be having a child (Samson), she was given instructions on how she should order the child, both in diet and conduct. Instructions were given both for herself while she was pregnant, and also for her son after he was born. These principles are very important to follow today also.

Families need to be proactive. We cannot control the actions of our spouse, but we can control ourselves. The wife looks for empathy and husbands look for respect. Be open and communicate. Think ahead and do your duty. For your children, plan their work together. If parents are so occupied with other things that they cannot keep their children usefully employed, Satan will. Idleness is a curse. Build good relationships within the family by open communication. Each home should be a heaven on earth, filled with peace and tranquility.

The mission of the home extends beyond its own members. "When religion is manifested in the home, its influence will be felt in the church and in the neighborhood." —*The Adventist Home*, p. 38. "Ye are the light of the world." Matthew 5:14

During the week, several outings were enjoyed in nature. A combined trip (family and youth conference) to Little River Canyon gave us some peace and rest. We could rest surrounded by the scenes of God's creation and come apart for a short while and spend time together in fellowship. Another day saw us at the Bible History Museum in La Grange, Georgia. At this museum we viewed many original artifacts from Biblical times that were donated by the country of Israel. A guided tour led us through a re-creation of a Jewish village, the cross of Calvary, a shepherd's tent, an olive press, a wine press, a Jewish market and more. Some of the fascinating facts that were related were very informative. The afternoon saw us at the wildlife safari where we could feed and pet many animals from the safari bus, such as deer, zebras, ostriches, giraffes, and buffalo. God has given us the animal kingdom to enjoy and to take care of. It was beautiful to see the animals in harmony with themselves and with man.

On Sabbath, Brother Idel Suarez gave the divine service, wrapping up what had been studied throughout the week and challenging everyone to go forward. He spoke on the theme of the youth conference, "Moving forward – beyond this moment" was taken from the following Bible verse, "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus." Philippians 3:12

He began by relating the story of Derek Redmond in the 1988 Olympics when he ruptured his Achilles tendon while racing. Rather than quit he was determined to make it to the finish line. His father ran down from the stands to help him limp to the end. We also have a Father who will help us to run this race, to make it to the end. He will help us reach the finish line. Paul describes the Christian journey as a race—a race in which a person can only reach the end successfully if they keep all the rules of the race. "And if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully." 2 Timothy 2:5. The rules in the Christian race are the Ten Commandments. "Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1

All too soon the conference was drawing to a close. Our family will either have a positive or negative effect on our church. God wants us to restore our families. He uses different means in this restoration process and sometimes it includes trials. "Therefore also now, saith

the LORD, turn ye even to Me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.” Joel 2:12. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet.” Joel 2:15–16. The Lord is calling each family. It is a solemn and serious time in which we live. The angel of mercy is about to take flight. Let us each do our part to sound the trumpet and bring a message of healing and hope to families.

AMEN.

Note: all seminars from the Family Conference can be viewed at:

<http://livestream.com/accounts/2702118/events/5885005>



**SOME
OF
THE
ATTENDEES**



Congo



Left:
Crossing the
river to
attend
church.



Right:
Baptism
in
May 2016.



Brother Shirima conducted a seminar with the Union and Field Committees on July 19-24, 2016.

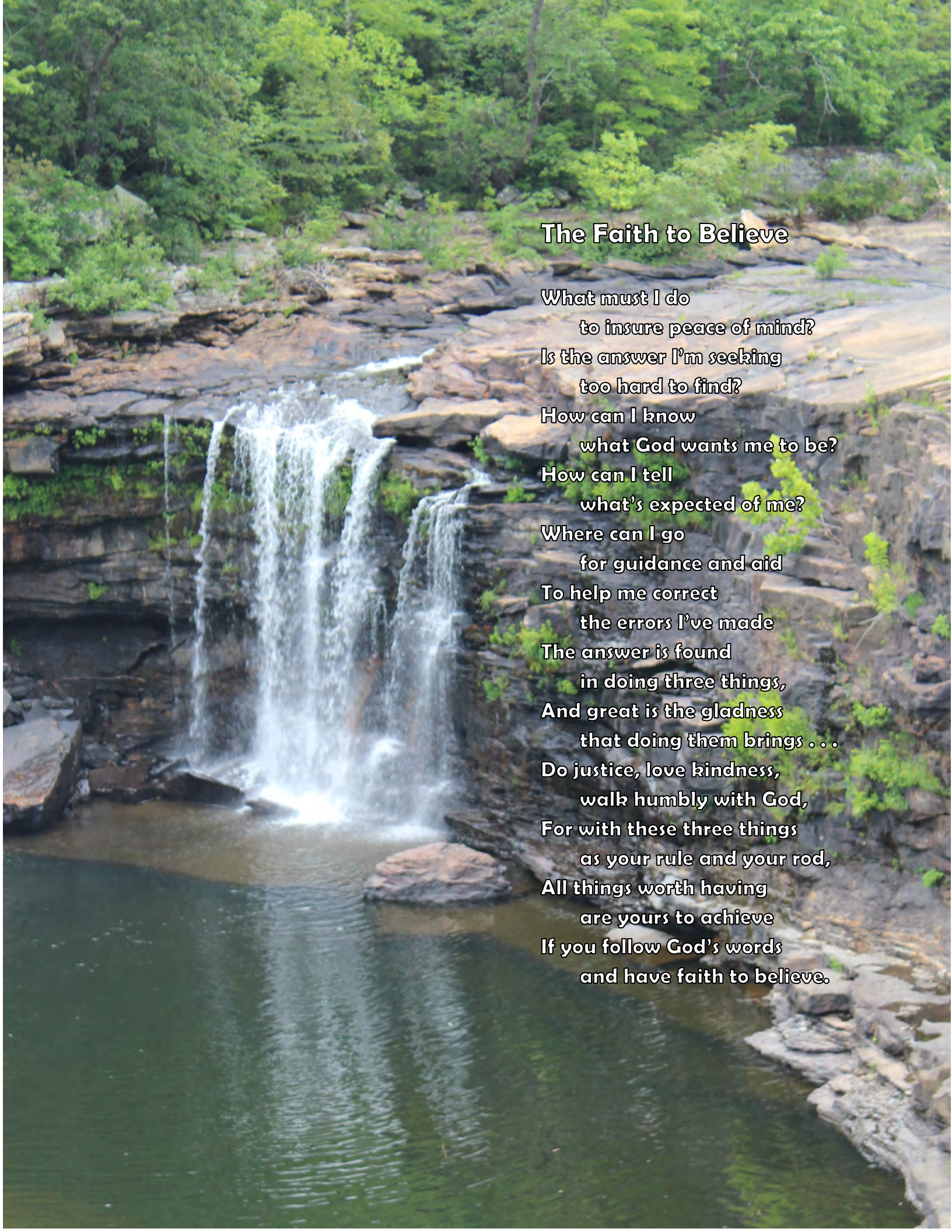
England



Brethren in Africa



From Left: Brother Chilewani, Brother Libamu
and Brother Joel from Malawi;
Brother Daniel Makalich from Mozambique.
In Christ we are One.



The Faith to Believe

What must I do
to insure peace of mind?
Is the answer I'm seeking
too hard to find?
How can I know
what God wants me to be?
How can I tell
what's expected of me?
Where can I go
for guidance and aid
To help me correct
the errors I've made
The answer is found
in doing three things,
And great is the gladness
that doing them brings . . .
Do justice, love kindness,
walk humbly with God,
For with these three things
as your rule and your rod,
All things worth having
are yours to achieve
If you follow God's words
and have faith to believe.