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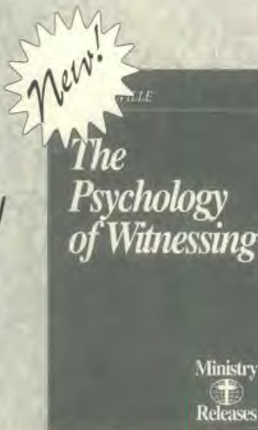
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The Message We Proclaim



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Jesus must be lifted up every message delivered in the pulpit.



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It is a wonderful feeling to witness first hand how God answers our prayers.

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A Message for the Last Days

Joel Sarli



My dear Elder, I have a question right at the beginning of this Editor's Forum. Where do you stand today in your attitude toward the Word of God? When I refer to the Word of God I refer unequivocally to the Bible.

I believe firmly that the gobbledygook of mystic, unintelligible, theological terms that undermine the sacred Scriptures have absolutely no place in preaching the Advent Message.

Theologians and preachers today are mitigating and diluting the testimony found in the Scriptures with theories based on an "IF theology" instead of giving people the certainty and surety of the testimony. Words like *maybe*, *perhaps*, or *possibly* largely used even in our pulpits are generating confusion among members and decreasing the intensity of the work toward the fulfilment of the mission for which Jesus established His church.

The other day I listened to an outstanding Adventist preacher in one of our largest churches in North America speak on the subject of the Second Coming. His sermon was full of quotations from theologians, philosophers and newspapers. Just once he quoted from the Scriptures. His appeal was solely based on the productions of man's fallible mind. What a contrast this is to the true minister of God who fearlessly declare, "Thus says the Lord . . ."

And I have a point to make here. Because Jesus is revealed in the Bible, a message without the Bible is a message without Jesus Christ. In John 5:39 (NIV), Jesus Himself gives us the reason why we must rely on the Scriptures: "You diligently study the Scripture because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me. . . ." According to these words the Scriptures are important because they give us the knowledge of Jesus Christ. Thus a message without the Bible is a message without the revelation of Jesus, and a sermon without Jesus has no reason to be preached in the pulpit of any church.

C.H. Spurgeon said it well: "The best sermons are the sermons which are full of Christ. A sermon without Christ as its beginning, middle, and end is a mistake in conception and a crime in execution. If you leave Christ out, you have left the sun out of the day and the moon out of the night. You have left the waters out of the sea and the floods out of the river. You have left the harvest out of the year, the spirit out of the body, you have left the joy out of heaven.

"A sermon without Christ! You may as well talk of a loaf without any flour in it. How can you feed the soul? It is a sort of sermon that will make the devils in hell laugh, but make the angels of God weep."

Dear elder, we are living very close to the end of time and the pure and clear message of the Bible alone will help our members to

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Elder's Digest

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Better Next Year

Orley M. Berg

The end of one year and the beginning of another is always a time for retrospect with regard to the past and resolve for the future. What better time than now to consider how the work in the church has gone in the old year and what can be done to better it in the new?

We thank God for His blessings and for what by His grace has been accomplished. But we are impatient to do more, to see the work finished, to go home to glory with our Lord. With this in mind, here are a few questions that you as a local church elder might well ask yourself.

A MATTER OF PRIORITY

Has the work of the church been given the priority it deserves? We live in an extremely busy age, with more things to do, to get, and places to go than man has ever faced before. Unless we have a deep-seated love for God and His church and an overriding conviction that the church and its work is the most important thing on earth we will find it very easy to give it only the remnant of our time, our affection, and our service. Let us examine ourselves to see whether there are other gods that we worship—gods of materialism, pleasure, or even work. With some, careful scrutiny may reveal the need for an entire re-evaluation of the personal program. The second job or the overtime may have to go. Excessive time given to selfish gratification may need rather to be given to service for the good of others.

AM I GROWING?

Am I growing, not only in my ability as a church leader but in my Christian experience? Am I becoming more Christ-like in my attitudes? Am I being drawn closer to my Saviour? Do I love Him more? Do I cherish and reflect more of His Spirit?

As King David grew older he noticed among those who had reached old age certain traits of

character, that caused him deep concern. Commenting on this, Ellen White writes, “He saw that most of the aged around him were unhappy, because of the unfortunate traits of their character being increased with their age. If they had been naturally close and covetous, they were most disagreeably so in mature years. If they had been jealous, fretful, and impatient, they were especially so when aged” (*SDA Bible*

Commentary, Ellen G. White

Comments, on Ps. 71:9, 17, 19, p. 1148). It was this that led him to write, “Cast me not off in the time of old age; forsake me not when my strength faileth” (Ps. 71:9; see also *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp.

422, 423).

For most of us the years of old age may still seem far away. Nevertheless, the important question is: Are we maturing spiritually? Are we easier to get along with? Are we more considerate of the feelings of others and more sympathetic toward their needs? What about the attitudes we bring to the meetings of the church council or other committees on which we serve?

MY PERSONAL DEVOTIONS

Are you faithful in your personal devotions? This, of course, is basic to the spiritual growth and maturity of which we have spoken. As the head of the house you will lead out at the family altar. But beyond that the personal daily reading of the Scriptures, meditation, and prayer is absolutely vital to the spiritual life. So saturate the soul with the Word until it burns as a living fire in the heart, giving you the power and grace to meet the challenges of daily living and through it all to bear faithful witness to your love for the Saviour.

If this is to be your life-style, it cannot be left to chance. So have a plan. A few minutes every day alone with God and His Word can make the difference between a healthy Christian experience and witness and one that is dull and cold. So you

What have I done during the past year to improve my capabilities as a church leader?

must have a plan for personal devotion. Then stick to it, even though at times there may seem to be a hundred other things clamoring for attention.

IMPROVING MY CAPABILITIES

What have I done during the past year to improve my capabilities as a church leader? Have I taken my work seriously? What about the manner in which the announcements have been handled, the public prayers offered, the sermons preached, the Sabbath school lessons taught, the calls made? What about the part I played in NET '96? How can I do better in 1997?

One can always find good books on leadership that are helpful. First of all, there is much in the Spirit of Prophecy. Biographies are a tremendous source of inspiration and learning.

In regard to sacred biography Ellen White has said, "As an educator no part of the Bible is of greater value than are its biographies" (*Education*, p. 146).

Special mention should be made of the *Elder's Handbook*. If you have not read it already, why not make this a special project for 1997. Subjects discussed include: *The Church and Its Organization; The Elder's Call and Qualifications; The Elder as Church Leader; The Elder as Supporter of Other Local Leaders; The Elder and Church Growth; The Elder and Church Nurture; The Elder and the Worship Service; The Elder and Special Services*. If you would like to know how to receive a copy of the *Elder's Handbook*, you may write to the Ministerial Association of the



General Conference, 12501 Old Columbia Pike, Silver Spring, MD 20904-6600 U.S.A., or call (301) 680-6508 or fax (301) 680-6502.

Considering the urgency of the times, how important that we use every moment to glorify our Creator and to advance His work. Let us claim again the many precious promises of His Word, and then by His grace seek in every way possible to be more useful and faithful in the work to which He has called us.

It is the most important work in all the world, that of being co-laborers with Him in His church through which the marvelous richness of His grace is to be exhibited and the message of His love and soon return heralded to the ends of the earth. The editorial staff of the *Elder's Digest* unites in wishing for each of our local church elders a special blessing in their service during 1997. **E**

Orley M. Berg lives in North Folk, California. He is a retired Assistant Secretary of the Ministerial Association of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church.

Seven Facts About CONDITIONAL SECURITY

The Doctrine of Perseverance

"The Scriptures teach that not only does continuance in the favour of God depend upon continued faith in and obedience to Christ, but, that it is possible for those who have been truly converted to fall away and be eternally lost" (*Salvation Army Handbook of Doctrine*)

1. **It is possible to possess grace and then lose it.**
 - a. Satan was created perfect—he fell to perdition. (Ezekiel 28:15)
 - b. Angels in heaven fell to eternal doom. (Jude 6)
 - c. Man who was made upright fell from grace. (Genesis 1:27)
 - d. Saul had the Spirit of God. (1 Samuel 10:10) Yet, because of his sin "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14). "Saul died for his transgression" (1 Chronicles 10:13).
 - e. Paul understood the possibility of falling. (1 Corinthians 9:27)
 - f. The Bible warns against and indicts backsliders. (Jeremiah 3:12, 22; 8:5)
 - g. The Scriptures are quite emphatic about the possibility of falling. (Hebrews 6:4-6)
2. **Faith in God has to be maintained.** (Jude 21)
 - a. A living faith in Christ is necessary. (Colossians 2:6)
 - b. Although Christians are "kept by the power of God" (1 Peter 1:5) they also have to keep themselves from all evil and stay in the sphere of good influences. (James 1:27; 1 John 5:18, 21)
3. **Salvation requires constant deliverance.** (2 Corinthians 1:10)
 - a. A daily experience. (1 Corinthians 15:31)
 - b. A daily renewal of faith. (Hebrews 11:6)
4. **Names can be blotted out of the book of life.** Exodus 32:33.
 - a. The book of life contains the record of the professed children of God. (Daniel 12:1; Philippians 4:3; Revelation 3:5; 13:8; 11:8; 21:27)
 - b. Names are blotted out because of unwillingness to forsake sin. Ezekiel 18:24.
 - c. David understood this fearful possibility. Psalm 69:28.
5. **The Christian life requires watchfulness** (1 Peter 5:8). "Resist him; keep your foothold in the faith." Moffat's translation.
 - a. Self-confidence may lead to disaster. (1 Corinthians 10:12)
 - Peter thought nothing would cause him to swerve from his allegiance to Christ. (Matthew 26:33)
 - Spiritual pride—a great deception. (Romans 11:20)
 - Some think they are saved. (Matthew 7:20-23)
6. **Faithfulness and endurance necessary.** (Matthew 24:13)
 - a. To maintain our confidence. (Hebrews 3:6; 10:35)
 - b. Some will not. (1 Timothy 4:1; 1 Timothy 1:19)
7. **Only One can keep us from falling.** (Jude 24)
 - a. Peter's assurance. (2 Peter 1:10)
 - b. Christ's personal promise. (John 10:28)

"We cannot be protected against ourselves in spite of ourselves. . . . The sense of the divine protection is at any moment sufficient to inspire confidence, but not to render effort unnecessary" (Rev. F. C. Cook, *Holy Bible with Commentary*, vol. 2, pages 158, 159).

Rex D. Edwards, D. Min., is the director for continuing education of the General Conference Ministerial Association, Silver Spring, Maryland.

The Successful Career Woman and Christian

Robert H. Pierson

Success is difficult to define. It means many things to many people. To the career woman it means advancement in her chosen profession. For the housewife it includes providing a happy home for a healthy, contented family. For many women today who are both housewife and job holder, it means achieving the optimum in both fields.

If you were a successful businesswoman, one who found time to entertain frequent house guests, were active in church work, and maintained such a consistent Christian experience that your whole household was with you “in the truth,” you might rightly feel you were approaching the point one would call a success in life, would you not?

The Word of God speaks of just such a woman. You have read about her, I am sure. Dr. Luke tells her story in the book of Acts. This successful church worker, career woman, hostess, and practicing Christian was Lydia of Thyatira. Her whole story as recorded by inspiration is found in two or three verses of Scripture and is told in about one hundred words. But it is well worth considering this unusual woman.

You have read Lydia’s story in the *King James Version* of the New Testament; now read it in Taylor, *The Living Bible*. It brings it right up to 1997:

*“On the Sabbath, we went a little way outside the city to a river bank where we understood some people met for prayer; and we taught the Scriptures to some women who came. One of them was Lydia, a saleswoman from Thyatira, a merchant of purple cloth. She was already a worshiper of God and, as she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart and she accepted all that Paul was saying. She was baptized along with all her household and asked us to be her guests. ‘If you agree that I am faithful to the Lord,’ she said, ‘come and stay at my home.’ And she urged us until we did” (Acts 16:13-15).**

Dr. Luke and Paul met Lydia for the first time while they were preaching in Philippi. Sabbath afternoon the two men decided to leave the busy city and seek a place of prayer by the side of a nearby river. Evidently this

riverside was a place where others were accustomed to come for prayer, and on this particular day the two men of God found Lydia and several of her friends. Perhaps they, too, were seeking the blessing of communing with God in this quiet place in nature.

Paul and Luke never allowed a single opportunity to pass without opening the Scriptures to any who would listen. Lydia and her friends listened. Lydia not only listened, “she accepted all that Paul was saying.” For Lydia to hear the truth was to accept it. There was no parleying with God, no excusing herself, no delay. Lydia was a person of action, and when God spoke she acted. Lydia might have hesitated. How will this affect my business? she might well have thought. If I become a Christian some of my best customers, who are heathen, may turn against me. I may lose money—perhaps my business, then what?

Don’t forget Lydia was a successful career woman. She was a “seller of purple.” This costly dye came from a certain species of shellfish. Wool colored by this rich purple dye sold for a handsome amount. Evidently Lydia was a good businesswoman, one who could hold her own with others in the trade. She might have put her business before God, but she didn’t. Nothing was more important than seeking “first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness” (Matt. 6:33).

Even before she met Paul and Luke, Lydia was one who sought to make God first in her life. Before her encounter with Christ through the apostles’ teaching she worshiped God to the best of her knowledge. Now God had honored her with more light. “The path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day” (Prov. 4:78).

God fulfilled His promise to Lydia. She made Him first in her life and in her business. He gave her “all . . . things,” which Jesus referred to in Matthew 6:33.

It is possible to be a successful businesswoman and still make God first in the life. When a woman is faithful to all that God requires of His people, she is blessed. God prospers those who obey quietly and fully.

Lydia was a devout woman. She “worshiped God.”

The Lord had opened her heart and prepared the soil for the good seed Paul sowed during his visit to Philippi. She not only heard the apostles' preaching, she "accepted all that Paul was saying" (Acts 16:14, Taylor). We would say today she "accepted the truth." She found joy in following her Lord into the water in baptism. She took all her household with her. What a blessed scene that must have been—this prosperous businesswoman, evidently of high repute in the community, leading the members of her household down into the water of baptism.

Like the patriarch Abraham centuries before, Lydia commanded her family and her household after her. (See Gen. 18:19.)

It is a glorious thing for an individual to do right, to respond to the call of God and walk in the way of obedience, to be baptized and thus to bear a personal witness of Christ. It is even more glorious to live and labor in such a Christlike spirit that the members of one's own family catch the atmosphere on the Master and decide for Christ.

The real test of one's relationship with Christ is not found on the Sabbath in the worship service. It is found in the family circle during the days of the week, when test, trial, and temptation are the Christian's likely lot. During these days the sons, daughters, father, mother, brothers, and sisters have an opportunity to learn whether the Christian profession is the real thing.

Perhaps you have been called a seven-days Adventist. You may not have appreciated it at the time, but actually this is the only kind of Adventist worth being. Then you, like Lydia, will experience the joy of seeing your household following the Master too!

Lydia was a good hostess. "Come into my house, and abide there," she insisted. Lydia was busy. Her dye business must have made considerable demands upon her time, but she was not too busy to be hospitable to God's workers.

Paul wrote a number of times about hospitality. Writing to the believers in Rome, he exhorted them to be mindful of "the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom. 12:13).

Checking on women who desired to become church workers Paul wrote, "Has she been kind to strangers as well as to other Christians?" (1 Tim. 5:10, TLB).

The old man of God also holds out the prospect of great blessing to the woman who is given to hospitality. "Don't forget to be kind to strangers, for some who have done this have entertained angels without realizing it!" (Heb. 13:2, TLB).

Lydia was indeed a remarkable woman—her life is a challenge to each Seventh-day Adventist woman

today. She compassed a business, church work, Christian witness in her home, and Christian hospitality. Surely she must have received much help from her heavenly Father in such an undertaking. You and I have access to this same source of help today! **E**

* Verses marked TLB are taken from *The Living Bible*, copyright © 1971 by Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill. Used by permission.

Robert H. Pierson, pastor, administrator and writer was the president of the General Conference of the Seventh-day Adventist Church when he wrote this article.



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Basic Concepts on the Ministry of Visitation

Roy B. Thurmon

INTRODUCTION:

1. "Pure religion . . . is this, to visit" (James 1:27).
2. Parable of the Lost Sheep. "Doth he not leave the ninety and nine and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?" (Matt. 18:12).
3. "Our Saviour went from house to house, healing the sick, comforting the mourners, soothing the afflicted speaking peace to the disconsolate" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 188).
4. "I am pure from the blood of all men. For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God." "I kept back nothing that was profitable unto you, but have shewed you, and have taught you publickly and from house to house" (Acts 20:26, 27, 20).
5. "Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:23).
6. "When a minister has presented the gospel message from the pulpit, his work is only begun. There is personal work for him to do. He should visit the people in their homes" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 187).
7. "To my ministering brethren I would say, by personal labor reach the people where they are. Become acquainted with them. This work cannot be done by proxy" (*Ibid*, p. 188).
8. "Those who labor for God have but just begun the work when they have given a discourse in the desk. After this comes the real labor, the visiting from house to house, conversing with members of families, praying with them, and coming close in sympathy to those whom we wish to benefit" (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 558).
9. "Many ministers dread the task of visiting; they have not cultivated social qualities, have not acquired that genial spirit that wins its way to the hearts of the people. Those who seclude themselves from the people are in no condition to help them" (*Gospel Workers*, p. 338).

I. Kinds of Visits Required of an Elder

A. Sick calls.

1. In hospital.
 - a. Routine visits, especially before surgery.
 - b. Be brief—stay only a few minutes.
 - c. Avoid discussing patient's illness. (Get information desired from family or the doctor.)
 - d. Be cheerful but always serious-minded.
 - e. Speak of pleasant things; inspire courage and hope.
 - f. Pray quietly before leaving. Be specific in prayer and make it brief. (Remember roommate if there is one.)
2. Home visits to the sick.
 - a. Shut-ins and aged (an occasional visit will encourage).
 - b. When the baby comes (an opportunity for a good spiritual call).
 - c. People with colds, flu, et cetera, do not expect a pastoral visit unless there are complications.

B. Soul-sick calls.

1. Weak members. (Anyone who does not attend Sabbath school or church services is weak.)
2. Backsliders. After visiting during the week, be sure to make a call on Sabbath for a public commitment to Christ. In every congregation there are souls who are hesitating, almost decided to be wholly for God (*Gospel Workers*, p. 151).

C. General membership visitation.

1. Avoid close social contacts. (Beware of too much boating, golfing, etc.)
2. Always remember your sacred responsibility as a spiritual leader every time you visit a home.
3. Do not alienate yourself from a part of your church by catering to a few.
4. Make EVERY call spiritual. (Of course one will speak of things of common interest, but they will lead to those matters that are sublime.)

5. Be full of courage and cheerful, but never a jester. A minister has no place telling silly jokes. It will tax his spiritual ingenuity to lead the family to a deeper Christian experience. Foolish talking, nor jesting "let it not be once named among you" (Eph. 5:3, 4).
6. Never leave a home without praying with the family.
7. Be careful not to use all time visiting church members. God has other sheep to be brought into the fold.

D. *Bible school interests.*

E. *Visitors at Sabbath school and church.*

F. *Relatives of Adventists:* chances are they have our literature and have probably attended some meetings.

G. *New believers.* Wean them—but not too quickly. Encourage them in some missionary activity.

II. Dividing the Visitation Time

A. *Do not try to see every member every month.*

1. Soon one will be nursing a few weak members while many others are starving.
2. See them at Sabbath school, church service, prayer meeting, AYS meeting, et cetera.

B. *Save a big block of your time for evangelistic calls.*

C. *Always have one or two regular studies in progress—personally.*

1. One is then able to encourage others to give studies.
2. It is good for one's own soul. Keeps the heart warm.

III. How Church Members Can Help With the Visitation Program

A. *Divide the church list among the elders of the church.* Type the name and address of each family on a small card. Divide the number geographically or in some other natural way among the elders. Each elder is to be personally responsible for the spiritual watchcare of those families he has been assigned.

B. *Encourage the deacons and deaconesses to call on each home in the church at least once a year.* Make every call spiritual.

C. *Friendship teams.*

1. Young people, or older, can go two by two to call on all the neighbors in the city—just a warm, friendly visit.
2. Divide territory into sections of approximately 100 homes each and assign one section to each team each year.

D. *Visiting new members.*

1. First week after baptism or transfer.

a. Send name to a church elder.

b. If several names, divide them among the elders.

2. Second week, send the new name(s) to the Sabbath school department. Names can be divided at a Sabbath school council meeting.

3. Third week, send the same name(s) to the home missionary department. Encourage new member(s) to engage in some missionary work.

4. Fourth week, send the same name(s) to the deacons and/or deaconesses. This, too, should be a spiritual visit.

5. The form letters for all these visits can be mimeographed to save a lot of time.

IV. Office Visits

A. *Every church should have a neat, though small, office.*

B. *Have certain hours when the pastor is available.*

C. *Home offices are not advisable.*

D. *Finally, see the people.* No substitute for personal visitation.

Roy B. Thurmon wrote this article when he was pastoring a church in Collegedale, Tennessee.

A Message for the Last Days

Continued from page 4

make right decisions in relationship to their eternal destiny. It is not time to amuse people in the pulpit of our churches.

In the book *The Great Controversy* E. G. White says: "The last great delusion is soon to open before us. Antichrist is to perform his marvelous works in our sight. So closely will the counterfeit resemble the true, that it will be impossible to distinguish between them except by the Holy Scriptures. By their testimony every statement and every miracle must be tested" (page 593).

Let us leave out of our message the human speculations that many times receive the name of theology. Let us preach the clear message of the Scriptures and in doing so we are giving the best to our people—the real Gospel—Jesus Christ.

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Greensboro Church Has Two Weekly Prayer Groups

Eulene Gallimore

Our first prayer group began about four years ago, after I visited the Kress Memorial Church in Florida. While there I had the privilege of attending their midday prayer session, which was for everyone, but especially for those who could not easily go out at night.

When I returned home, I asked our pastor if we could begin something similar. He said, “You do it.” So our Tuesday morning prayer group began. Every Tuesday we meet from 10:30–11:30 a.m., and afterwards we have lunch together. In our meetings we study different books of the Bible or a Spirit of Prophecy book with study sheets. And we pray.

Many, many prayers have been answered. It is a wonderful feeling to witness first hand how God answers our prayers. As a group we have grown closer and are more aware of each other’s needs and the needs of our whole church.

Some months after our Tuesday prayer group began, Elder Victor Brown visited our church and conducted a seminar on small group ministry. After attending the seminar, several of us decided to have a Sabbath afternoon prayer group.

The Sabbath afternoon group is made up of young married couples, unmarried couples, singles, senior singles and couples. Mostly we meet in my home after church, where we have lunch together with each one contributing to the meal. Often we invite visitors to join with us. After lunch and fellowship we have our intercessory prayer group. We have a book with names and the needs listed. We pray for each one.

One young lady in our church, who was right in the middle of her senior year, decided she would quit school. Her mother asked us to pray for her to change her mind. Both prayer groups prayed, and individually we prayed every day for her to be wise and to stay in school. Before the end of the week, her mother called to tell me that her daughter had just decided to go back to school. The mother said it was truly a miracle.

Another member’s daughter, who is married, was very distant to her parents. We prayed especially for the parents and the daughter. After a short time the daughter called her mother, invited her for dinner, and told her that she wanted to have a relationship with her.

It is a wonderful feeling to witness first hand how God answers our prayers.

The following is a testimony by an 82-year-old retired school teacher and a prayer group member: “Recently, a dear friend, Connie, called to let me know that she had a large growth on one of her hands. It was swollen and painful. She had

already been to the doctor and surgery was scheduled. The Holy Spirit led me to pray for her. Then when I went to my prayer group, I asked them to also pray for my friend, who was scheduled for surgery on Thursday.

“Wednesday morning I got a call from Connie saying she had just been to see her doctor again and to the doctor’s amazement, he could not determine where the swollen growth had been.”

“What happened?” the doctor exclaimed. Connie replied, “It’s a miracle.”

“When she came by to show me her hand she had tears of joy and thanksgiving to God for His miracle manifested in August 1996. This was proof of God’s faithfulness in answering our prayers. Needless to say the joy that I experienced was powerful and overwhelming.”

Meeting with my prayer groups are my bonus prayer days. I also enjoy the wholesome fellowship. During the week when my phone rings and a friend calls, and we close the conversation by saying, “Please let’s close this chat with prayer,” my heart overflows with thanksgiving. **E**

Eulene Gallimore writes from Greensboro, North Carolina, where she is head elder in her church. She is the mother of two Adventist ministers.

Special
Section

**The Message
We Proclaim**



THE SANCTUARY

THE SABBATH

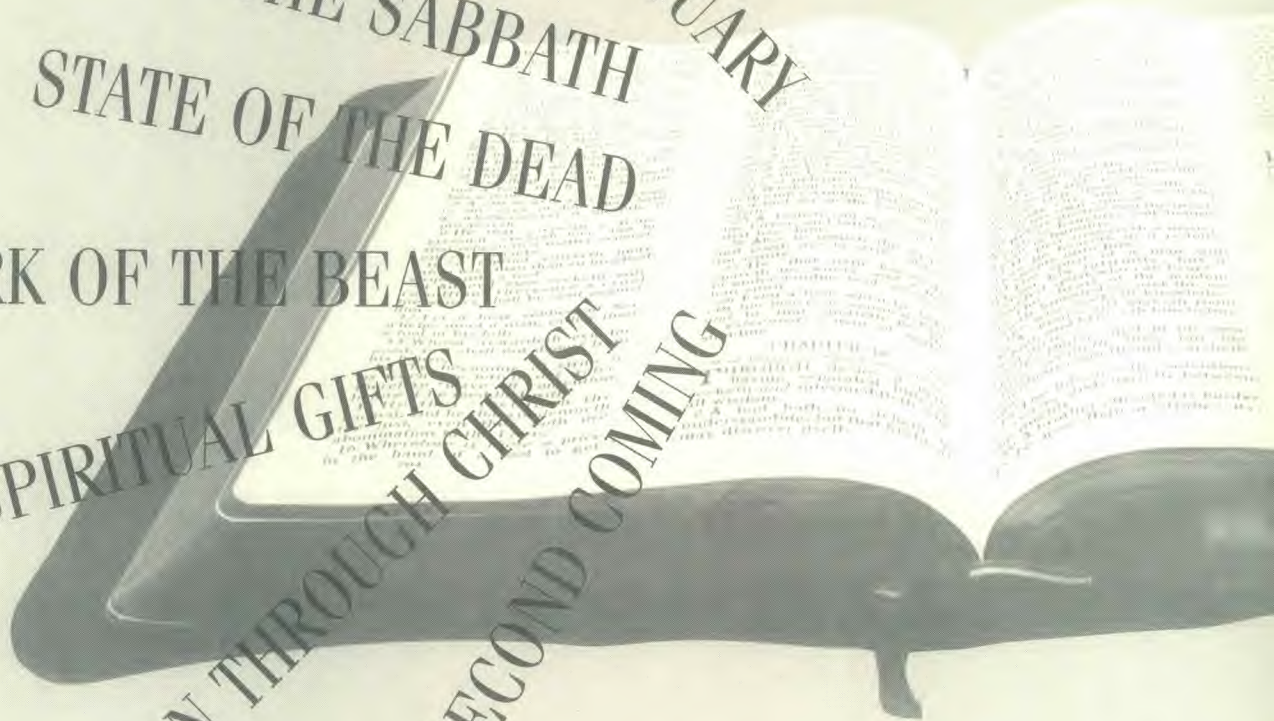
STATE OF THE DEAD


MARK OF THE BEAST

SPIRITUAL GIFTS

SALVATION THROUGH CHRIST

THE SECOND COMING





The GOSPEL IN THE DOCTRINES

*Some people today are
afraid of the doctrines.
They believe that if they
study doctrines they are
losing Christ.*

JOEL SARLI

The Lord had blessed her work as a Bible instructor with 70 precious souls in the first baptism of that series of evangelistic meetings. One day in her enthusiasm for the Lord she expressed her amazement in observing the transformation that was taking place in the life of so many people. “The more I teach the gospel to people the more I marvel of the transforming power of our message,” she exclaimed.

For her the words of Paul “*the gospel is the power of God unto salvation*” was a vivid reality. She understood that she was indeed teaching the gospel, going from home to home as she helped people to understand the doctrines of the Adventist church. She understood the gospel as the doctrines of the Adventist church. She could not distinguish them because she had experienced first hand the many lives that had been transformed by the power of the Message.

Accompanying her was a young intern who had just graduated from college with a theology degree. He became the pastor of the

It is the conviction of some people today that doctrine is more related to the intellect and gospel to the experience.

new church and as the work continued, he came to understand this approach with apprehension. At last deciding that it was a severe detriment to her ministry, he decided to provide new insight to the faithful Bible instructor so that she might understand some fresh theological concepts that he just learned from his updated teachers in college.

"You are not teaching gospel but Adventist doctrines," he began, "and you are using one of the worst methods of studying the Bible—the 'proof-text-method'." He told her that he would have more time to talk about this since he would be remaining there as the coordinator of the follow-up activities for this campaign.

GOSPEL AS OPPOSED TO DOCTRINES

Today we increasingly face this trend in Christianity. Preachers, administrators, and theologians are speaking of the gospel as opposed to doctrine. Often this concept is expressed in sentences like the following: "If we are preaching doctrines we are not preaching the gospel"; "The important emphasis should be placed on gospel and not doctrines"; "To bring about a spiritual revival to our congregations we need to preach gospel and not doctrines." It is the conviction of some people today that doctrine is more related to the intellect and gospel to experience.

Dr. John R. W. Stott in

his book *Your Mind Matters* illustrates this point mentioning a leader of the neo-Pentecostal movement that said to him that what matters was not the doctrine, but the experience. This concept has influenced the very structure of the neo-Pentecostal churches affecting mainly its worship style. Stott concludes that this is equivalent to putting our subjective experience above God's revealed truth.¹

This idea that gospel and doctrine are different things has been repeated in pulpits, publications, and in schools, bringing confusion in the minds of many faithful preachers, students, and members, while discrediting the loyal work done by evangelists and Bible instructors through the years. I would like to suggest that such a concept in some way demonstrates a lack of understanding of the true meaning and purpose of the doctrines. It is not fair to the message of the Bible itself, to the great gospel commission given by Jesus to His church, and the excellent work done by pastors, evangelists, missionaries, and lay people around the world. It is a distortion of the true meaning of the word *doctrine* and the theological content of the gospel. And I believe that it more truly reflects the prevalent concept so widely spread among Christians today, that of justifying the accommodation of the church with the world.

If it is true that some preachers and members have given, in some instances, a

wrong impression of the true meaning of certain doctrines, it is also true, that due to the lack of the correct and consistent presentation of doctrines, some of our preaching does not provide the quality of spiritual nurture to our congregations. Doctrines are part of the solid message of the Bible that must be given to our congregations through the preaching process of God's Word.

E. G. White counsels: "We do not go deep enough in our search. Every soul who believes present truth will be brought where he will be required to give a reason of the hope that is in him. The people of God will be called upon to stand before kings, princes, rulers, and great men of the earth, and they must know that they do know what is truth."²

"ALL THAT I HAVE COMMANDED"

In Matthew 28:20 Jesus instructed the church that it was her responsibility to teach the new disciples to observe all that He had commanded. The word "teaching" is a translation of the Greek word *didaskalos* and is related to the verb *didasko* that means teach, instruct.³ This word refers to the specific responsibility that Jesus entrusted to His Church. That responsibility is to pass on to the new disciples of the future Christian church His teachings. The Holy Spirit, when He inspired Paul to suggest the several spiritual gifts, did not forget to

include the gift of teaching “to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Eph. 4:12 RSV).

Some natural questions that one might pose could be: What did Jesus teach when he was on earth? What was the content of His teaching that we were to carry on to the believers? Was it the gospel or not? What is the gospel? Conzelmann answers in this way: “In brief, the answer is God, His kingdom and His will. . . .” (on the whole subject, see H. Conzelmann, *An Outline Theology of the New Testament*, 1969, 115-27).⁴

“TEACHERS TO SUIT THEIR OWN LIKINGS”

The church that fails in teaching “all things” that Jesus commanded is not fulfilling the evangelical mandate that Jesus gave to His Church. It is easier to be selective in what we preach to our congregations in order to make our pastoral road smooth and uncomplicated.

Many are avoiding to preach some of the basic ethical teachings of Jesus because of the potential confrontation they may face from some members of their congregations. To please their listeners and to be loved by their congregations they preach only a partial message which arbitrarily can be called gospel, but is neither the full gospel nor the eternal gospel (Rev 14:6) as proclaimed by Jesus Himself. In some churches the preaching has been limited to subjects socially

attractive such as forgiveness, love, acceptance and some subjects that improperly are called righteousness by faith.

My dear Elders, if we want to be faithful to the gospel we have to go beyond that. We would do well to review the admonition of Paul, the prince of the gospel’s proclamation: “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: preach the word, be urgent in season and out of season, convince, rebuke, and exhort, unflinching in patience and in teaching. For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching (*doctrine*), but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own likings” (2 Tim 4:1-3 RSV).

WHAT IS BIBLICAL DOCTRINE?

The word “doctrine” comes from the Latin language, “*doctrine*”. Its basic meaning is: “teaching, instruction; something that is taught.” In the Greek, the original language of the New Testament, doctrine is *didakê* (used 30 times) and *didaskalia* (used 21 times). The one that teaches is *didaskalos* (used 59 times).

In the Old Testament the word used is *torah*, that is, a set of revealed teachings. The importance of it is underlined by the repetition of the word (216 times). In Old Testament times God called Himself *Didaskou* (Psa. 94:10), the *Teacher*. In the *Septuagint*, the pre-Christian

version of the Jewish Scriptures, this word *doctrine* was used to refer to the concrete manifestation of God’s will: (1) God’s will in general (Psa. 143:10); (2) God’s exhortations (Deut. 4:1); (3) God’s words (Deut. 4:10). In the scriptures of the Old Testament, in many instances, the word *law* refers to doctrine and in the New Testament the word *faith* was applied by the apostles in making reference to doctrines as well (Jude 3, 20; Gal. 1:23; Eph. 4:5; Phil. 1:27; Gal. 1:23; 1 Tim. 3:9, 13; Titus 2:2; 3:15; etc. . . .).⁵

In the Bible every teaching related to the revealed will of God, through the prophets, apostles, and Jesus Himself, is doctrine. From this perspective if we say that we have to preach the gospel and not the doctrine we are making a mistake that compromises our role as preachers of the Word in its fullness.

Likewise, in merely using the name of Jesus and in making some emotional description of His sacrifice is not preaching the gospel. Jesus Himself gave a warning against this inconsistent type of preaching saying, “Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord’ and not do what I tell you? Everyone who comes to me and hears my words and does them, I will show you what he is like” (Luke 6:46-47 RSV).

CHRIST THE CENTER OF ATTRACTION IN EVERY DOCTRINE

It seems that some people today are afraid of the

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doctrines because they believe that if they study doctrines they are losing Christ. It is true that some preachers have lost already the ability of making Christ the central focus of the doctrines. But this has nothing to do with the nature of the doctrines itself, but with the spiritual vision of the preacher.

In the Old Testament as well as in the New Testament doctrines are beams of light coming from the "Sun of righteousness" (Mal. 4:2). Doctrines are means that God uses to convey certain aspects of the truth about Himself to His people. If the doctrines are disconnected from Jesus, the living Source of truth, surely they will have no transforming power. They are dead in themselves. In that case we should not discard or blame the doctrines but the preacher.

John W. Fowler says: "The purpose of all preaching—doctrinal, prophetic, moral, and ethical—is to lead to Christ. The Sabbath, man's condition in death, health reform, dress standards, the law of God, the mark of the beast, the sanctuary, the second coming—all must find their relevance in Him."⁶ And E. G. White beautifully supports this concept: "Increased light will shine upon all the grand truth of prophecy, and they will be seen in freshness and brilliancy, because the bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness will illuminate the whole."⁷

In presenting doctrines we will not undermine

necessarily the power of the person of Jesus as revealed in the Bible. David never undermined the merciful character of God in exalting the law. On the contrary, he exalted it.

Jesus must be lifted up in every message delivered in the pulpit as E. G. White says concerning the third angel's message and the doctrine of the Sabbath: "The third angel's message calls for the presentation of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment, and this truth must be brought to the world; but the great Center of attraction, Jesus Christ, must not be left out of the third angel's message . . ."⁸ The great Central Focus of any biblical doctrine is Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God.

All the doctrines of the Bible are the gospel in its fullness when properly understood and preached. It is our responsibility as spiritual leaders within our congregation to avoid this compromising dichotomy and be sure that sound biblical doctrines in their right perspective are being taught to our people. That is why Paul wrote to Timothy, "Take heed to yourself and to your teaching (*doctrine*)" (1 Tim 4:16).

William Carey Taylor says: "If the doctrine or the evangelical faith is undermined and destroyed, there will be *no room for evangelism anymore*. Some are discarding doctrines under the pretext of evangelizing. This generalized idea had its origin in the ecumenical presuppositions. But

evangelism without doctrines is like leading people to apostasy."⁹

We cannot speak of the gospel as opposed to doctrines. Every teaching of the Bible, when properly understood, is gospel because it leads us to understand better the plan of salvation and the love Jesus Christ our precious Savior. And that is good news. **E**

Notes

¹ Stott, John R.W. *Crer Ê Também Pensar* (ABU Editora S.C.- São Paulo, 1991) p. 9.

² White, E. G. *Testimonies to Minister and Gospel Workers* (Pacifice Press Publishing Association, Boise, ID, 1962) p. 119.

³ *Dictionary of the New Testament Theology*, Vol. 3 (Zondervan Publishing House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1971) p. 762.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 762.

⁵ Reis, Anibal P. *O Crente Pode Perder a Salvação* (Edições "Caminho de Damasco", São Paulo, Brazil, 1987) p. 19.

⁶ Fowler, John W. *Preaching "Present Truth"*, Berrien Springs, MI, *Adventist Affirm Journal*, 1988) Vol. 2, n. 2, p. 33.

⁷ White, E.G. *Evangelism* (Review and Herald Publishing Association, Washington D.C., 1970) p. 198.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 184.

⁹ Reis, Anibal P. *O Crente Pode Perder a Salvação*, p. 18.

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JESUS

IN THE DOCTRINE OF CREATION

*Jesus came to earth to
become Adam as Adam
was intended to be when
he came forth from the
hands of the Creator.*

JON PAULIEN

In the beginning, God created . . .” (Gen. 1:1). “In the beginning was the Word . . .” (John 1:1). With these phrases we are introduced to the idea that the same Jesus who “became flesh and made his dwelling among us” (John 1:14) was the One through whom “all things were made” (John 1:3). John wants us to understand that when we read the creation story of Genesis, we must see Jesus if we are to fully grasp its message. The God who “created the heavens and the earth” (Gen. 1:1) was Jesus. The God who said, “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3) was Jesus. The God who “formed man from the dust of the ground” (Gen. 2:7) was Jesus. The God who walked “in the garden in the cool of the day” (Gen. 3:8) was Jesus. “Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made” (John 1:3).

Being Creator implies, of course, that Jesus is fully God in every way. “And the Word was God” (John 1:1). John 1:1 is probably the clearest assertion of the deity of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. It tells us that when Creation took place, Jesus was already there. Although He was distinct from the Father from the beginning (“the Word was with God”), His relationship with the Father was an intimacy of equals, not that of a superior with an inferior. The Word shared fully in

Adam and Eve were intentionally created in the likeness of God, which implies that a relationship with Him would be the natural thing.

God's nature, "what God was, the Word was" (1:1—My translation).

But the New Testament view of Christ in the Creation goes much deeper than an assertion that Jesus is the One who made all things. For the New Testament, the story of creation becomes a marvelous parable also of Jesus' saving work and of the importance of His human nature. To fully understand the New Testament approach to creation, let's take a quick look first at the creation story of Genesis 1 and 2 itself.

The story of creation is really told twice in Genesis. In the first chapter (and spilling over to the third verse of chapter two), we find the big picture of creation as a whole. Day by day God's creation develops in complexity until it reaches its high point; the creation of Adam and Eve, the first parents of the human race. In the second telling of the story (Gen. 2:4-25) the writer elaborates on the creation of humanity. Whereas in the first story Adam and Eve were the high-point of creation, in the second story they are the center and focus of God's creative activity.

The passage in the first two chapters of Genesis that interests us the most in this article is Genesis 1:26-28 (NIV):

26 Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.

27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

28 God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.

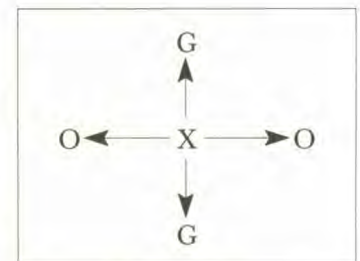
In this text it becomes clear that Adam and Eve were created as beings in relationship. Their lives were marked by three basic relationships; a relationship with God, a relationship with each other, and a relationship with the world around them. The thrice-repeated assertion that human beings are created in the image of God (26, 27) makes two points. First, Adam and Eve were intentionally created in likeness to God, which implies that a relationship with Him would be the natural thing. Second, the image concept also implies that God was prior to and superior to them. He was the Creator. They were creatures. Adam and Eve were in a subordinate relationship with God. It was a relationship of Greater with lesser.

At the same time they were in relationship with each other. "Male and female he created them" (27). It was not a subordinate relationship, however, like the one they had with God. "Eve was created from a rib taken from the side of Adam, signifying that she was not to control him as the head, nor to be trampled under his feet as an inferior, but to stand by his

side as an equal . . ." (PP 46). The relationship between Adam and Eve was designed to be a relationship of equals, each loving and serving the other.

The third relationship was outlined in verses 26 and 28. Adam and Eve were to "subdue the earth" and "rule" it. This dominion is described in relation to the animal kingdom. They were to rule over the fish of the sea, the birds of the air, the livestock, the creatures that move along the ground; in other words, they were in dominion over all the earth. This dominion is clearly seen in the story of the naming of the animals in Genesis 2:19, 20.

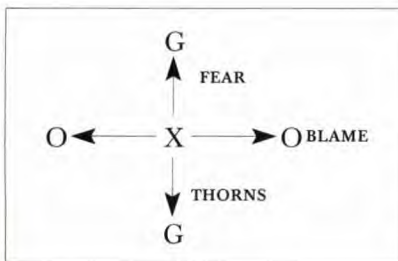
The three relationships in which Adam and Eve were created can be illustrated by the following diagram in which X stands for Adam or Eve, G stands for God, O stands for the other of the pair and all future human beings that Adam or Eve would relate to, and E stands for Earth or Environment.



The upward arrow illustrates the superior-inferior relationship between Adam and God. The horizontal arrow illustrates the relationship of equality Adam and Eve had with each other. The downward

arrow symbolizes the dominance or stewardship over the rest of creation that God gave to Adam and Eve.

When sin entered the garden, it began as a breach between Eve and God, but the consequences of sin quickly spread to all three relationships. First, Adam and Eve recognized the brokenness in their relationship with God by hiding from Him when He approached (Gen. 3:8-10). God acknowledged their need for space in the relationship by banishing them from the garden (3:23, 24). Immediately, they began to bicker and blame others for their faults (3:11-13). Man began to dominate woman (3:16). And the creation began to resist their dominion. The flowers wilted (PP 62), the ground produced thorns (3:18), and the animals ceased to respond as they had before. When Adam and Eve rebelled against the rule of their Creator, the environment rebelled against their rule as well. And the ultimate consequence of sin was the end of all relationships, death (Gen. 2:17).



What does this sad story of broken relationships have to do with Jesus Christ? In what way is the story of

creation and the experience of Adam and Eve in the Garden a parable of Jesus' saving work and the human nature of the God-man?

John 1:1 is the beginning of the answer. The nature and the work of Jesus is modeled on the original creation. Where John says "In the beginning was the Word . . . through him all things were made" (John 1:1, 3), Genesis says, "In the beginning, God said . . . (Gen 1:1, 3, 6, 9, etc.) and it was so" (Gen 1:7, 9, 11, etc.).

In light of this it is most interesting to read Luke 1:35 (NIV).

*The angel answered,
"The Holy Spirit
will come upon you,
and the power of the Most High
will overshadow you.
So the holy one to be born
will be called the Son of God."*

The concept of the Spirit of the Most High "overshadowing" Mary reminds the reader of Genesis 1:2 where the "Spirit of God was hovering over the waters." The result of the Spirit's work in Genesis 1 was the creation of the world. The result of the Spirit's work in Luke 1 was a new creation, the humanity of Jesus. Jesus is the fulfillment of the new creation promised in Old Testament prophets like Isaiah (Isa. 65:17).

It is not surprising, therefore, that New Testament writers freely compare Jesus with Adam

(Rom. 5:12-19). The Adam of Genesis is the "first man" or the "first Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45), Jesus is the "second man," "the last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:45-47). Adam is "the earthly man", Jesus is "the Man from heaven" (1 Cor. 15:48-49). Like Adam, Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Col. 1:15).

In what sense is Jesus the new Adam? In what sense is he like Adam and yet greater than Adam? The crucial element is that Jesus is like Adam in His relationships. Jesus too had a perfect relationship with God, with others and with the environment around Him. Jesus came to earth to become Adam as Adam was intended to be when he came forth from the hands of the Creator. When this principle is understood, a number of simple concepts in the gospels become filled with fresh meaning.

In John 14:28 Jesus makes the statement, "The Father is greater than I." This text is freely used by Jehovah's Witnesses to show that Jesus is inferior in nature to the Father. But they have failed to understand the "second Adam" significance of this text. As the new Adam Jesus was in perfect subordination to His Father. As the second Adam Jesus obeyed the commands of His Father (John 15:10). As the second Adam Jesus did not operate on His own, but was taught by His Father (John 8:28). He always did that which was pleasing to His Father (John 8:29). He was in a relationship of perfect

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What had been the original Adam's by right of creation has been purchased back at infinite cost.

subordination to His Father. He was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

Jesus also had a perfect relationship with His fellow human beings as He walked on this earth. This relationship with others was beautifully illustrated by the foot washing service in John 13. Jesus "did not come to be served, but to serve" (Mark 10:45). "He went around doing good" (Acts 10:38). "He made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant . . . he humbled himself" (Phil. 2:5-8). If every person on earth had the spirit and attitude of Jesus there would be sweet harmony in the loving service each would provide for the others. True equality is found in mutual submission and service. Jesus demonstrated in His relationships with others that He was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

It is in His relationship with the environment that the parallels between Jesus and Adam become especially interesting. The first Adam was created to rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26, 28; Heb. 2:6-8). The second Adam inherited that role from the first by the new creation (Heb. 2:8, 9). He was Adam as Adam was intended to be. Thus many of the stories in the gospels make sense as illustrations of Jesus' dominion over the earth.

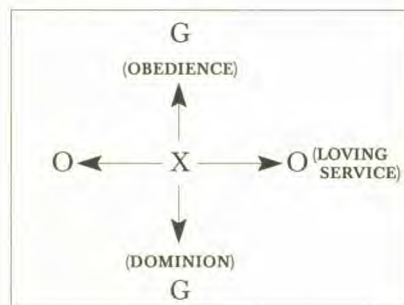
The disciples were out fishing on the Sea of Galilee one night, but they caught nothing (John 21:1-3). Why were they fishing at night? To understand that you need

to know that there are two types of fishing, lure fishing and net fishing. Lure fishing takes place in daylight. You want the fish to see the lure, be attracted and bite into the line. But net fishing works best at night. The fish "stumbles" into the net without even realizing that anything is there. If you have had no luck during the night, the net fisherman has one last chance in the early hours of the morning. He can throw the net on the shady side of the boat. A fish enjoying the early morning sunshine wanders into the shadow of the boat, is blinded momentarily, and ZZZAAAPPP!!! The fish is caught.

But in the story there was this guy standing on the beach (John 21:4, 5). He knew a lot about preaching, but He seemed to know very little about fishing. He called out, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat" (John 21:6). Since the disciples weren't stupid, He was clearly inviting them to throw the net on the sunny side of the boat! Not a great strategy under ordinary circumstances. But this was no ordinary preacher. This was Adam as Adam was intended to be. He had dominion over the fish of the sea (Gen. 1:26, 28)! In His mind He connected with several schools of fish totaling 153 and said, "Hey, you and you and you, all of you, into that net right now!" And they obeyed, because he was the second Adam, He was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

On another occasion, Jesus directed Peter to catch a particular fish that had scooped up just the right amount of change to meet an urgent tax bill! Jesus was in dominion over the fish of the sea. He also ruled over all the earth (Gen. 1:26). Even the winds and the waves obeyed Him (Matt. 8:26, 27). The disciples were right to ask, "What kind of *man* is this?" He was Adam as Adam was intended to be.

Sometime after this Jesus took a ride on an unbroken colt (Mark 11:1-8). If you or I were to try this, the ride would be a short and merry one! But Jesus had dominion "over every living creature that moves along the ground" (Gen. 1:28). He could freely declare, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matt. 28:18). He was Adam as Adam was intended to be. He lived perfectly in all three of Adam's relationships, He lived in obedience to God, in loving service to others, and in dominion over the earth and its animals.



Like the first Adam, the second Adam had a wayward bride. "I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin

to him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ" (1 Cor. 11:2, 3). The church is here likened to Eve, carrying the "second Adam" typology a step further. The first Adam was put to sleep, and an opening was made in his side. From that opening came the substance from which God made the woman. Similarly, the second Adam was put to sleep (on the cross) and an opening was made in His side. From that opening came the substance (water and blood—cf. 1 John 5:6) from which God created the church.

Jesus Christ is all that Adam was meant to be. He was tempted on the point of appetite (in the wilderness, cf. Matt. 4:1-3). In his temptations He was passing over the same ground where Adam had failed, but where the first Adam failed, the second Adam conquered. In overcoming Satan's temptations Jesus passed over the ground of Adam's failure and redeemed it.

On the other hand, Jesus also accepted the consequences of Adam's failure. Because of sin, the first Adam came under the curse. He was cursed with nakedness (Gen. 3:10, 11), thorns (3:18), sweat (3:19), and death (2:17; 5:5). Likewise, on the cross the second Adam came under the curse of the first Adam. He too was naked (one purpose of crucifixion was

humiliation in front of your family and friends, the PG* version of the cross found in most artwork is not historically accurate—Heb. 12:2), and suffered from thorns, the sweat of anguish and ultimately death.

So we see a great reversal in the experience of Christ. He lived a perfect life in our human flesh, though he had to battle the full force of human temptation. He was Adam as Adam was intended to be. On the basis of His perfect life, we inherit eternal life and justification. What had been the original Adam's by right of creation has been purchased back at infinite cost. At the same time, although He did not deserve it, He carried in His body on the tree (1 Pet. 2:24) all the consequences of human sin. He reaped the full force of the curse. As a result, the death and condemnation that we inherited from the first Adam is no longer held to our account.

"Consequently, just as the result of one trespass was condemnation for all men, so also the result of one act of righteousness was justification that brings life for all men. For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous" (Rom. 5:19). "Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered

the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. 'With His stripes we are healed.'" (Desire of Ages, p. 25).

For the writers of the New Testament, to talk about Christ was to talk about creation, and to think of creation was to see Christ. And the greatest of all creations is the one Christ affects in the lives of His people (2 Cor. 5:17). **E**

* Parental Guidance.

Jon Paulien writes from Berrien Springs, Michigan where he is professor of New Testament Interpretation in the Theological Seminary at Andrews University.

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The ESSENCE OF NEW TESTAMENT PREACHING

How is authentic New Testament preaching distinguished from a religious lecture or an impassioned exhortation?

HERBERT E. DOUGLASS

What was the nature of New Testament preaching that called forth the power and glory of New Testament faith? How is authentic New Testament preaching distinguished from a religious lecture or an impassioned exhortation? What should one expect of a sermon? What is its purpose? How should the preacher understand his own relationship to the sermon? What is the “truth” that is to be proclaimed?

These are questions that can be answered only after careful study of the New Testament record and a preacher’s own experience. But answers there must be if a preacher in the twentieth century is to share the sense of mission that moved Paul in the name of his Lord to storm the hearts of men and women, sophisticated or unlettered, up and down the shores of the Mediterranean. Paul bares his soul in numerous New Testament passages as he describes the nature of Christian faith—how it is born and its relationship to authentic preaching. Perhaps he never spoke more clearly than when he wrote the following in his second letter to the Corinthians:

“Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. We have renounced disgraceful, under-handed ways; we refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God’s word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God. And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled only to those who are perishing. In their case the god of this world

has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the likeness of God. For what we preach is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, with ourselves as your servants for Jesus sake. For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness,' who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, to show that the transcendent power belongs to God and not to us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies. For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.

"Since we have the same spirit of faith as he had who wrote, 'I believed, and so I spoke,' we too believe, and so we speak, knowing that he who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and bring us with you into his presence. For it is all for your sake, so that as grace extends to more and more people it may increase thanksgiving, to the glory of God.

"So we do not lose heart. Though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner

nature is being renewed every day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal."¹

As Paul reflects on his experiences as a preacher for Jesus Christ, he reveals three fundamental facts regarding New Testament preaching: (1) A definition of the nature of authentic Christian proclamation—what the sermon is and is not; (2) a description of how a genuine sermon is born; and (3) a declaration of the goal of New Testament preaching.

WHAT THE SERMON IS AND IS NOT

Here Paul makes a clear statement defining the distinctive characteristic of a genuine Christian sermon: "For what we preach² is not ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord" (verse 5). The image of an official herald adds vigor and color. What Paul had been doing was not accomplished in the dark, or by crafty diplomacy, or by saccharine manipulation of ear-tickled audiences. Whatever else men could say about Paul,

they were in no doubt about his clear, direct, unadorned message: Jesus Christ is Lord! Trust Him! In this is your eternal salvation!

But a genuine sermon is more than a proclamation, it is also a demonstration: God "has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (verse 6). New Testament preaching is an indivisible union of word and life. When Jesus said, "I am . . . the truth, and the life" (John 14:6) He united the medium with the message. His life was the truth. The truth about life and reality is to be seen in the person of Jesus Christ. The amazing discovery of the early apostles was that when men made Jesus Lord of their lives, a new power moved them, their lives were dramatically changed, and the spirit of Jesus became the spirit of their lives also. They learned the truth about life in their own experience.

THE LIFE AND THE WORD

The birth of the Christian church occurred when the first disciples called Jesus Lord; the church grew when it turned to the non-believing world and bore witness in life and word to the love and power of God in their

lives. Words alone about Jesus, even eloquent pronouncements regarding His matchless life, His heroic death, and His incredible resurrection, would never have brought forth a second generation of Christian believers. New Testament preaching is believable only when the preacher's life validates the preached word. And the preacher's life is credible only when indeed Jesus is Lord of his life.

But Paul in his simple definition of Christian preaching is also saying a word about what a sermon is not. Above all else, a Christian sermon is not the exposition of the preacher's religious self-consciousness: "What we preach is not ourselves" (verse 5).

The chief weakness of nineteenth-century liberalism was that the ground of authority for Christian proclamation, "the factual basis for theology," was the "direct, immediate, personal experience"³ of the religiously oriented man. Admittedly there is much to learn from another man's spiritual experience, but salvation comes from outside of man, not from within. Valid indeed is a man's personal experience *but that which creates valid experience is not man's own self-analysis*. For the New Testament preacher, "What we preach is not

ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord” (verse 5).

Neither is the New Testament an attempt to prove the existence of God or the divinity of Jesus. Because Christian preaching is the proclamation of the God who became flesh, there is no necessity (or even possibility) to first prove the existence of God before we speak of what we have learned about Him through His revelation. Something alien enters the church when metaphysics is employed in the attempt to assist or augment theology. Theology is simply the study of God’s self-communication. What God has not revealed to man about Himself and the meaning of life surely cannot be learned by unaided human reason. The existence of God is made real only when and where God communicates Himself, either directly (without human mediation) at life’s burning bushes or indirectly through the mediation of faith (that is, through the witness of a person who has experienced the reality of God’s presence). “Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the Christ” (Rom.10:17).

Nor is the sermon merely a conveyance for the transmission of information. New

Testament preachers were primarily concerned that the conscience would be moved to decision: “We would commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God” (2 Cor. 4:2). Mere lectures about Jesus no matter how logical or erudite, are not adequate to move the conscience to decision.

TO INFORM IS NOT ENOUGH

A greater commission rests on the genuine Christian preacher than merely to process and amass information, no matter how true it may be. Above all else, the preacher is a channel through whom the living Lord can actually confront men and women; human words become the historic, objective instrument that the Holy Spirit uses to reach the conscience of the listener. The conscience is more than the logical faculty; to reach the conscience, a preacher must do more than inform, he must aim to move man’s deepest feelings.

But meeting the conscience is not yet the end of Christian proclamation. The New Testament preacher did not merely arouse the moral feelings and then withdraw as if his task were done. He had an ultimate purpose—to bring his listeners to decision. Thus Paul said

in the fifth chapter of second Corinthians, “We persuade men” (verse 11); “so we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We beseech you on behalf of Christ” (verse 20). As an undershepherd to the Lord’s pleading, the genuine preacher informs, moves the feelings, and appeals to the will for a decision.

“We must have more than an intellectual belief in the truth. Many of the Jews were convinced that Jesus was the Son of God, but they were too proud and ambitious to surrender. . . . They did not receive into the heart the truth as it is in Jesus. When truth is held as truth only by the conscience, when the heart is not stimulated and made receptive, only the mind is affected. But when the truth is received as truth by the heart, it has passed through the conscience, and has captivated the soul with its pure principles. It is placed in the heart by the Holy Spirit, who reveals its beauty to the mind, that its transforming power may be seen in the character.”⁴ **E**

Notes

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Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission.

¹ 2 Corinthians 4.

² Paul uses at least seven Greek words when describing the basic of the Christian preacher. For Paul the concept of Christian proclamation is too big to be confined within one word. The most common word used is *kerussein*, translated fifty-three times in the King James Version “to preach,” five times “to publish,” and twice to “proclaim.” The Greek mind instantly understood Paul’s colorful description of preaching because the word *kerussein* was often used to describe the work of the official herald who rode through the empire announcing a new law summoning men to battle or proclaiming a victory. In Paul’s mind to preach was to perform the task of a herald for God, a herald who is sent to proclaim the good news of victory straight from the throne of the King of kings and Lord of lords. The message that Paul proclaimed is called the *kerugma*: “It pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe” (1 Cor. 1:21) The herald who proclaims the *kerugma* is called the *kerux*: “For this [gospel] I was appointed a preacher (*kerux*) and apostle. . . . a teacher (1 Tim. 2:7). The use of *kerussein* and its derivatives suggests a grand picture of pageantry.

³ Harry Emerson Fosdick, *The Living of These Days* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1956). pp. 64. 234.

⁴ *Evangelism*, p. 291.

Herbert E. Douglass was an associate Editor of the Review and Herald when he wrote this article. Presently he lives in Weimar, California.

TECHNIQUES THAT HELP IN TEACHING THE TRUTH

MARK FINLEY

During my senior year in college each theology student was required to give Bible studies to someone in the nearby community. Diligently I searched for my interest. Finally I discovered a woman who was willing to endure my Bible studies.

Often during the studies I was unable to answer the lady's questions. And often I sat red-faced in embarrassment because I had forgotten what I was to say next. Regularly I stayed too long. Although I was sincere, my best efforts were awfully feeble.

THE POWER OF GOD'S WORD

As I looked back on that Bible study through the years, it seemed a great disaster. I wondered whether God had allowed me to train with somebody He knew wouldn't respond. What poor theology! Ten years later I returned to South Lancaster, Massachusetts and Atlantic Union College to hold an evangelistic series. Who was in the audience but the woman with whom I had studied ten years before! During that ten years the seed of the Word of God had been growing. As Hebrews states it so magnificently, "The Word of God is quick and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing asunder even to the joints and marrow of the heart" (Heb. 4:12). Although my words were powerless, feeble, and impotent, God's Word, through the power of the Spirit, did what my words could never have accomplished. In spite of my failure there was still power in God's Word to draw this woman back. God's Spirit touched her life. Through His powerful influence a new creation emerged. Her heart and life were changed. She was among the first baptized in that evangelistic meeting.

I am reassured by the fact that God's Word continually works in men and women's hearts in spite of our feebleness. I am continually encouraged by God's promise in the book of Isaiah, "For as the rain cometh down and the snow from heaven and returneth not thither but watereth the earth and maketh it bring forth . . . , so shall My word be that goeth forth out of My mouth. It shall not return unto Me void but it shall accomplish that which I please" (Isa. 55:10, 11).

Ellen G. White states it succinctly: "The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the Word of God. This Word imparts power. It begets life. Every command is a promise. Accepted by the will, received into the soul it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and recreates the soul in the image of God" (*Education*, p. 126).

At times you may feel inadequate in presenting God's

Word. Nervousness or anxiety may overwhelm you, and you may question your competency. I've got good news for you. As you present the Word of God, the same Spirit that prompted the writers of old to pen the Scriptures will move on the hearts of the men and women to help them to understand its teachings. If you will consciously depend on Him, He will aid your weakness.

Communicating the Word of God differs from any other form of communication. When a salesman makes a presentation he uses human sales skills to reach the mind. When a TV commentator broadcasts to the masses, he uses men's media marketing methods to communicate his concepts. When a teacher teaches her students American history, math, or science, she communicates with principles of logic. But when a teacher of God's Word stands before a congregation, that teacher is a vehicle through which the Holy Spirit communicates divine concepts to the mind.

It is true that the human element plays a major part in influencing the listener's acceptance or rejection of truth, and so proper teaching techniques are important. Nevertheless, without the Spirit of God, teaching techniques are powerless to influence the thoughts of men and women for eternity. They may inform the mind but they cannot convert the heart.

Teaching techniques that we will discuss here are tools. Tools do not do the work. A hammer, a saw, a screwdriver merely facilitates the accomplishment of the task. They must be used by people who know how to use them.

The teaching techniques are powerful. I have seen them work in hundreds of seminars on thousands of minds. They blend concepts from the Bible, the writings of Ellen G. White, and modern psychology. If you will follow them, they will help you to be an effective communicator. They will ensure that your listeners receive and understand the message you're attempting to communicate.

TWO FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE LEARNING

Most students of human behaviour believe that two major factors influence learning. In psychological terms they are called *ethos* and *logos*. *Ethos* has to do with the speaker. *Logos* has to do with the message. Whether or not individuals will accept truth depends on both how they feel about you and how clearly you reveal truth.

In regard to *ethos*, the bottom line is this: If people don't accept you, no matter how logical and true your message is, they won't accept it. How do you come across? Are you pious and sanctimonious or caring and concerned? Do you give the impression that you think you have all the answers? That you consider yourself intelligent and your audience ignorant? Do you come across as arrogant and self-assured or as one who is genuinely concerned about imparting information that will be helpful to the audience?

In a recent article on Christian persuasion, Tim Timmons, pastor of the Southcoast Community Church in Irving, California, asserts that your audience asks three questions as you get up to speak. The first is, "Can I trust you? Are you basically honest? Are you sincere and genuine?" (*Leadership*, Fall, 1985, p. 93).

Nothing will substitute for good preparation. . . . lack of preparation limits the work He can do through us.

In the light of such events as Watergate, Irangate, and the PTL scandal, a growing number of people are suspicious of authority figures. So this basic question of trust is paramount in the minds of many.

Ellen G. White wrote, "As the people looked upon Jesus, they saw a face in which divine compassion was blended with conscious power. He seemed to be surrounded with an atmosphere of spiritual life. While His manners were gentle and unassuming, He impressed men with a sense of power that was hidden, yet could not be wholly concealed. . . . Christ's teaching had a freshness and a power such as men had never before known. Even His enemies were forced to confess, 'Never man spake like this Man.'" (*Ministry of Healing*, pp. 51, 52). Early in your presentation one of your goals should be to establish yourself with your listeners as a spiritual man or woman. It will help to prepare their minds to receive your message.

According to Timmons, the second question your audience is asking when you get up to speak is, "Does this person care for me?" If you come across as a genuinely caring person rather than a dogmatic, bigoted individual, they will be much more willing to learn from you. This makes it important that you learn the names of each person in your class, that you spend time before and after class getting acquainted with your class members.

Talk to people, making such comments as "John, I'm so glad to see you, but I notice that you're here alone. Let your wife know that we've missed her" or "Mary, it's so good to see you again. I'm happy that you've brought your daughter with you." Or "Joan, we missed

you last week. I heard that you were sick and I want you to know that we've been praying for you."

Learning something about the individual, discovering little details regarding their family, understanding something about their work, knowing about their interests and hobbies, communicating to them a personal concern and interest will break down the walls of prejudice and open their minds to receiving the message that you're attempting to communicate.

THOROUGH PREPARATION

The third question Timmons says arises within the minds of the listeners is "Does the speaker know what he's talking about? Does he know his subject?" Here is where you may feel a little intimidated. You may think, "What if I lose my place during the presentation? What if I become confused? How can I overcome my anxiety and nervousness? How can I keep from being a hindrance to the acceptance of God's truth?"

Nothing will substitute for good preparation. God is so desirous of communicating truth to hearts and minds that He will attempt to use us to reach people whether or not we are well prepared. But lack of preparation limits the work He can do through us.

When I was a ministerial student, I was extremely nervous each time I got up to preach. Once when I gave a chapel talk at Atlantic Union College, I was so nervous that my stomach was in knots. My knees shook, my voice cracked, my face turned red, and beads of sweat stood out on my forehead and poured down my cheeks. I wondered whether I would get through my talk. Not only was I glad when it was

over but everybody else was too! I determined that I had to do *something* to feel more at ease in the pulpit.

The girl I was dating at the time, Ernestine, who has now become my wife, worked in the college gymnasium. At the side of the gymnasium there was a small room where basketballs were stored. Ernestine agreed to open this room for me so I could practice my sermons. Among the basketballs I preached and preached and preached. If it were possible, hundreds of basketballs would have been converted! Preaching in that storage room gave me confidence and developed my delivery.

Years later I began encouraging my wife to conduct a Daniel seminar. Initially she was frightened at the thought, but agreed to give it a try. During the next two weeks she listened to my tapes on Daniel over and over again. Evenings she sat in bed studying the Daniel lecture notes. One evening when I came home, she said, "Mark, I need to go over this material with you." A willing prospect, I sat and listened as she presented the material. She reviewed it again and again.

The first day of her seminar she had an air of confidence. This was not the first time she had given that material. She had shared it with the windows, the doors, and the draperies. Only as you're willing to put some time into careful study will your sermon be as successful as you desire it to be. **E**

Mark Finley is the speaker for It Is Written an international telecast program. He writes from Thousand Oaks, California.

Perseverance

Gisèle S. Hasel

“Be diligent in these matters; give yourself wholly to them, so that every one may see your progress. Watch your life and doctrine closely. Persevere in them, because if you do, you will save both yourself and your hearers” (1 Timothy 4:15-16).

Impossible!” A Roman soldier shouts across the desert galloping towards his commander after surrounding the mountain. “It can’t be done!”

Here I was looking at this massive mountain from the same angle that the Romans first looked at it and all I could think about was: “Impossible! How could they even think of it!” Standing at the bottom looking up at Massada I tried to imagine what went through the Roman soldier’s minds as they stood where I was, so many years ago. After all, they had traveled on foot and some on horse back for days before they arrived to the spot where I stood at this moment. Even though it was during the winter, the area surrounding the Dead Sea is dry and hot! As the lowest point on earth, 1200 feet below sea level, these Romans were not only tired and thirsty from their journey but now they were face to face with the biggest military dilemma they had probably ever encountered. “How do we conquer the enemy when we are 1300 feet below them and there is no way up?”

Herod the Great had built his fortress and palace in such a strategic place that nature was its strongest defense. Massada was built on a mountain top surrounded by cliffs. A small snake path winds itself up the edge of the cliff and is easily defended from the walls above. Only one person at a time could ascend to its heights.

The enemies that were resisting above consisted of a few hundred Jewish Zealots that had escaped from the destruction of Jerusalem. They had taken

Massada as their hideout and thought they were safe there. Indeed they were! They could live there continually for Herod had built huge cisterns that provided them with water. He had also brought up fertile earth so that they could farm and have food.

The Romans had years before built massive storage facilities that were stocked with provisions—dried fruits and grains. With this supply they could live in comfort and style for years.

“Who on earth!” I thought to myself “would even consider conquering this place?” In this case, the Romans were not fighting against man but nature, and nature certainly has a way of intimidating us. I could not help but admire the Romans. They could simply have said, “Well . . . we can just keep them prisoners up there. They are a small number of people . . . compared with the rest of our

empire. . . . Eventually they will want their freedom from this confined space, come down from the mountain, and we will get them then.”

But the Romans were different. They understood the meaning of what it meant to persevere. At that moment for the first time I understood in a more profound way why they had conquered the world. They were like iron! They just did not give up! They had determination and perseverance!

The Romans despite their unfortunate situation made a decision that to me seemed lunatic! They decided to create their own mountain so they could climb up. They decided to build a ramp from where I was standing to the top. Building such a ramp meant having a plan, manpower, time; finding building supplies, food, and water to keep them alive in the middle of a vast desert. But most of all they needed determination and perseverance! Whatever motivated them to take such measures, we can only guess but the fact is that close to two thousand years

As elders we will especially be attacked with thoughts of discouragement because we will be fighting against invisible powers. But in our case we will have the advantage. Jesus is our Emperor.

later the ramp still stood in the silence in the desert speaking to me. At that moment the ramp became a monument of what it meant to persevere.

Standing there that afternoon, I realized that as a Christian I have much more to persevere for than the Romans ever had. Christ has given His life for me so that I can inherit His kingdom and eternal life. What else could I ask for?

As elders we also need to build a ramp. We must build a bridge from this world to God's kingdom. In order for us to do it we must also persevere! We must use the same techniques that the Romans did. We too must follow a plan. The plan that Jesus Christ provided for us in His Word. We must recruit train and encourage others in our churches and congregations to carry forward this plan. Then we must take the time necessary to implement the plan. We must have the Spirit to empower and give us the energy needed to carry out the plan. And then through prayer we must persevere to make that plan a reality.

Sometimes I ask myself "Do I have what it takes? Will I persevere even when the odds are against me? When I take a hard look at this mountain of sin in the world today do I get discouraged?"

As elders we will especially be attacked with thoughts of discouragement because we will be fighting against invisible powers. But in our case we will have the advantage. Jesus is our Emperor. The Bible reassures me that God does not allow anything to happen to me that I cannot handle.

In Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV) we are promised: "Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart."

As Christ persevered for us and our sins how much more must we persevere for Christ in overcoming our sins and bringing others to His throne. Perseverance is an important part of the character formation of a Christian, especially for a spiritual leader. The Spirit of Prophecy inquires of us: "Are we striving with all of our God-given powers to reach the measure of the statute of men and women in Christ? Are we seeking for His fullness, ever reaching higher and higher, trying to attain to the perfection of His character? When God's servants reach this point, they will be sealed in their foreheads.

The recording angel will declare, 'it is done.' They will be complete in Him whose they are by creation and by redemption" (*Selected Messages*, Book 3, page 427).

In James 1:3 we read "Because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything." The Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy make a strong case that our faith and our perseverance through Christ will be the essential qualities needed in our salvation. For Paul writes to Timothy: "Persevere! because if you do you will save both yourself and your hearers!"

Through the death of Jesus and through faith and perseverance we can participate in saving our lives and the lives of others. In order for me to save the lives of others we must persevere in our own spiritual life. We cannot control the decisions of others, but we can lead and inspire them by being a living example. What you and I can do today, is to renew our commitment to Christ and lay hold on His promise that He will be with us every step of the way. He will be our inspiration that will sustain our spirit to endure through all of life's trials.

At Massada, seven months had passed. The Romans finished the ramp, burned down and breached the walls . . . and entered an eery silence. All around them they saw and heard nothing but the rushing of the wind. They began searching for their enemies only to find that all of them— men, women and children were lying dead in their homes beside one another. During seven months they had worked hard under the desert sun only to conquer the bodies of the dead. Their perseverance was in vain!

But the kingdom of God for which we persevere is not a kingdom of death. In God's kingdom the dead shall be resurrected, the blind shall see, the deaf hear. I have a feeling that when we enter those gates we will be applauded and cheered on by a multitude of angels and beings from other planets. We will not find a silent and dead place, we will meet with our Lord, the giver of eternal life. We will see Jesus face to face. In Hebrews 10:36 and 37 we read: "You need to persevere so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised. For in just a very little while 'He who is coming will come and will not delay.'"

Praise the Lord, that when WE see Jesus we will realize that our perseverance and work here in this world was not in vain! So let each one of us "Do as the Romans do!" PERSEVERE! Carry on! Until the kingdom of Christ is conquered. **E**

Giselle S. Hasel writes from Detroit, Michigan where she and her husband Dr. Michael Hasel are just beginning their ministry in the church of Warren.

Danger in Speculative Knowledge

by ELLEN G. WHITE

LAST-DAY DECEPTIONS

The field into which Satan led our first parents is the same to which he is leading men today. He is flooding the world with pleasing fables. By every device at his command he seeks to prevent men from obtaining that knowledge of God which is salvation.

We are living in an age of great light; but much that is called light is opening the way for the wisdom and arts of Satan. Many things will be presented that appear to be true, and yet they need to be carefully considered with much prayer; for they may be specious devices of the enemy. The path of error often appears to lie close to the path of truth. It is hardly distinguishable from the path that leads to holiness and heaven. But the mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit may discern that it is diverging from the right way. After a while the two are seen to be widely separated.

PAST EXPERIENCE TO BE REPEATED

The experience of the past will be repeated. In the future, Satan's superstitions will assume new forms. Errors will be presented in a pleasing and flattering manner. False theories clothed with garments of light, will be presented to God's people. Thus Satan will try to deceive if possible, the very elect. Most seducing influences will be exerted; minds will be hypnotized.

Corruptions of every type, similar to those existing among the antediluvians, will be brought in to take minds captive. The exaltation of nature as God, the unrestrained license of the human will, the counsel of the ungodly—these Satan uses as agencies to bring about certain ends. He will employ the power of mind over mind to carry out his designs. The most sorrowful thought of all is that under his deceptive influence men will have a form of


*“Preach the word;
 be instant
 in season,
 out of season;
 reprove, rebuke,
 exhort with all
 long-suffering
 and doctrine.”*

godliness, without having a real connection with God. Like Adam and Eve, who ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, many are even now feeding upon the deceptive morsels of error.

Satanic agencies are clothing false theories in an attractive garb, even as Satan in the garden of Eden concealed his identity from our first parents by speaking through the serpent. These agencies are instilling into human minds that which in reality is deadly error. The hypnotic influence of Satan will rest upon those who turn from the plain word of God to pleasing fables.

It is those who have had the most light that Satan most assiduously seeks to ensnare. He knows that if he can deceive them, they will, under his control, clothe sin with garments of righteousness, and lead many astray.

I say to all: Be on your guard; for as an angel of light Satan is walking in every assembly of Christian workers, and in every church, trying to win the members to his side. I am bidden to give to the people of God the warning: “Be not deceived; God is not mocked” (Galatians 6:7).

BEWARE OF A SENSATIONAL RELIGION

At this time we need in the cause of God spiritually minded men, men who are firm in principle and who have a clear understanding of the truth.

I have been instructed that it is not new and fanciful doctrines which the people need. They do not need human suppositions. They need the testimony of men who know and practice the truth, men who understand and obey the charge given to Timothy: “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their

own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables. But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry" (2 Timothy 4:2-5).

Walk firmly, decidedly, your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace. You may be sure that pure and undefiled religion is not a sensational religion. God has not laid upon anyone the burden of encouraging an appetite for speculative doctrines and theories. My brethren, keep these things out of your teaching. Do not allow them to enter into your experience. Let not your lifework be marred by them.

THE WORD OF GOD OUR SAFEGUARD

Our watchword is to be: "To the law and to the testimony; if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isaiah 8:20). We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and omega of knowledge. The Scriptures, given by inspiration of God, are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Take the Bible as your study book. All can understand its instruction.

I call upon our ministers, physicians, and all church members to study the lessons that Christ gave His disciples just before His ascension. These lessons contain instruction that the people need.

Eternal life is obtained only by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the Son of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," Christ declared, "he that believeth on Me hath everlasting life. . . . I am the living Bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live forever: and the bread that I will give is My flesh, which I will give for the life of the world Whoso eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day For My flesh is meat indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He that eateth My flesh, and drinketh My blood dwelleth in Me, and I in him. . . . It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:47-63).

Christ calls upon His people to believe and practice His word. Those who receive and assimilate

this word, making it a part of every action, of every attribute of character, will grow strong in the strength of God. It will be seen that their faith is of heavenly origin. They will not wander into strange paths. Their minds will not turn to a religion of sentimentalism and excitement. Before angels and before men, they will stand as those who have strong, consistent Christian characters.

In the golden censer of truth, as presented in Christ's teachings, we have that which will convict and convert souls. Present, in the simplicity of Christ, the truths that He came to this world to proclaim, and the power of your message will make itself felt. Do not present theories or tests that Christ has never mentioned

and that have no foundation in the Bible. We have grand, solemn truths to present. "It is written" is the test that must be brought home to every soul.

Men may still learn the things that belong to their peace. Mercy's voice may still be heard calling: "Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). It is only when spiritual life is given that rest is found and lasting good secured. We must be able to say, in storm and tempest: "My anchor holds."

Let us go to the word of God for guidance. Let us seek for a "Thus saith the Lord." We have had enough of human methods. A mind trained only in worldly science fails to understand the things of God; but the same mind, converted and sanctified, will see the divine power in the word. Only the mind and heart cleansed by the sanctification of the Spirit can discern heavenly things.

Brethren, in the name of the Lord I call upon you to awake to your duty. Let your hearts be yielded to the power of the Holy Spirit, and they will be made susceptible to the teaching of the word. Then you will be able to discern the deep things of God.

May God bring His people under the deep movings of His Spirit! May He lead them to arouse, to see their peril, and to prepare for what is coming upon the earth! **E**

This article was taken from Testimony Treasures volume 3, pages 268-278.

Ellen G. White was one of the founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A prolific writer, she produced more than 100,000 pages by the time she died in 1915. Her work continues as a prophetic voice within the Adventist church.

*We must be
able to say,
in storm
and tempest:
"My anchor
holds."*



Preaching Tools for Church Leaders

by Carl P. Cosaert

You have just been asked to preach next month and you're at a loss of what to say. There are several subjects you are interested in but how do you find enough information to help flush out your ideas? If you have ever found yourself in such a position, I have good news for you. If you have local access to the Internet (most towns do) there is a wide variety of material that can greatly aid your sermon or Sabbath school class preparation—and it is all free! The Internet can provide you with a virtual electronic library of material that will make your sermon preparation easier and quicker. Here are several resource tools that can get you started.

Ellen G. White Writings: If the overwhelming amount of Ellen G. White material has ever hindered you from exploring her thoughts on certain topics you need no longer worry. It is now possible to search and examine the complete published writings of Ellen G. White via the Internet—without even having to purchase the Ellen G. White CD-ROM. In minutes, you can search for Mrs. White's thoughts on temperance, baptism, or whatever topic you are researching. All you have to do is type in the word and in minutes you can examine or download her statements. You can access these writings through the World-Wide Web or by Telnet. Via World-Wide Web contact <http://www.egwestate.andrews.edu>. The Telnet address is aubbranch.egwestate.andrews.edu (login as "guest").

Online Bible Concordances: Looking for that certain verse but can't find it? You no longer have to read the whole Bible to find that verse. The Bible Gateway has a search program that allows you to search up to six different versions of the Bible. Simply type in the keyword and it will give you every place in the Bible where that word is found. The Bible Gateway can be found at <http://www.gospelcom.net/bible>.

Vine's New Testament Word Search: *Vine's Expository Dictionary of N.T. Words* is another gold mine of material for free on the Internet. Have you ever found a Bible word and you wondered what it meant? Rather than going to *Webster's Dictionary* which gives you the modern meaning of words, *Vine's* gives you the biblical meaning of those words. This Bible study tool can be found at <http://www.goshen.net/vnd/>.

Nave's Topical Bible: *Nave's Topical Bible*, considered one of the best tools for topical Bible study, is also available on the Internet. *Nave's* is more than a concordance, it is an idea book that allows you to see what the Bible has to say on over 20,000 topics. Simply type in the topic you are studying (women, worship, etc...) and you will find the most significant references for each topic. This excellent resource can be found at <http://www.goshen.net/ntb>.

Matthew Henry Commentary: Another source of help on the Internet is *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary*. This commentary set has provided sound biblical interpretation for sermons and study for over 300 years. When you can't seem to understand just what the Bible is saying, all you need to do is type in the book and chapter and you can read what Matthew Henry understood the passage to mean. *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary* can be located at <http://ccel.wheaton.edu/henry/mhc.html>.

Sermon Stories And Illustrations: In desperate need of finding a fresh illustration or story for your sermon? Now you can access hundreds of stories, illustrations, quotations, poems and more through several sites on the Internet. The Baptist Bible Fellowship provides a combination of sermons, stories and illustrations and can be found at <http://www.bbfi.org/sermons/sermons.html>. Another excellent site for illustrations and preaching tools can be located at <http://www.sedona.net/~budman/illustr.html>.

Christian Classics: The Christian Classics Ethereal Library contains many books that can be read online or downloaded. At this site you can

find the works of Augustine, John Bunyan, John Calvin, C. H. Spurgeon, Jonathan Edwards and many more. In fact, if you are interested in church history you can find the complete 38 volumes of the *Early Church Fathers*. These books are available at <http://ccel.wheaton.edu>.

Adventist Connections: Looking for late breaking Adventist news, history, or addresses of other SDA institutions or churches on the Internet? The SDA World Church home page is found at <http://www.cuc.edu/sdaorg/gc>. A list of various SDA organizations (not all are approved) and churches can be obtained from Adventist Connections at <http://www.andrews.edu/inst.html>.

Conclusion: These Bible study tools are only that, tools. They can not write your sermon for you, but they can make your preparation less anxiety ridden. It will take some time at first to get acquainted with these tools, but once you do you will wonder how you ever preached without them.

Carl P. Cosaert writes from Kansas City where he is pastor of the Seventh-day Adventist Church at Olathe.



Put this information
in your file. It may
be useful to you in
the future.

Wrong Message

A man had a friend who enlarged his business. His sales had increased to the point that a larger warehouse and sales office were needed. Even though the move was a rather complicated and burdensome process, it was really a thing to be celebrated. For this reason, the man sent his friend some flowers on the day of his grand opening.

The flowers, however, were poorly handled and the businessman received a bouquet that was intended for a funeral. It was accompanied with a card which said: "My deepest sympathy during this time of sorrow." When the man called his friend on the phone to wish him well, he was confronted with the error, "Why in the world," said the businessman, "did you send me these sympathy flowers?"

The man went immediately to the florist to demand an explanation. The florist met him outside the shop and was obviously upset. "I am terribly sorry about the mixup with the flowers," he said, "but I hope you will be understanding. Your situation is not half as bad as the one down at the funeral home. The folks there received your flowers accompanied by the card which said: BEST WISHES IN YOUR NEW LOCATION."

The Book

The Bible is referred to in many different ways. We speak of it as *God's Word*, the *Good Book*, the *Holy Scriptures*, and the *Sword of the Spirit*. It is also known as the *Book of books* and the *Living Word*. Some call it simply *THE Book*, for nothing else seems necessary. It stands alone, towering above all other writings. Of the many titles given to the Bible, however, the one that is the most appropriate is *God's Miracle Book*. This is true for a number of reasons:

1. It is miraculous in its origin—coming to us by divine inspiration.
2. It is miraculous in its durability—outlasting the opposition of its critics and surviving the attempts of its enemies to exterminate it.
3. It is miraculous in its results—transforming the lives of those who read and believe it.
4. It is miraculous in its harmony—agreeing in all its parts, even though written over a period of 1600 years by about 40 different authors.
5. It is miraculous in its message—telling of many occasions when God supernaturally intervened in the affairs of men to accomplish His redemptive purposes.
6. It is miraculous in its preservation—maintaining its accuracy and reliability down through the centuries. Yes, the Bible is *God's Miracle Book!*

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