

DAYBREAK SERIES



APRIL-JUNE/1978

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

THE PATH OF FAITH



Is this a book to end all debate?

No, but it would go a long way in that direction. Put it together with this quarter's Sabbath School lessons and you'll have the basis for righteousness by faith.

It is no secret among our friends, or among our critics either, that the subject of *righteousness by faith* is at present enjoying a deep and fervent consideration in the ranks of thoughtful Christians everywhere.

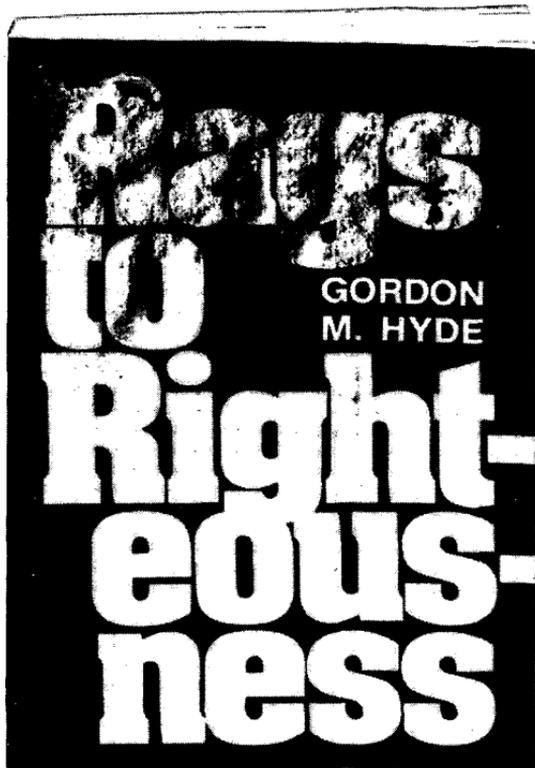
The greatest aids to the explanation of such terms as justification and sanctification are found in a close study of the simple object lessons used by our Lord, and this is where Gordon Hyde has contributed his best thoughts through the pages of this book. It is when the profound is placed in a simple setting that the unlearned and the scholar both stand in amazement.

This very readable and interesting treatise is designed to introduce every reader to an experiential knowledge of the grace of Christ.

RAGS TO RIGHTEOUSNESS by Gordon Hyde.

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Dear Fellow Sabbath School Members around the World:

The Trans-Africa Division wishes to thank all the members of the world Sabbath School for their generous support of the Thirteenth Sabbath Special Project Offering, taken on March 27, 1976. As a result we have upgraded the physical plant and expanded the academic program of our secondary school at Inyazura, Rhodesia. This is one of our feeder schools for Solusi College. The offering also made it possible to plan definitely for the erection of new church buildings in the capital cities of the developing homelands in the Southern Union. This tangible evidence of your concern for, and interest in these specific projects has brought great rejoicing to the hearts of both laity and workers.

Now we are eagerly anticipating your support in the Thirteenth Sabbath Special Project Offering which has been designated for our Division and which will be received on June 24 of this quarter. Judging from your past loyalty and generous gifts we feel confident that this will be another major boost, giving impetus to the Lord's work in this part of Africa. We plan to use the funds to construct an evangelistic center in Kinshasa, the capital of the French-speaking country of Zaire. This is the second largest French-speaking city in the world, and one of the largest cities in Africa. Yet, despite the fact our work has been established for 50 years in Zaire, we have only one small congregation in Kinshasa, meeting in a church building which is poorly located in a market area. To build this evangelistic complex will be costly, for both land and building materials are excessively high. Nevertheless, it is imperative that we meet this challenge if the millions of inhabitants of this metropolis are to be reached with the message of the great Advent. It is our hope to establish this building as near to the heart of the city as possible.

We are also planning to develop a field headquarters in connection with this complex as well as a dental and medical clinic. However, this will depend upon the size of the offering received on June 24. We shall be indebted to you for your prayers and support in helping us achieve this objective.

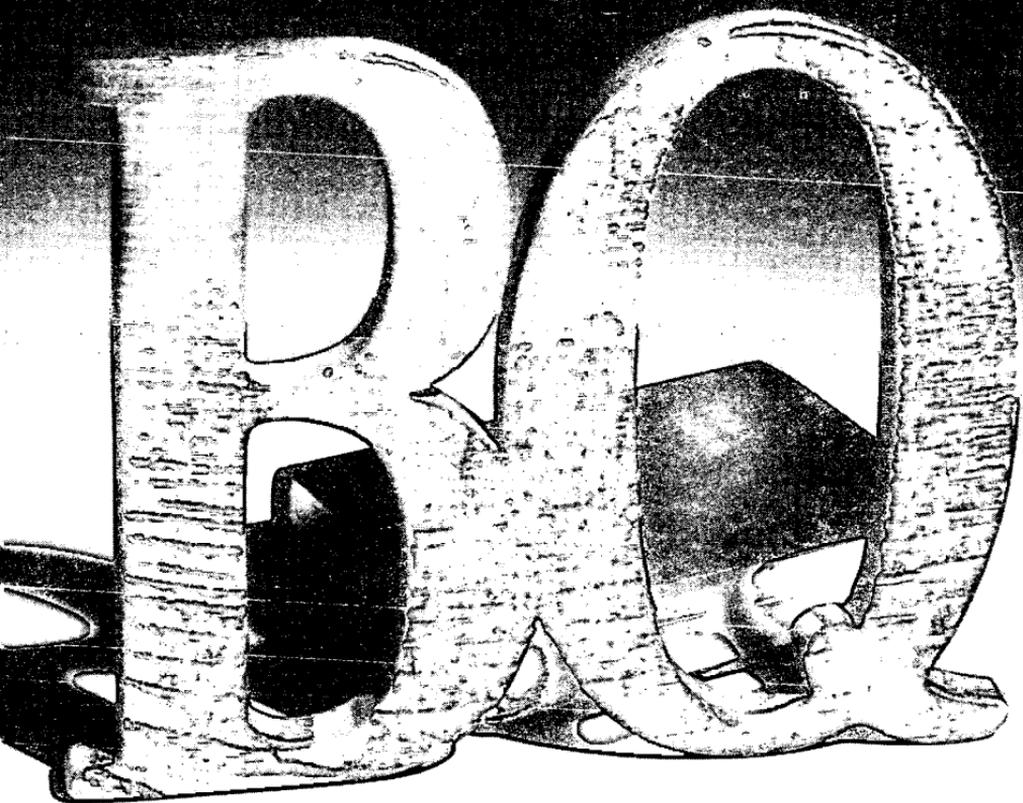
With Christian greetings from Trans-Africa, I remain,

Your brother in Christ,

Merle L. Mills

Merle L. Mills, President

WHAT'S YOUR



How well do you know your Bible?

Do you have to ask your pastor or Bible instructor to answer those difficult Bible questions your associates are asking?

It is just a matter of time before what you have in your head is all you will be able to depend on.

If your B Q is down, daily lesson study will help you to get prepared for the soon-coming conflict.

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The Adult Sabbath School Lessons are prepared by the Sabbath School Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. The preparation of the lessons is directed by a worldwide Sabbath School Lesson Committee, the members of which serve as consulting editors.

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THE PATH OF FAITH

Introduction

To hear some presentations of the gospel of Jesus Christ is to gain the impression that only a special group—a handpicked few—have, or can have what is required to become righteous, and thus to be fitted for heaven.

Some fear to attend meetings or read publications that deal with righteousness by faith because they are sure beforehand that it is beyond all but those with a built-in capacity to reach heaven and gain eternal life.

It is the object of this series of Sabbath School lessons to clear away any basis for such fears or hesitations. Dear Sabbath School member, heaven is for *you!* And you too can understand the way to get there! In fact, "As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. . . . Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ. . . . All that human nature can bear, we may receive here. But what is this compared with the hereafter?"—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 331, 332.

We want to study together this quarter some of the first major steps which we must take on the path of faith in Jesus. We shall look at our need of Jesus, the way His love draws us to Him, how we come to be sorry for our sins, and what we can do with them. We shall try to understand better how simple faith is, and how to use it in surrender of ourselves to His control. We shall reassure ourselves of His willingness to forgive us and to make us new creations in Himself. We shall feel the depth of the peace He offers and the joy of giving ourselves fully to Him. We shall marvel anew at the almost unbelievable promises He makes, sense the joy of bearing His fruit in our lives as we accept Him and become righteous by faith.

We have decided to concentrate our study on the writings of the apostle John—his Gospel, his Epistles, and the Revelation. But we draw occasionally on other inspired witnesses to fill out some of the picture. We gratefully draw on the special counsel to this remnant people by the spirit of prophecy.

It is possible that many will feel that some important principle or emphasis has been overlooked in this series of lessons. And that should not be cause for surprise. We will readily recognize that there are other steps on the path of faith besides those covered this quarter. Although we deal with fruit bearing in the Christian life, there is more to be said about the full process of growing up into Christ, about conquering doubt, about the Christian's work and witness, about the life of prayer and the evidences which confirm our conversion. Much more can be said about the ties between these steps to Christ and His work in the heavenly sanctuary and the closing of that work. Righteousness by faith as a special emphasis in our history is a most profitable study. But, again, let us remember that we do not have to resolve the issues raised during our history before we can personally enter into the peaceful and joyous experience of righteousness by faith. The first and essential steps are covered in the lessons we are about to study together this quarter.

Oh that we each might believe Him and thus know His presence before this quarter closes! Let us study, pray, and witness with and for each other.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4).

It has so often been said that the greatest certainty in life is death. And it is equally true that death plays no favorites. The man who plants seed, the woman who drives a city bus, people bordering on the edge of starvation, and those who are overfed—all of these alike face the inevitable grave.

In this respect the believer in Jesus Christ is not different from the unbeliever. It is only when we talk of life beyond death—eternal life, life without end—that there is a difference between the one who believes, and the one who believes not.

In spite of every effort of medical science there appears to be no way to stretch generally useful and happy human life much beyond fourscore years. Occasionally reports claim life-spans of 130 or even 150 years. At least some age-claims come from places where there is no reliable or official record of birth dates. So when a person dies it becomes not a little difficult to decide how long he has lived! Though we may accept these reports at face value, still even the sesquicentarian will soon die.

But more than all of this, most people live in heavy darkness. Not physical perhaps, but mental, moral and social darkness—not to mention darkness of the spirit, of the soul. Some keep “happy” by a full life of busyness, others by perpetual self-indulgence. But there comes a day or reckoning, a day of facing life’s

greatest reality alone, and so often without hope.

How much we need Him who has life in Himself—He who is able and willing to give that divine life to men.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. Healer**
(John 5:6)
- 2. “A Spring of Water”**
(John 4:14)
- 3. “The Light of the World”**
(John 8:12)
- 4. “The Bread of Life”**
(John 6:35)
- 5. “The Good Shepherd”**
(John 10:11)
- 6. “The Way”**
(John 14:6)



A black and white photograph of a signpost. The signpost is a vertical wooden post with a horizontal crossbar. A rectangular sign is attached to the vertical post, featuring the text "We Need Him" in a bold, sans-serif font. The signpost is surrounded by a dense thicket of bare, thorny branches, likely from a hawthorn or similar species, which are dark against the light background. The overall scene is stark and evocative.

We Need Him

**Part 1
HEALER**

What do you think was the purpose of Jesus' question?

"When Jesus saw him and knew that he had been lying there a long time, he said to him, 'Do you want to be healed?' " (John 5:6, RSV).

Can we by imagination put ourselves in the place of this sufferer by the sheep pool in Jerusalem? Think of being helpless for some 38 years from a crippling disease. Then think of having your hopes raised periodically by the expectation created from a long-standing tradition that the one who could show the greatest selfishness by making himself first to enter the pool at a certain season by a certain sign would be healed. Can you imagine the jealousy and enmity that would develop among these poor sufferers by the pool as each was forced to regard every other person there as his potential enemy, virtually his destroyer? Some would have helpers to assist them in gaining an advantage over those having no help. Some would edge their way to the pool periodically, to the very brink, so that they might be the happy first person to jump or fall or roll into the water.

To one such a sufferer, who had borne 38 years of misery and undoubted self-condemnation, Jesus said with sympathy and concern, "Do you want to be healed?"

THINK IT THROUGH

How does this healing of the cripple illustrate our need of Christ?

Do you find yourself contending with the selfish, scrambling crowd? Do you find others stronger than yourself taking advantage of your weakness? Do you feel alone and friendless, shut out from God's mercy? Have you been striving repeatedly to meet a lifelong objective, only to be disappointed again and again until your strength and hope are about to give out?

How we need today to hear that voice of tenderness and see that countenance of compassion offering to us the help which Christ alone can bring!

Do you want to be healed?

"He bids you arise in health and peace. Do not wait to feel that you are made whole. Believe His word, and it will be fulfilled. Put your will on the side of Christ. Will to serve Him, and in acting upon His word you will receive strength. Whatever may be the evil practice, the master passion which through long indulgence binds both soul and body, Christ is able and longs to deliver. He will impart life to the soul that is 'dead in trespasses.' Eph. 2:1. He will set free the captive that is held by weakness and misfortune and the chains of sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 203.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 201-203.

Part 2
"A SPRING
OF WATER"

What does it mean that the water Jesus gives will become a spring?

"Whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst; the water that I shall give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life" (John 4:14, RSV). (See John 7:37-39.)

Some who study this lesson today will know from cruel experience what it means to be really thirsty. And those who know this by experience have a gratitude for a supply of water which is unknown to those who have always turned on the faucet and received all the water they could use.

The Bible land in which Jesus grew up and ministered was one that treasured its supplies of water. Large pools were cut from the rock to provide storage for water when it came in the rainy seasons so that there would be a supply during the rainless summer. Wells were also dug to assure a water supply.

An adequate water supply was essential for establishment of a village or town. He who had an unfailing well on his property was wealthy indeed. More often than not the well was shared by all in the community and even by strangers and travelers.

Think, then, of the Samaritan woman, coming alone and in the heat of the day to draw water at Sychar. Generally the women of a village came to the well at the same time, morning and evening. They enjoyed it as a social occasion, a time of chatter and laughter. Did she come alone because her sinful life made her an outcast?

How easily Jesus knocked at the door of her heart by talking to her about water—His physical need and her spiritual one.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are there hidden veins of sin in your life which have drained off and dried up the wells of salvation?

"He who tastes of the love of Christ will continually long for more; but he seeks for nothing else. The riches, honors, and pleasures of the world do not attract him. The constant cry of his heart is, More of Thee. And He who reveals to the soul its necessity is waiting to satisfy its hunger and thirst. Every human resource and dependence will fail. The cisterns will be emptied, the pools become dry; but our Redeemer is an inexhaustible fountain. We may drink, and drink again, and ever find a fresh supply. He in whom Christ dwells has within himself the fountain of blessing,—'a well of water springing up into everlasting life.' From this source he may draw strength and grace sufficient for all his needs."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 187.

Do you need a spring of water welling up to eternal life within your soul? Then you need Him.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 183-188.

Part 3
"THE LIGHT OF
THE WORLD"

How did Jesus symbolize Himself at the Feast of Tabernacles? Why is this symbol appropriate?

"Then spake Jesus again unto them, saying, I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

We have seen Jesus portrayed as the Healer of disease, physical and spiritual. We have seen Him as the Source of springs of living water welling up unto eternal life. Now we see Him portrayed as the Light of the world.

Our modern electrically illuminated world is not too well able to appreciate the preciousness of light. Some can recall the days when oil lamps and candles were the main means of dispelling the darkness. But when Jesus announced Himself as the Light of the world, it was on the occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles, when two great lamps cast their glow over the city of Jerusalem and the temple courts. This was to be a reminder of the pillar of light that guided Israel in the desert, and it also was regarded as pointing to the coming of the Messiah.

Were the feast lamps adequate to represent the Light of the world?

"As the radiant lamps of the temple lighted up all about them, so Christ, the source of spiritual light, illumines the darkness of the world. Yet the symbol was imperfect. That great light which His own hand had set in the heavens was a truer representation of the glory of His mission."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 463.

Light is vital to sustaining life. Even the faint light of the winter's sun makes a difference to the growth of plants and grasses. Light is the only answer to darkness, and it is appropriate that the apostle Peter, recalling the symbol which Christ had used of Himself, assured, us, "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

THINK IT THROUGH

In what areas of life has the light of heaven not shone into my heart and upon the road before me?

Christ "was the spiritual light that in symbol and type and prophecy had shone upon Israel. But not to the Jewish nation alone was the light given. As the sunbeams penetrate to the remotest corners of the earth, so does the light of the Sun of Righteousness shine upon every soul."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 464.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 463-465.

Part 4
"THE BREAD
OF LIFE"

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35).

In what way do you understand Jesus to be the "bread of life"?

In addition to water and light there is the necessity for nourishment of the body. Without food a person will starve and die.

But here again Jesus is not only the giver of the bread that sustains physical life; but, as our text clearly indicates, He is speaking of a soul hunger which He alone can satisfy.

The Jewish people reminded Christ that in the wilderness Moses had given them bread from heaven, the manna (verses 31-33). Correcting their memory of who was the true giver—God, not Moses—Jesus took the symbol of bread from heaven to illustrate His own coming down from heaven to give *spiritual* life. The manna in the wilderness had sustained only *physical* life.

The sustenance of thousands of people in their travels through an unproductive desert was clearly a miracle of God's grace and power. It is just as miraculous to obtain eternal life. It is not the result of man's searching after God, but the result of man's partaking of heavenly bread—Jesus who came from God to man.

Just as Jesus had offered the woman at the well a spring of water that would be to her eternal life, He now offers Himself as the bread which alone can sustain eternal life.

THINK IT THROUGH

How would you compare the bread of life which Jesus offers with the tree of life that was available to Adam and Eve in the garden?

When Adam and Eve were cut off from access to the tree of life, God made known the provision of the "seed of the woman," who would come to intervene in the battle between man and Satan. This was a wonderful manifestation of God's love, as well as a clear indication of the human need for Christ. The tree of life could have sustained the lives of Adam and Eve forever. After sin only belief in Jesus brought eternal life. Will it not be through Him that we shall regain access to the tree of life? And with the sin question forever settled, this mortal shall put on immortality. How beautifully complete and perfect is God's plan to meet our desperate need!

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 386-391.

Part 5
"THE GOOD
SHEPHERD"

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep" (John 10:11).

In what ways is Jesus like a "good shepherd"?

While water and bread were vital to the simple life of the dwellers in Bible lands in Christ's day, another common sight in the land, which Christ took to represent Himself and our need of Him, was that of a shepherd leading his flock. We perhaps see Him best illustrated in the shepherd who owned the sheep he cared for. Not in a wealthy man who owned sheep and hired others to care for his flocks. Nor in the one hired shepherd. The owner-shepherd's very life was the life of his sheep.

The true shepherd endured storm and pestilence, hunger and drought and thirst with his sheep. He found for them streams of clear water and green pastures where they could feed and rest. He wandered about the land according to the need of his sheep. He knew each of them by name, and each responded to his voice. By night he was their protector from thieves and from wild beasts. When they were near a sheepfold where he could place them for the night, he was himself the living door to the fold. It was difficult for any enemy to enter the fold without the shepherd's knowledge. The good shepherd risked his life for the sheep. All of this was in contrast to the hireling.

We recall the experiences of the young shepherd David, caring for his father's flocks, and how he had to meet a lion and a bear to preserve his entrusted treasure.

In the Bible sheep are regarded as helpless, defenseless, and stupid. (See *SDA Bible Dictionary*, p. 995.) It is not without reason that they have been known for centuries as "silly" sheep. They manifest nothing like the intelligence or understanding of a horse or a dog. Christ chose the sheep to represent us, and the good shepherd to represent Himself. We, the "silly" sheep, have perhaps not been sufficiently aware of our need of the Good Shepherd.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does the sheep know when it is lost? Can the sheep find its way home when lost?

"Jesus knows us individually, and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows us all by name. He knows the very house in which we live, the name of each occupant. He has at times given directions to His servants to go to a certain street in a certain city, to such a house, to find one of His sheep.

"Every soul is as fully known to Jesus as if he were the only one for whom the Saviour died."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 479, 480.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 476-484.

Part 6
"THE WAY"

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

It is interesting to note that by the time Saul of Tarsus became burdened to persecute members of the church of Jesus Christ, they had become known as those who were "of this way" (Acts 9:2). Could it be that the believers's acceptance of Christ's declaration of Himself as the way led to this synonym for Christianity?

We have so many scriptural references to the "way," whether it is "the way of salvation" (Acts 16:17) or "the way of the Lord" (Acts 18:25), or simply "way" (Acts 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:22).

We yearn to be restored to harmony with God. Christ is the way. We yearn for victory over the plague spots of character, the weaknesses that beset us, whether inherited or cultivated. Christ is the way. We feel lost and bewildered so that we wander in every direction hoping to find the way. Christ is the way. Are we consumed with the search for truth? Christ is not only the way, he is also the truth.

How are life and truth related in Jesus?

He who finds Christ, or rather, he who is willing to be found by Christ finds not only the way but also the truth. Are we exhausting our resources in the search for the prolonging of life? As we come to Christ we find "the way, the truth, and the life." How more perfectly could Christ represent to us our need and His complete ability to supply all our human needs?

THINK IT THROUGH

What way have I been following today? Have I been walking in the sparks of my own kindling? Have I felt perfectly adequate and capable of making my own way?

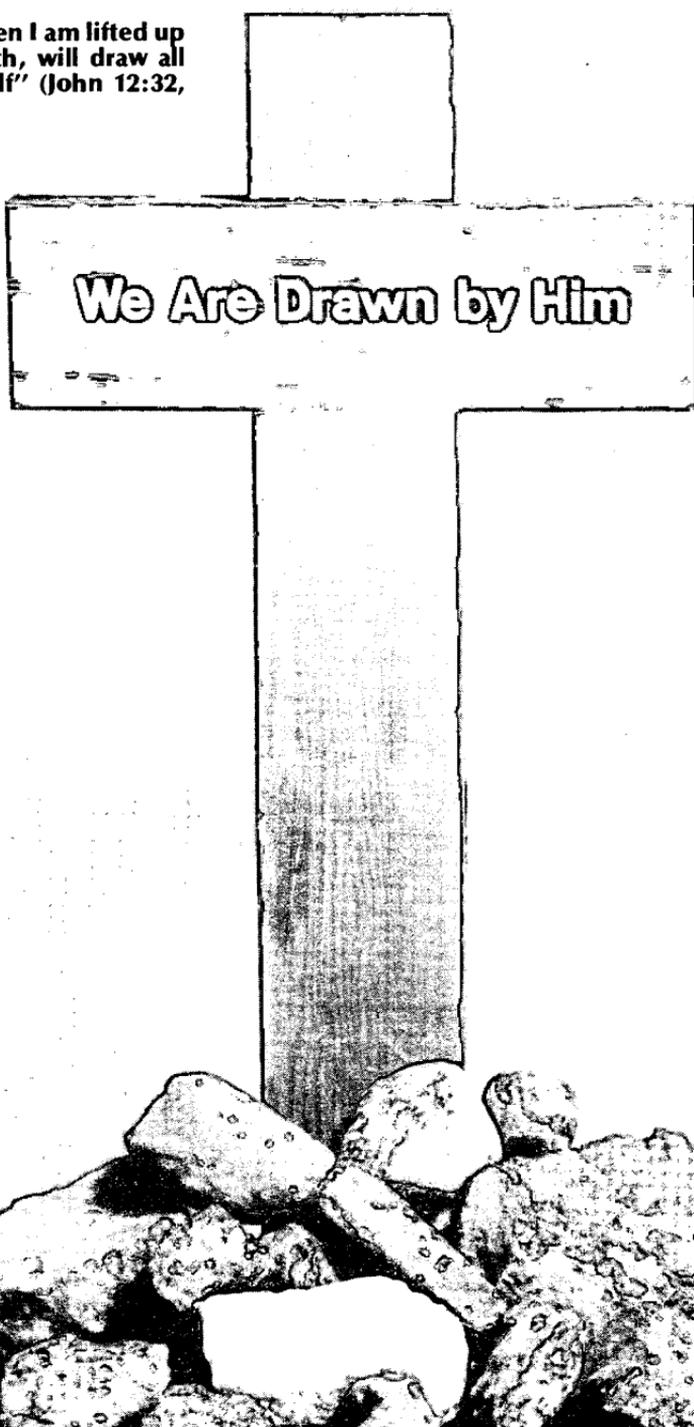
"By His humanity, Christ touched humanity; by His divinity, He lays hold upon the throne of God. As the Son of man, He gave us an example of obedience; as the Son of God, He gives us power to obey. . . . So when He [Christ] came 'in the likeness of man,' He declared Himself the I AM. The Child of Bethlehem, the meek and lowly Saviour, is God 'manifest in the flesh.' 1 Tim. 3:16. And to us He says, 'I AM the Good Shepherd.' 'I AM the living Bread.' 'I AM the Way, the Truth, and the Life.' 'All power is given unto Me in heaven and in earth.' John 10:11; 6:51; 14:6; Matt. 28:18. I AM the assurance of every promise. I AM; be not afraid. 'God with us' is the surety of our deliverance from sin, the assurance of our power to obey the law of heaven."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 24, 25.

What perfect provision Jesus Christ has made for our eternal salvation! How completely we need Him!

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 292, 293; *Steps to Christ*, "The Sinner's Need of Christ," pp. 17-22.

"And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12:32, RSV).



We Are Drawn by Him

Commonly we think that we become Christians when we go in search of Christ. It seems hard for us to recognize that any time that we go to Christ, He first has come to us and is continually drawing us to Himself.

Notice the setting in which the words of our key text above are spoken. Jesus had recently made His triumphal entry into the city of Jerusalem, riding as kings of Israel did—on a colt. His disciples and the responsive crowd had shouted hosannas in His name. Among the crowds that came up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. It was they who made the moving request to Philip, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus."

In response to the request of the Greeks Jesus began to speak of His impending death. He had come to be not Saviour of the Jews only, but also Saviour of the world. This price He must pay to make it possible for people of any nation to be saved from sin through Him. And as the details of death by crucifixion came to mind He asked His Father to save Him from that hour. But His conviction that it was for this purpose that He had come into the world tempered this request.

In faith He invited His Father to glorify His own name. Immediately came the response from heaven, "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (verse 28). The wondering crowd heard only what sounded to them like thunder. Some more discerning ones suggested that an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus insisted that the voice had come not for His sake but for theirs. And looking to His crucifixion, almost in tones of triumph He declared, "Now is the judgment of this world, now shall the ruler of this world be cast out; and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself" (John 12: 31, 32, RSV).

In last week's lesson we studied a number of illustrations given in the Gospel of John portraying the fact that we as sinners are in need of Christ. In this week's lesson we find assurance

that we not only need Him but that He is doing everything that heaven can do to draw us to Him. Christ is the great lodestone, the heavenly magnet, that tugs at human hearts, drawing them to Himself.

When Jesus explained to the crowd that when He should be lifted up He would draw all men to Himself, He was predicting the method by which He would die, in which He would become that "grain of wheat" that would fall into the earth and die in order that it should not remain alone but rather that it should bear much fruit. By His death on the cross Christ would reveal to everyone the love of God in a way that would draw individuals to Him.

"If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour. Then the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, 'I delight to do Thy will, O my God.' Ps. 40: 8."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 176.

How is it, dear friend, with you? Have you been resisting the tugging at your heartstrings of the love of God in Christ Jesus?

This week let us study together how much He loves us, and let us ask ourselves how we can possibly resist the tug of His love.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Light for All**
(John 1:9)
2. **"Lamb of God"**
(John 1:29)
3. **"Come and See"**
(John 1:48)
4. **"Born of the Spirit"**
(John 3:8)
5. **"Given . . . of My Father"**
(John 6:65)
6. **No Orphans Here**
(John 14:18)

**Part 1
LIGHT
FOR ALL**

“That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (John 1:9).

What are some ways Jesus “lighteth every man”?

There is in these words a rather clear indication that every man that comes into the world receives some degree of light from Jesus Christ, “the true Light.” As we saw in last week’s lesson, Jesus declares Himself to be the light of the world.

The setting for these words was the contrast drawn between John the Baptist and Jesus Christ by the apostle John in this first chapter of his Gospel. John the Baptist was a witness; he came to bear witness to Him who was the light. The Scripture is clear that John himself was not the light; but, as John was engaged in his ministry, He who was indeed the true light was coming to the forefront. As *The New English Bible* gives it, “The real light which enlightens every man was even then coming into the world.”

This understanding of John 1:9 harmonizes with the key text of the week to the effect that all men will be drawn to Christ through the sacrifice which He made on Calvary’s cross. (See John 12:32.)

Such a concept of God as one whose love is given impartially to all men, granting to each the opportunity to be enlightened concerning the love of God in Christ Jesus, agrees with what we would expect of a God of love.

THINK IT THROUGH

What examples can you think of which illustrate the fact that “the true Light” had universal appeal even while He was here as a man among men? (See John 12:20-23 and Luke 7:1-10.) Note the inspired comment on the latter:

“To Jesus this [the faith of the centurion] was an earnest of the work which the gospel was to accomplish among the Gentiles. With joy He looked forward to the gathering of souls from all nations to His kingdom. With deep sadness He pictured to the Jews the result of their rejection of His grace: ‘I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.’ Alas, how many are still preparing for the same fatal disappointment! While souls in heathen darkness accept His grace, how many there are in Christian lands upon whom the light shines only to be disregarded.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 317, 318.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 464, 465.

Part 2 **“The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29).**
“LAMB OF GOD”

The Saviour who draws all men unto Himself through His cross and who is the light to lighten every man in the world is also declared by John the Baptist to be “the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.” There is no favoritism here, no exclusiveness, no partiality. The sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary was sufficient to cover, to cleanse, and to remove the sins of the world. And what a wealth of significance is called up by that very expression “the Lamb of God”!

What connection do you see between Jesus and the Old Testament system of sacrifices?

The whole sacrificial system from the time of the cherubim-guarded entrance to the Garden of Eden down to the very days of Jesus Christ Himself could be summed up in the expression “the Lamb of God.”

How much did Abraham understand of the expression, “the Lamb of God”? (See Gen. 22:1-18; Heb. 11:17-19.)

Abraham had been permitted to spare the life of his son Isaac, and the ram caught in the thicket out on the mountaintop provided the substitute for Isaac. So that place was named thereafter “The Lord will provide” (RSV). But who would substitute for the Son of God? Who would spare the heavenly Father the agony of separation from His Son as He became the Sin Bearer, the Lamb of God, the sacrifice and substitute for the sins of the whole world? There would be no substitute for Him. Wonder O heavens and be astonished O earth! Is it any mystery that Jesus had the power to draw men unto Himself?

THINK IT THROUGH

To what extent have I accepted Jesus as “the Lamb of God” for me?

“There are not many ways to heaven. Each one may not choose his own way. Christ says, ‘I am the way: . . . no man cometh unto the Father, but by Me.’ Since the first gospel sermon was preached, when in Eden it was declared that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head, Christ had been uplifted as the way, the truth, and the life. He was the way when Adam lived, when Abel presented to God the blood of the slain lamb, representing the blood of the Redeemer. Christ was the way by which patriarchs and prophets were saved. He is the way by which alone we can have access to God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 663.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 132-137.

Part 3
"COME AND SEE"

"Nathanael said to him, 'How do you know me?' Jesus answered him, 'Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you' " (John 1:48, RSV).

It had been when John the Baptist pointed out "the Lamb of God" that the first men who became Christ's apostles left John the Baptist to follow Jesus. They were Andrew, the brother of Peter, and John the evangelist. "Moved by an irresistible impulse, they followed Jesus,—anxious to speak with Him, yet awed and silent, lost in the overwhelming significance of the thought, 'Is this the Messiah?' "—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 138.

What lesson can we learn from the experience of Christ's first disciples? Verses 40-45.

But no sooner had Andrew and John come to know Jesus even a little than there was born in their hearts a desire to call others. So Andrew went in search of his brother Simon.

And now we find Jesus calling Philip and saying to him, "Follow Me." Philip obeyed this summons and himself became an extension of the voice and call of Jesus Christ. Philip went in search of his friend, Nathanael. Since his own knowledge of Jesus was still limited, he was having a little difficulty in persuading Nathanael that he had indeed found the Messiah. But finally he simply said, "Come and see." When Nathanael came, Jesus gave such evidence of knowing him and his longing for the Messiah that Nathanael declared in growing faith, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel" (verse 49).

THINK IT THROUGH

Does my life so reflect the likeness of Jesus today that it says to those who do not know Christ, Come and see? (Compare Rev. 22:17; 2 Cor. 3:2.)

"The teaching of Christ was the expression of an inwrought conviction and experience, and those who learn of Him become teachers after the divine order. The word of God, spoken by one who is himself sanctified through it, has a life-giving power that makes it attractive to the hearers, and convicts them that it is a living reality. When one has received the truth in the love of it, he will make this manifest in the persuasion of his manner and the tones of his voice. He makes known that which he himself has heard, seen, and handled of the word of life, that others may have fellowship with him through the knowledge of Christ. His testimony, from lips touched with a live coal from off the altar, is truth to the receptive heart, and works sanctification upon the character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 142.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 138-143.

Part 4
"BORN OF
THE SPIRIT"

"The wind blows where it wills, and you hear the sound of it, but you do not know whence it comes or whither it goes; so it is with every one who is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8, RSV).

Did you ever think in childhood that you might stop the wind from blowing? As impossible a dream as that of the foolish king who thought that he could hold back the waves of the ocean. Whether it be the gentle refreshing summer breeze that breaks up the heat of the day or the awesome hurricane, tornado, or monsoon, there is nothing that man can do to control the will of the wind.

The love of God is like the wind in that He who draws us to Himself draws universally. Man can build no barriers that can keep out the first approach of God through the Holy Spirit. This is not to suggest for a moment that the Lord forces His love upon any; but there is a light which lights every man that comes into the world. God's love is universal, Jesus shed His blood for the sins of the whole world. God sees and knows equally every individual, no matter where he is found in the world, and no man can stay God's love except by his persistent rejection of it.

Must I be able to explain the love of God in order to receive it?

"It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why should I or should I not be troubled because I cannot tell the exact time and place and circumstance under which I gave my heart in response to the movings of God's Spirit?

"A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or to trace all the circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. By an agency as unseen as the wind, Christ is constantly working upon the heart. Little by little, perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ. These may be received through meditating upon Him, through reading the Scriptures, or through hearing the word from the living preacher. Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal, the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

You can reject the Holy Spirit, but you cannot stop His wooing. If we do not resist Him, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for sin.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 172-174.

Part 5
"GIVEN . . .
OF MY FATHER"

Why is any person attracted to Jesus as Saviour?

"And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father" (John 6:65).

The experience of coming to Jesus Christ is completely real. It is as real as the fact that God the Father reigns on the throne of the universe and that all things are sustained by His might. It is not by accident, not by good fortune, but entirely by the power of the Spirit that any individual comes to Christ and finds eternal life in Him.

How completely is the heavenly Father willing that all should find eternal life in His Son? John 6:39, 40.

Did association with Christ while He was on earth have a saving power greater than He can provide now?

We may think that if we had lived on earth when Jesus was here we would have been with John, Andrew, Nathanael, Philip, Mary Magdalene, and the woman at the well in giving our hearts to Him; that we would have been among the first to support Him and to let Him know of our love. We may sometimes think that anyone who saw and heard Jesus in person would have been compelled to receive Him. But think of Judas Iscariot, who had the closest association with Jesus, who was treated as the rest of the disciples were treated for some three years, but who never committed himself to Jesus. By his own choice Judas deprived the heavenly Father of the privilege of bringing him into a saving relationship with the Son, Jesus Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it really mean to believe on the Son of God?

"There is a great work to be done for your own soul's salvation, and to qualify you to win others from unbelief to a life sustained by faith in Christ Jesus. 'Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me [with a casual faith?—No, with an abiding faith that works by love and purifies the soul] hath everlasting life. I am that bread of life. . . . I am the living bread which came down from heaven. . . . But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray Him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me, except it were given unto him of my Father.' (John 6:47, 48, 51, 53, 54, 63-65)." —*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 137, 138.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 391-394.

**Part 6
NO ORPHANS
HERE**

"I will not leave you desolate; I will come to you" (John 14:18, RSV).

In the original language of the New Testament, Jesus was saying, "I will not leave you as orphans, I will come to you" (NASB). How more beautifully could He have expressed it! He was about to return to heaven following His unexpected death on the cross—unexpected to His dearest disciples. Their utter desolation begins to be seen on the night of the betrayal and continues for some of them through most of the day of His resurrection. Absolutely orphaned!

But no. The very event which made them such desolate orphans from their beloved Master was the means by which He would ensure their being with Him for all eternity. And in the interim, throughout the remainder of their lives, He would be with them by His Holy Spirit.

Is Christ's love, offered to those original followers, offered equally to us? Have you been drawn so close to Jesus Christ that even in the deepest depths of your loneliness, you know He has not left you an orphan? (See John 16:33.)

"The life of Christ's disciples is to be like His, a series of uninterrupted victories, not seen to be such here, but recognized as such in the great hereafter.

"Those who labor for the good of others are working in union with the heavenly angels. They have their constant companionship, their unceasing ministry. Angels of light and power are ever near to protect, to comfort, to heal, to instruct, to inspire. The highest education, the truest culture, and the most exalted service possible to human beings in this world are theirs."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 307, 308.

THINK IT THROUGH

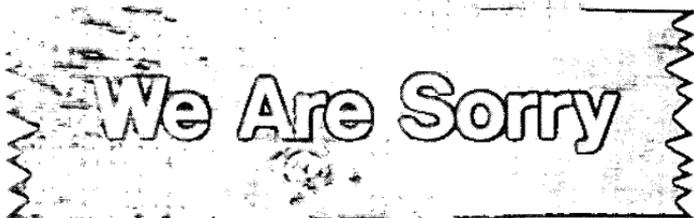
Why is it some people resist the pleadings of God for their salvation?

"The only way in which we can gain a more perfect apprehension of truth is by keeping the heart tender and subdued by the Spirit of Christ. The soul must be cleansed from vanity and pride, and vacated of all that has held it in possession, and Christ must be enthroned within. Human science is too limited to comprehend the atonement. The plan of redemption is so far-reaching that philosophy cannot explain it. It will ever remain a mystery that the most profound reasoning cannot fathom. The science of salvation cannot be explained; but it can be known by experience. Only he who sees his own sinfulness can discern the preciousness of the Saviour."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 494, 495.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 669.

"For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret, but worldly grief produces death" (2 Cor. 7:10, RSV).



Already this quarter we have studied together about our need of Jesus Christ and how He draws us to Himself. Now we need to consider what happens in the human heart if it does not resist.

In the key text above, the apostle Paul is speaking to the church at Corinth to which he had written some very straight counsel. The Corinthians had been deeply upset over his letter, and, while the apostle indicates that it did not make him happy to have them grieved, it made him happy to know that their grief from his rebuke led them to repentance. He describes such grief as "godly." He defines this godly grief as that which "produces a repentance that leads to salvation and brings no regret," while mere worldly grief by contrast may be destructive, even producing death.

The Gospel of John contains a classic example of true repentance and a classic example of false repentance, a repentance unto death. We refer to the contrasting experiences of Peter and Judas. Peter's willingness to have his heart broken unto repentance was the only thing that saved him from the desperateness of Judas, who went out and hanged himself. We shall look at these two contrasting characters and their experiences as we study together this week.

But first let us ask ourselves the key question: What is repentance?

We remember that the call to repent was the key message of John the Baptist, and his call was not in vague generalities. He pointed out the specific sins of different classes of men who came out into the wilderness to hear him. He even courageously pointed out individual sins and did so ultimately at the cost of his life. What did he want men to do in repenting? What would show that they were repentant?

With his calls for repentance John gave specific instructions as to various actions that would demonstrate that there was true repentance of heart.

Repentance would result in a change. In fact, the original words which are translated "repentance" in the texts which we will use this week carry this clear idea of a change of mind. Later in our lessons of this quarter we are going to study conversion, and we perhaps can see already that there may be a very close link between repentance and conversion. We have all heard the child's definition of repentance as being "sorry enough to quit," or "sorry enough to stop," or "sorry enough to change." These are good definitions. How can we be "sorry" about our condition if the so-called sorrow fails to produce changes in our life-style? It is not enough to profess repentance. The words and actions and life will give evidence of repentance in reality.

Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost, referred to his hearers as those who had put the Redeemer to death. Under conviction they asked, "What shall we do?" Note the first word of Peter's answer, "Repent." On a later occasion he said, "Repent . . . and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out" (Acts 2: 37, 38; 3: 19). This is beautifully summed up in a short paragraph in *Steps to Christ*: "Repentance includes sorrow for sin and a turning away from it. We shall not renounce sin unless we see its sinfulness; until we turn away from it in heart, there will be no real change in the life."—Page 23.

With this definition in mind, let us proceed to our study of this lesson.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Why Repent?**
(Rom. 2:4)
2. **Repentant Peter**
(John 21:17)
3. **Unrepentant Judas**
(John 13:30)
4. **Repent or Perish!**
(Rev. 2:5)
5. **Oh, Sinner Man!**
(Luke 5:32)
6. **All Should Repent**
(2 Peter 3:9)

Part 1
WHY REPENT?

“Do you not know that God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” (Rom. 2:4, RSV).

We may at first think that we see a contradiction in the calls for men to repent (as in the preaching of John the Baptist and of Peter at Pentecost) and the suggestion that it does not lie within man’s unaided power to bring himself to repentance.

What did Peter say is the source of repentance? Acts 5:31.

Is God asking or commanding us to repent and yet withholding the means by which alone we can be brought to repentance? Does He require us to have something for our salvation which can only be obtained as a gift from Him, and then withhold the gift? No. As our text indicates, God’s kindness is meant to lead us to repentance.

If we will open our eyes to see God’s kindness, His love, His long-suffering, His tender mercies toward us, these will lead us to repentance. Do you not recall from your childhood occasions when discipline tended to harden your will against the will of parent or teacher, but when that same parent or teacher made some personal sacrifice in order to meet some particular need or wish of yours, you were all broken up inside? When you knew that your mother or father was going without something for herself or himself in order to give you something that you needed or thought you wanted, could you withstand that love? Could you persist in having your own way?

THINK IT THROUGH

What has Jesus done for me that would lead me to be genuinely sorry for my sins and willfulness?

“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.’ John 1:29. The light shining from the cross reveals the love of God. His love is drawing us to Himself. If we do not resist this drawing, we shall be led to the foot of the cross in repentance for the sins that have crucified the Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 175, 176.

What is the relationship between repentance and forgiveness?

“It is true that repentance does precede the forgiveness of sins; for it is only the broken and contrite heart that will feel the need of a Saviour.” But “the Bible does not teach that the sinner must repent before he can heed the invitation of Christ, ‘Come unto Me, all ye that labor and are heavy-laden and I will give you rest.’ Matthew 11:28. It is the virtue that goes forth from Christ, that leads to genuine repentance.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 26.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “Repentance,” pp. 23-26.

Part 2
REPENTANT
PETER

"He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love me?' Peter was grieved because he said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to him, 'Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep' " (John 21:17, RSV).

Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times for assurance of his love for Him?

Our text is drawn from conversation of Jesus with Peter after the resurrection. Three times Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him. If Peter was sincere, wasn't once enough?

Peter had three times denied his Lord, not many days before this—he who had boasted that though everybody else should forsake the Saviour, he would never leave Him. And Peter had been something of a leader among the disciples. Yet in the hour of trial he had failed so miserably—almost as miserably as Judas. For as Judas betrayed the lovelessness of his own heart by selling his Saviour for 30 pieces of silver, Peter showed the weakness of his love for his Lord by denying that he knew Him, and accompanying his denial with the kind of low-down cursing that he may have picked up among the fishermen of Galilee.

Now if Peter is to be restored to the confidence of his brethren and is to resume leadership, it must be evident to all that the proud braggart has become humble and teachable. Notice that Peter does not now boast. When pressed regarding his sincerity he merely casts himself upon Christ's knowledge of the hearts of all men: "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you" (Verse 17).

THINK IT THROUGH

What broke the heart of proud Peter and led him to genuine repentance, genuine change of mind?

"While the degrading oaths were fresh upon Peter's lips, and the shrill crowing of the cock was still ringing in his ears, the Saviour turned from the frowning judges [in the court of Caiaphas], and looked full upon His poor disciple. At the same time Peter's eyes were drawn to his Master. In that gentle countenance he read deep pity and sorrow, but there was no anger there.

"The sight of that pale, suffering face, those quivering lips, that look of compassion and forgiveness, pierced his heart like an arrow. . . .

"A tide of memories rushed over him. . . . Unable longer to endure the scene, he rushed, heartbroken, from the hall."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 712, 713.

Here is genuine repentance recounted vividly as though enacted before our eyes.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 710-713.

**Part 3
UNREPENTANT
JUDAS****“As soon as Judas had received the bread he went out. It was night” (John 13:30, NEB).**

In so many ways it was night for Judas. Judas's action would bring night to the disciples and even to the Lord Himself.

The same kind of sympathy and love and yearning tenderness which broke the independent heart of Peter was resisted by the hardened, self-deceived heart of Judas. By comparison with Judas, Peter was crude and uneducated, but he was utterly whatever he was. Judas was a deceiver. He apparently deceived all the disciples and even thought he had deceived the Lord. Thereby he revealed how sadly he was himself deceived.

Judas had already arranged to betray his Lord for the price of a slave—30 pieces of silver—before the Lord stooped to take the place of a slave and bathed the feet of Judas in the upper room. And although, as on several previous occasions, an inner urge swept over him to confess all and bare his heart before the Redeemer, he repeatedly accepted the tempter's rationale for his actions. He even convinced himself that the betrayal was a kindness to the Lord because it would force the reticent Saviour into revealing Himself before His enemies as the undeniable Messiah—if Messiah He really was.

THINK IT THROUGH**Have I been resisting the promptings of God's love to confess my sins in genuine sorrow for them?**

“At the Passover supper Jesus proved His divinity by revealing the traitor's purpose. He tenderly included Judas in the ministry to the disciples. But the last appeal of love was unheeded. Then the case of Judas was decided, and the feet that Jesus had washed went forth to the betrayer's work.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 720.

Do not the words of Scripture imply repentance by Judas: “I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood” (Matt. 27:4)?

“The Saviour did not reproach His betrayer. He knew that Judas did not repent; his confession was forced from his guilty soul by an awful sense of condemnation and a looking for of judgment, but he felt no deep, heartbreaking grief that he had betrayed the spotless Son of God, and denied the Holy One of Israel. . . .

“Judas saw that his entreaties were in vain, and he rushed from the hall exclaiming, It is too late! It is too late! He felt that he could not live to see Jesus crucified, and in despair went out and hanged himself.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 722.

FURTHER STUDY*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 716-722.

**Part 4
REPENT OR
PERISH!**

“Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent” (Rev. 2:5).

In the letters from Jesus to the seven churches there are five calls to repentance. Failure to heed the call of the Lord would be followed by dire consequences. And these are messages of love from Jesus to His professed followers. This fact is particularly indicated in the message to Laodicea, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19).

Were these appeals to the churches general calls for repentance, or were they associated with specific needs, problems, or sins of the respective churches? (See Rev. 2:4, 5, 14-16, 20, 21; 3:2, 3, 15-19.)

It is important to recognize that the Lord was pointing out specific sins in each church. The call to repentance was closely associated with words of specific reproof, specific appeal, designed to have specific results in the church. So we may imply that individual repentance must relate to particular sins and weaknesses. Let each pray the prayer of the psalmist, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Ps. 139:23, 24).

“Although as sinners we are under the condemnation of the law, yet Christ by His obedience rendered to the law, claims for the repentant soul the merit of His own righteousness. In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action. The work of transformation must begin in the heart, and manifest its power through every faculty of the being; but man is not capable of originating such a repentance as this, and can experience it alone through Christ, who ascended up on high, led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 393.

THINK IT THROUGH

How serious is the loss of our first love for Christ and His church?

“The losing of the first love is specified as a moral fall. The loss of this love is represented as something that will affect the entire religious life. Of those who have lost this love, God says that unless they repent, He will come to them, and remove their candlestick out of its place.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 957.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, “Consecration,” pp. 44-46.

Part 5
OH, SINNER
MAN!

"I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance"
(Luke 5:32).

He who responds to the call of Christ's love will be led to repent. All of us who feel our own sinfulness and helplessness may be assured that Jesus did not come to call the righteous ones. Rather, He came to call and to save sinners—those who, when confronted with the love of God as seen in Calvary's cross, would cry out, God be merciful to me a sinner!

Is there any one sinner beyond the reach of the love of God?
Matt. 12:31, 32.

The Scripture teaches that God will forgive the sins we confess. (See 1 John 1:9.) Any unconfessed sin is unpardonable so long as it remains unconfessed. It is the Holy Spirit who convicts us of our need for confession. To refuse the Spirit's conviction places the sinner where he cannot confess so that his sin might be forgiven.

"The sinner may resist this love, may refuse to be drawn to Christ; but if he does not resist he will be drawn to Jesus; a knowledge of the plan of salvation will lead him to the foot of the cross in repentance for his sins, which have caused the sufferings of God's dear Son."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 27.

THINK IT THROUGH

What shall I do if I have in my heart a longing for something better than this world can give?

I can do a number of things: (1) I can ask God to give me repentance, to reveal Christ in His infinite love and His perfect purity. (2) I can come to Christ just as I am. (3) I can refuse to excuse myself by comparing myself with others and their defects. (4) I can refuse to delay the work of forsaking my sins and seeking purity of heart through Jesus. (5) I can refuse to consider any sin as too trivial to call for genuine repentance. (6) I can remember that one wrong trait of character cherished can neutralize the power of the gospel. (7) I can invite Christ to search my heart and to reveal its wicked ways. (8) I can be in dead earnest as I would be if I believed my life was at stake. (9) I can study God's Word prayerfully. (10) I can refuse to give up to despair. All God's promises and His warnings are manifestations of His love.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 275.

Part 6
ALL SHOULD
REPENT

What does Peter teach about God's desire for everyone?

"The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance" (2 Peter 3:9, RSV).

What a tragedy that many earnest Christians have thought that some are predestined to be saved and some predestined to be lost! These inspired words, so clear and forthright, declare that God does not wish that any should perish but that *all* should reach or come to repentance.

This text confirms what we have learned earlier—that God is drawing all men to Himself, that there is a light which lights every man that comes into the world, that Jesus has paid the price for the salvation of the whole world and not for a selected few.

How is it then, that in comparison with the billions of the world's population, so few even profess the name of Christ and still fewer actively call upon His name?

Think of the grief which must come to the heart of God, not only because of sin, but because of our often persistent refusal to respond to the only means of bringing them eternal deliverance from sins and their consequences.

THINK IT THROUGH

What was the setting in which Peter gave us this assurance of God's wish that all should come to repentance? (See 2 Peter 3:3-8).

Peter gave this assurance after his warning to those who think that everything that is happening in the world has always happened, that everything is going along in the same old way and always will. But Peter reminds these scoffers of the Flood which came and disrupted a world which had come to believe that things would never change.

Looking at the passage of the centuries from the time of the Flood, he reminds that with the Lord time is not a problem, that a thousand years are only as a day to Him. What counts is the promises of God which may look slow of fulfillment as men count slowness. But what men fail to recognize is that it is the forbearance of God that leads Him to delay His coming. But don't let that delay deceive you, Peter reasons, because the day of the Lord *will* come, and when it does come, it will be for many like a thief unexpected, catching them unprepared and unprotected. Then things will happen which men have decided would never happen. It is because the Lord wants all to be led to repentance, says Peter, that time goes on as long as it does.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 467, 468.

LESSON 4 April 16-22

The apostle John does not speak extensively on the subject of confession of sin. He does, however, give us in the last text that we shall use this week, the most precious and reassuring promise of all concerning God's response to man's confession of sin. In fact, the Scriptures as a whole do not speak at great length nor with great frequency on this subject, and many of the texts which in our English translations contain the word *confession* or *to confess* are not speaking of confession of sin, but rather of a confession of faith in a name—the name of Jesus above all. And so we have the expression in Christian theology of "confession of faith," not only in theology but also in Christian worship. But as we proceed with our study of the steps that the sinner is invited to take in coming to Jesus, we are concerned about the subject of *confession of sin*.

Our key text above, taken from the wise man and expressed in the typical parallel phraseology of many of the proverbs, puts these two thoughts against each other:

- (1) He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper;
- (2) But he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.

We take it, then that to confess is the opposite of trying to cover up one's sins or transgressions and that a parallel act with confession of sin is the forsaking of sin. This reminds us of a child's definition of repentance—being "sorry enough to quit." Likewise genuine confession involves a willingness to forsake the sin confessed. Nowhere in the Scripture is there a call for a man to keep on repeating his sins in the blissful assurance that upon further confession he can receive forgiveness and continue to sin with impunity. Rather, we would gather from our key text that he who confesses his sins without the intent of forsaking them is virtually as guilty as he who attempts to

cover his sins and to hide them from the knowledge of God and man.

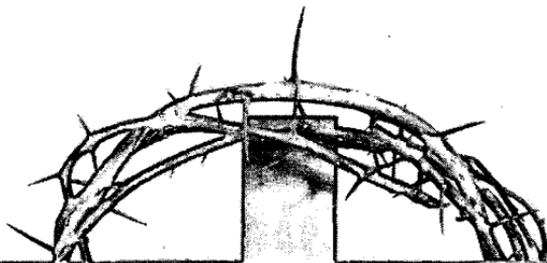
If we suggested earlier that there is all too little genuine repentance among Christians these days, we certainly would go the next step and say that there is all too little confession and forsaking of sin among professed Christians.

Why do not husband and wife, brother and sister, mother and child, kiss and make up. Why is it not enough if the husband who left the home in anger in the morning returns in the evening and simply settles into the peaceful routine of homelife again without reference to the morning's problem? Is he not in his own way saying that he is sorry for what he said or did earlier, and wishes to be forgiven? Some devoted wives insist that it would be out of place for a husband to do more than this. They say he should not put in words to the one offended an acknowledgment of the wrong which he has said or done. Some wives would even imply that it would be unmanly for a husband to make such a confession. Would it be unmanly? Let us think about it as we study this week. Is it perhaps all right for a woman or a child to confess specifically, orally, or in writing, his or her wrong, but not for a man?

Why this modern male reticence to confess specific sins and wrongdoing, whether to God or to man or both?

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Confession and Baptism**
(Matt. 3:5, 6)
2. **Chief of Sinners**
(1 Tim. 1:15)
3. **"My Sin and the Sin of My People"** (Dan. 9:20, 21)
4. **Confess to One Another**
(James 5:16)
5. **Specific Confession**
(1 Sam. 12:19)
6. **"Faithful and Just"**
(1 John 1:9)



We Wronged Him

"He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy" (Prov. 28:13, RSV).

**Part 1
CONFESSION
AND BAPTISM**

What were key results of the preaching of John the Baptist in the wilderness and of his message, "Repent ye"?

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins" (Matt. 3:5, 6).

In the ministry of John the Baptist repentance and confession went hand in hand. He called to the people of Israel to recognize that the kingdom of heaven was about to come upon them and that in order to be ready for it they must repent. The people who heard him confessed their sins and accepted baptism at his hand, signifying the washing away of their sins.

It is significant that even the Roman soldiers who came out to hear John were instructed to modify their life-style so as to cease sinning against their fellowmen. Confession of sin was to accompany forsaking of sin.

There is a marked danger today that, in bringing new converts to Jesus Christ and to church fellowship, we fail to give them time to recognize their responsibility in repentance, confession, and restitution. A number of years ago there was a baptismal candidate who heard God speaking to him through the preaching of the judgment hour message, and when he heard of confession and restitution, he sought out the minister in alarm. He began to tell the things of which he had been guilty in his youth, and even since becoming a married man and a father. He had been something of a terror to the secluded rural community where he had lived. He had borrowed without intention of returning, and he had borrowed and had simply forgotten to return. Now the thought of confession and restitution filled his heart with fear.

But the Spirit of the Lord brought conviction, and this brother, with tracts in his pocket rather than a gun on his hip, set out among his neighbors to confess and restore. They were amazed that he came to see them; still more amazed at what he had to tell them. They gladly forgave him and some grabbed out of his pocket the Christian magazines he had brought. "If these did you that much good," said one, "maybe they can help me."

THINK IT THROUGH

What neglected work of confession and restitution do I have?

"The conditions of obtaining mercy of God are simple and just and reasonable. The Lord does not require us to do some grievous thing in order that we may have the forgiveness of sin. We need not make long and wearisome pilgrimages, or perform painful penances, to commend our souls to the God of heaven or to expiate our transgression; but he that confesseth and forsaketh his sin shall have mercy."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 103-108.

Part 2
CHIEF OF
SINNERS

Even after years of apostleship, how did Paul see himself in the sight of God?

"This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Tim. 1:15).

Was it inappropriate for a great apostle such as Paul to admit to a young beginning preacher like Timothy that he regarded himself the chief of sinners? Was there danger that Timothy would despise the apostle for so classifying himself? He might assume that Paul was using a figure of speech, that he was not genuine in so describing himself—chief of sinners.

Why did Paul see himself so much a sinner?

One has only to look briefly at the acts of the apostles as Luke portrayed them to see that, to the very end of his ministry, the great apostle Paul never forgot that he persecuted the saints of Jesus Christ—His church. It seemed ever to weigh upon his soul. Not that he was unforgiven! But when writing to Timothy about it, he related it to the mercy he had received from God. He had no salvation in himself; it came to him from Jesus Christ. (See verse 16.) The apostle had evidently taught his converts a similar measure of earnestness in rejecting the past and accepting God's mercy.

With what intensity did the Corinthian believers engage in afflicting their souls for sin? 2 Cor. 7:10, 11.

This scripture (2 Cor. 7:10, 11) rings with earnestness. Here is true confession of sin.

"Christ looks at the spirit, and when He sees us carrying our burden with faith, His perfect holiness atones for our shortcomings. When we do our best, He becomes our righteousness. It takes every ray of light that God sends to us to make us the light of the world."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 368.

THINK IT THROUGH

What hidden chapters in my life have never been included in my experience of repentance and confession?

"Those who have not humbled their souls before God in acknowledging their guilt, have not yet fulfilled the first condition of acceptance. If we have not experienced that repentance which is not to be repented of, and have not with true humiliation of soul and brokenness of spirit confessed our sins, abhorring our iniquity, we have never truly sought for the forgiveness of sin; and if we have never sought, we have never found the peace of God."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 37, 38.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Lord's Prayer," (Luke 11:4), pp. 113-116.

Part 3
"MY SIN AND
THE SIN OF
MY PEOPLE"

Is it ever appropriate for one person to confess the sins of another person?

"While I was speaking and praying, confessing my sin and the sin of my people Israel, and presenting my supplication before the Lord my God for the holy hill of my God; while I was speaking in prayer, the man Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision at the first, came to me in swift flight at the time of the evening sacrifice" (Dan. 9:20, 21, RSV).

Here we have the prophet Daniel, in exile with many of his people, seeking a very special relationship with the Lord whereby to know and understand the Lord's purposes in dealing with Judah. Some of the things which had been revealed to Daniel placed him in great perplexity, since he could not see how what he had been shown could fit into what the Lord had earlier predicted for Judah. The prophet therefore gives himself to a special time of afflicting his soul for his own sin and the sin of his people Israel, which has placed them in captivity. He places himself in the role of an intercessor between God's people and God Himself. In this respect he is acting as a true servant of the Lord.

What does the prophet Joel say the leaders of God's people are to do? Joel 2:17.

THINK IT THROUGH

How could the church today practice the example of Daniel and the teaching of Joel noted in this lesson?

"We are now living in the great day of atonement. In the typical service, while the high priest was making the atonement for Israel, all were required to afflict their souls by repentance of sin and humiliation before the Lord, lest they be cut off from among the people. In like manner, all who would have their names retained in the book of life should now, in the few remaining days of their probation, afflict their souls before God by sorrow for sin and true repentance. There must be deep, faithful searching of heart. The light, frivolous spirit indulged by so many professed Christians must be put away. There is earnest warfare before all who would subdue the evil tendencies that strive for the mastery. *The work of preparation is an individual work. We are not saved in groups.* The purity and devotion of one will not offset the want of these qualities in another."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 489, 490. (Emphasis supplied.)

This does not mean that we cannot meet together in prayer and confession of our failures as a people. Neither can such group activity substitute for the individual repentance of the individual soul.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 486-491.

Part 4
CONFESS TO
ONE ANOTHER

To whom beside God is confession to be made?

“Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much” (James 5:16).

“Confess.Textual evidence favors . . . beginning v. 16 with the word “therefore.” The prime requirement for sincere faith in prayer is a clear conscience. Wrong deeds secretly done are to be confessed also to those who have suffered injury. A guilty conscience erects a barrier to unreserved reliance upon God and will defeat prayer.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 541.

What is the connection between confession of sin and forgiveness? James 5:16.

In commenting upon this text Ellen White interprets it as follows: “Confess your sins to God, who only can forgive them, and your faults to one another. If you have given offense to your friend or neighbor, you are to acknowledge your wrong, and it is his duty freely to forgive you. Then you are to seek forgiveness of God, because the brother you have wounded is the property of God, and in injuring him you sinned against his Creator and Redeemer. The case is brought before the only true Mediator, our great High Priest, who . . . is able to cleanse from every stain of iniquity. Hebrews 4:15.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 37.

“We are to surrender our hearts to God, that He may renew and sanctify us, and fit us for His heavenly court. We are not to wait for some special time, but today we are to give ourselves to Him, refusing to be the servants of sin. Do you imagine you can leave off sin a little at a time? Oh, leave the accursed thing at once! Hate the things that Christ hates, love the things that Christ loves. Has He not by His death and suffering made provision for your cleansing from sin?”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 327.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the substance of confession? Will a gift suffice?

“True confession is always of a specific character, and acknowledges particular sins. They may be of such a nature as to be brought before God only; they may be wrongs that should be confessed to individuals who have suffered injury through them; or they may be of a public character, and should then be as publicly confessed. But all confession should be definite and to the point, acknowledging the very sins of which you are guilty.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 38.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, “Asking to Give,” p. 144; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, “The Spirituality of the Law,” p. 59.

**Part 5
SPECIFIC
CONFESSION**

What clear example does the Old Testament present of a specific acknowledgment of sin by the people of God?

"And all the people said unto Samuel, Pray for thy servants unto the Lord thy God, that we die not: for we have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king" (1 Sam. 12:19).

God's people Israel, desiring to be like the nations round about them, demanded of the Lord a king. They had been led for many years by judges called by God, the last of whom was Samuel the prophet. They were not satisfied and desired to have a king over them. They had been duly warned of the sad consequences that would follow, but their desire to be like the nations round about them overwhelmed their loyalty to God and to His chosen servants. So the Lord permitted judgments to fall upon Israel, and they seemed quickly to become aware of the reason for these judgments. It is noteworthy that in their confession of their wrongdoing they were explicit regarding the particular sin

THINK IT THROUGH

Can I expect the Lord to grant a blanket forgiveness for a generalized confession of sinfulness or selfishness?

"In the days of Samuel the Israelites wandered from God. They were suffering the consequences of sin; for they had lost their faith in God, lost their discernment of His power and wisdom to rule the nation, lost their confidence in His ability to defend and vindicate His cause. They turned from the great Ruler of the universe and desired to be governed as were the nations around them. Before they found peace they made this definite confession: 'We have added unto all our sins this evil, to ask us a king.' 1 Samuel 12:19. The very sin of which they were convicted had to be confessed. Their ingratitude oppressed their souls and severed them from God."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 38, 39.

What parallel is seen in the experience of the apostle Paul in his attitude toward his sin? Acts 26:9-11.

"Paul did not seek to shield himself; he paints his sin in its darkest hue, not attempting to lessen his guilt. He says: 'Many of the saints did I shut up in prison, having received authority from the chief priests; and when they were put to death, I gave my voice against them. And I punished them oft in every synagogue, and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad against them, I persecuted them even unto strange cities.' He does not hesitate to declare that 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 641.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 605, 611, 615.

Part 6
"FAITHFUL
AND JUST"

No matter how great the evil done, what blessed assurance is given to all who truly confess and forsake their sins?

"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

There probably is no more precious promise in all Sacred Scripture than this unequivocal, unlimited assurance of forgiveness and cleansing if we confess.

This overwhelming promise of God's mercy is surrounded by warnings against our suggesting that we have no sins. The path of hiding sins is a path that leads to destruction. Those who follow such a course are deceiving themselves and show that they do not have the truth in them; they are attempting to make God untrue to Himself, and they thus show that His Word is not in them. The glorious promise of separation from sin is for whoever is willing to "confess" his sins.

It is interesting to notice the intent of the word "confess" in this text—"to speak the same thing." We may see here a link with the comment at the beginning of our lesson that confession is not always of sin, but may be a confession of faith in Christ or a confessing of His name. Either way the confession implies a speaking.

What attitude lends itself to genuine confession of sin? Ps. 34:18.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does the spirit of self-justification not fit in with the spirit of true confession?

"The spirit of self-justification originated in the father of lies and has been exhibited by all the sons and daughters of Adam. Confessions of this order are not inspired by the divine Spirit and will not be acceptable to God. True repentance will lead a man to bear his guilt himself and acknowledge it without deception or hypocrisy. Like the poor publican, not lifting up so much as his eyes unto heaven, he will cry, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' and those who do acknowledge their guilt will be justified, for Jesus will plead His blood in behalf of the repentant soul."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 40, 41.

No human therapy can bathe the soul with the healing power that comes from the assurance of acceptance with God on the part of him who truly is penitent and brings his sins humbly and with a broken heart to the cross of Calvary. Quickness to acknowledge one's own faults and sins and slowness to accuse another, are the results of the Spirit's work on the human heart.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Sower Went Forth to Sow," ("Preparation of the Soil"; "In Good Ground"), pp. 56-59.

"Then said Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

Did you ever try to wrestle with the question of the exact order in which a new believer takes the various steps to Christ? No matter how we try, we find there is no *one* way by which men and women are led to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. So while we have stressed our need of Him, and how He draws us to Him, and how we must come with repentance and a willingness to confess our sins and to forsake them, there is no required order in which these various steps are to be taken. If there is one thing which all human beings have in common, it is how different we are from one another—even identical twins. So let us acknowledge that the sequence we have given to these lessons is somewhat arbitrary; and since it is, let us pause this week to examine from a little different angle some of the steps we have considered thus far.

It is not at all out of place today for us to consider our key text: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not

believe." There probably has never been a time in human history when this demand was more widely made, or when men and women claim that they can provide the signs and wonders essential to faith, if indeed they are essential. The era of the charismatic is certainly one that places top priority on signs and wonders.

But you will recall that the man to whom Jesus spoke these words eventually put his trust in the Lord without any evidence of sign or wonder. That is, no sign or wonder had been performed for him, though unquestionably he had heard of what the Lord had done for others.

So who is going to have a spirit of repentance in his heart or be willing to confess and forsake his sins, if he does not believe, if he does not trust in God and in His precious promises? Who is going to believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto salvation if he does not trust implicitly His every word? So we have a vital lesson before us this week.

"Not because we see or feel that God hears us are we to believe. We are to trust in His promises. When we come to Him in faith, every petition enters the heart of God."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. "The Man Believed"
(John 4:50)
2. The Woman Believed
(John 4:28, 29)
3. Man From Galilee?
(John 7:41)
4. Man From Above
(John 3:31)
5. You May Believe
(John 20:30, 31)
6. When You Pray
(Mark 11:24)



We Trust Him

Part 1
"THE MAN
BELIEVED"

What made the faith of the Jewish nobleman so outstanding as to receive a place in the inspired record of the Gospels?

"Jesus saith unto him, Go thy way; thy son liveth. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way" (John 4:50).

In many respects the Jewish nobleman had characteristics which most of us can acknowledge that we share. He was influenced by status, prestige, outward appearance, material influence, possessions, and authority.

The nobleman's son was at the point of death, and the urgency of the situation led this man of authority to undertake the search for Jesus. He would entrust this responsibility to no one else. Finding Jesus, he was greatly disappointed by what he saw—none of the human trappings of influence, authority, or power. Doubt jabbed at his heart, but in his desperation he made known his request to the Saviour, making the answer to his need the evidence upon which he would or would not believe on Christ as the Messiah. It was then that the words of our key text for the week were spoken by the Lord: "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe" (John 4:48).

Suddenly the Jewish nobleman was confronted with the fact that his own unbelief and his entirely selfish motives could cost the life of his son. Realizing now that he was in the presence of Him who read his innermost thoughts, he cast himself upon the Saviour's mercy: "Sir, come down ere my child die." The response of the Saviour came immediately, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." Though he has no tangible evidence, no telecommunication from his home, the nobleman is satisfied that his son is well. So much so that he does not even rush home. He now trusts the Saviour implicitly.

THINK IT THROUGH

When have I exercised as trusting a faith as that of the Jewish nobleman?

"The Saviour longs to give us a greater blessing than we ask; and He delays the answer to our request that He may show us the evil of our own hearts, and our deep need of His grace. He desires us to renounce the selfishness that leads us to seek Him. Confessing our helplessness and bitter need, we are to trust ourselves wholly to His love."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 200.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 196-200.

Part 2
THE WOMAN
BELIEVED

What made a believer out of the Samaritan woman at the well?

“The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?” (John 4:28, 29).

“Left her waterpot. She was on the point of leaving, her waterpot filled (DA 183), when the disciples returned from the village with food for Jesus. She was eager to reach the village and tell others of her great discovery, and did not care to be slowed by the heavy waterpot. She had experienced *desire*, *conviction*, and *decision* . . . , and the next logical step was *action*—she went to tell others of her great discovery. This testified to the reality of her decision. The waiting waterpot was mute evidence of her intention to return without delay.”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 941.

Doubtless a number of factors led the woman of Samaria to put her trust in Jesus as the Messiah. It is evident that He won her attention, aroused her interest, awakened her desire, and led her to perceive who it was that spoke to her. He, a Jew, had taken the unthinkable initiative to speak to a Samaritan woman. But having led her to request of Him that living water springing up into everlasting life, she suddenly had the veil of anonymity swept away from her soul and became exposed to the blazing light of the Saviour's purity.

While she attempted to parry the exposure by theological argument and racial prejudice, it occurred to her sin-darkened mind that this Man acted as she would expect the Messiah to act. When she gave tentative expression to such a possibility, she received the glorious revelation, “I that speak unto thee am he” (verse 26).

THINK IT THROUGH

Could it be that the path of having our sins exposed between ourselves and the Lord would be the path of genuine faith? How can this happen?

“As the woman talked with Jesus, she was impressed with His words. . . . As the past of her life had been spread out before her, she had been made sensible of her great want. . . . Nothing that had hitherto come in contact with her had so awakened her to a higher need. Jesus had convinced her that He read the secrets of her life; yet she felt that He was her friend, pitying and loving her. While the very purity of His presence condemned her sin, He had spoken no word of denunciation, but had told her of His grace, that could renew the soul.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 189, 190.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 190-195.

**Part 3
MAN FROM
GALILEE?**

What prejudice discouraged many from believing on Jesus Christ?

“Others said, This is the Christ. But some said, Shall Christ come out of Galilee?” (John 7:41).

It perhaps should not surprise us if today national and racial and social prejudices throw up barriers between men. Such barriers are undoubtedly as old as sin itself.

A long-standing prejudice existed in Jerusalem against the more open, liberty-loving, uninhibited people of Galilee. Jewish tradition had determined that since Christ was of the seed of David and Bethlehem was David's town, then Christ must come out of Bethlehem and not out of Galilee. While He was to be born in Bethlehem, when He should make His debut no one would know from whence He had come. This idea is reflected in the words, "Howbeit we know this man whence he is: but when Christ cometh, no man knoweth whence he is" (John 7:27).

So the enemy of God and man contrives to place stumbling blocks in the path of faith. And human pride accepts these devious prejudices rather than the simple, straightforward statements of the Word of God.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there any assurance whereby one can know what indeed is the truth of God?

"The preaching and teaching of His word is one of the means that God has ordained for diffusing light; but we must bring every man's teaching to the test of Scripture. Whoever will prayerfully study the Bible, desiring to know the truth, that he may obey it, will receive divine enlightenment. He will understand the Scriptures. 'If any man willet to do His will, he shall know of the teaching.' John 7:17, R.V."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 459.

There is a sobering thought in the realization that the Jews of Christ's day were the chosen people of God, yet in large measure they failed to recognize the identity of the true Messiah when He came to them. Thus it behooves every one of us to ask earnestly, Am I absorbing the prejudices of others? Am I permitting others to determine what I shall believe? Am I permitting others to dictate to me what is truth? Am I permitting others to share with me their pride and their prejudice while the Saviour stands waiting at the heart's door, knocking, waiting, and knocking. If we keep Him outside the heart's door, can He bring repentance and confession to us as means of receiving His forgiveness and cleansing from sin?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 455-460.

**Part 4
MAN FROM
ABOVE**

What is Christ's origin and position?

"He that cometh from above is above all: he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: he that cometh from heaven is above all" (John 3:31).

These noble words spoken by the forerunner of Christ, John the Baptist, are a measure of the faith of John in Christ's divine origin. It was a measure also of John's complete self-abnegation—his willingness to direct attention and honor to another. The multitudes had flocked out to the wilderness to hear him; now John directed them to One whose sandal he felt unworthy to loose.

What characteristics of John the Baptist enabled him to recognize Christ as the Messiah? (See John 3:25-30.)

"Looking in faith to the Redeemer, John had risen to the height of self-abnegation. He sought not to attract men to himself, but to lift their thoughts higher and still higher, until they should rest upon the Lamb of God. He himself had been only a voice, a cry in the wilderness. Now with joy he accepted silence and obscurity, that the eyes of all might be turned to the Light of life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 333.

"We can receive of heaven's light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We cannot discern the character of God, or accept Christ by faith, unless we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this the Holy Spirit is given without measure. In Christ 'dwell-eth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and in Him ye are made full.' Col. 2:9, 10, R.V."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.

THINK IT THROUGH

What lessons can I learn from the attitudes of John the Baptist?

"John had by nature the faults and weaknesses common to humanity, but the touch of divine love had transformed him. He dwelt in an atmosphere uncontaminated with selfishness and ambition, and far above the miasma of jealousy. He manifested no sympathy with the dissatisfaction of his disciples, but showed how clearly he understood his relation to the Messiah, and how gladly he welcomed the One for whom he had prepared the way."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 179.

The penitent believer's trust in Jesus thrives on humility and self-abnegation—the spirit of Him who said, "I am among you as he that serveth" (Luke 22:27).

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 178-182.

Part 5
YOU MAY
BELIEVE

What is the essential basis upon which all faith in Jesus Christ depends?

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30, 31).

We may wish to assert it again and again in our studies this quarter. Our faith in Jesus Christ is anchored in the inspired Word of God, and most specifically in the records of the Gospels which tell us who He was, what He was, and how and why He was our Redeemer.

Some critics accuse Christians of bibliolatry, as opposed to idolatry. They say that, while we renounce idol worship in all forms, we actually worship the Bible, that we idolize this book, that we give it a reverence and a deference and a confidence which no book merits. On the other hand, about 300 years ago rationalistic scholars, in the period known as the enlightenment, determined that the Bible was only a piece of literature like any other book and should be tested and evaluated and criticized on the same basis as any other ancient book. But neither viewpoint is that of the apostle John. He wrote to provide a basis for our faith in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God. Those who approach the study of John's Gospel and the other inspired books with this expectation find food for their soul and the ground for their faith. Tasting and seeing, they find that the Lord indeed is good, and that He fulfills all His promises.

What parallel is there between Christ's miracles of physical healing and His work of healing sin-sick souls?

In the healing of the man sick with palsy, Jesus plainly stated, “That ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house” (Matt. 9:6).

“From the simple Bible account of how Jesus healed the sick, we may learn something about how to believe in Him for the forgiveness of sins.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 50.

It is our privilege similarly to receive spiritual cleansing. If we will believe Christ's promise, confess our sins, give ourselves to God, place our will on His side, then God can do for us what He has promised. He will forgive and He will cleanse.

“Do not wait to *feel* that you are made whole, but say, ‘I believe it; it *is* so, not because I feel it, but because God has promised.’”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 126.

**Part 6
WHEN YOU
PRAY**

When I pray for cleansing, grace, and power, how may I be assured that I have received them?

“What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them” (Mark 11:24).

Some turn away from taking this precious promise at its face value because they say all God's promises are conditioned by His will. In other words, if I should happen to not pray according to God's will, then I cannot claim His promises, I cannot believe in them implicitly or make them my own. This type of precaution may be very much in order when we are praying for blessings on the value of which we are not entirely clear—such things as health, wealth, and long life. But the things of which we are speaking in this lesson and throughout the lessons of this quarter are unquestionably in harmony with His will.

“It is the will of God to cleanse us from sin, to make us His children, and to enable us to live a holy life. So we may ask for these blessings, and believe that we receive them, and thank God that we *have* received them. It is our privilege to go to Jesus and be cleansed, and to stand before the law without shame or remorse. ‘There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.’ Romans 8:1.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 51.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why am I so prone to forget what once I knew and believed regarding the promises of God?

It is human nature to forget. It is interesting to see from a Bible concordance how often the word “remember” appears, and the word “forget.”

We need a continuing growth in grace that parallels our first experience in Jesus Christ. The apostle Paul counsels “As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him” (Col. 2:6).

“Now that you have given yourself to Jesus, do not draw back, do not take yourself away from Him, but day by day say, ‘I am Christ’s; I have given myself to Him;’ and ask Him to give you His Spirit and keep you by His grace. As it is by giving yourself to God, and believing Him, that you become His child, so you are to live in Him. . . .

“Some seem to feel that they must be on probation, and must prove to the Lord that they are reformed, before they can claim His blessing. But they may claim the blessing of God even now. They must have His grace, the Spirit of Christ, to help their infirmities, or they cannot resist evil. Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 52.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 426-431.

“Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you” (James 4:7).

No one in the New Testament speaks about belief or believing more frequently than the apostle John. The expression is almost the key word of his Gospel. Why should that be? John is endeavoring to establish a basis upon which his readers can accept Christ as divine. In our lesson last week we stressed the element of trust in our faith. In this week's lesson we would stress submission, commitment, adherence, and steadfastness as additional elements of this experience of faith. Indeed there is no one word, either in the original language or in our modern languages, that covers all the shades of significance of this vital matter of belief or faith.

James in his epistle tells us that the devils believe, but their belief does not bring them joy, peace, or satisfaction. When they think about what they know and believe about God, the devils shudder and tremble. (See James 2:19.) Yet within two or three verses, James is holding up Abraham as an example of one who believed God—the same expression as he used of the devils. But surely there must have been some difference in the kind of believing done by the devils and the believing done by Abraham, because, while the devils tremble, they are devils still. But Abraham is counted as righteous and is called “the friend of God” (James 2:23).

Since the same root word is used for “faith” and “belief” throughout the New Testament, we must of necessity derive any shades of difference from the setting in which the term is used. This week we are going to draw upon a number of occasions when people were in conflict about Jesus Christ—in conflict over His claims to be the Son of God, to be the Sent of Heaven. Some were persistent enemies like the

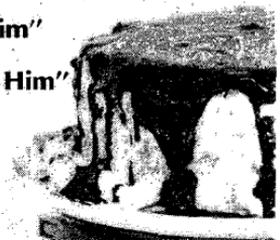
Pharisees and Sadducees, while others were simply ignorant of who Christ claimed to be and what He had come to do. In a number of instances these humble, less informed people came to believe, submitted, and counted themselves followers of Jesus Christ despite bitter opposition, ridicule, and threats of excommunication.

Jesus Christ was concerned that men should believe Him to be who He claimed to be. Unless they did so, He could not do anything to save them. The success of the gospel depends on our acceptance of it. We quote John 3:16 freely, but we tend to forget verse 18: “He that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” So this is a life-and-death matter—eternal life and eternal death indeed.

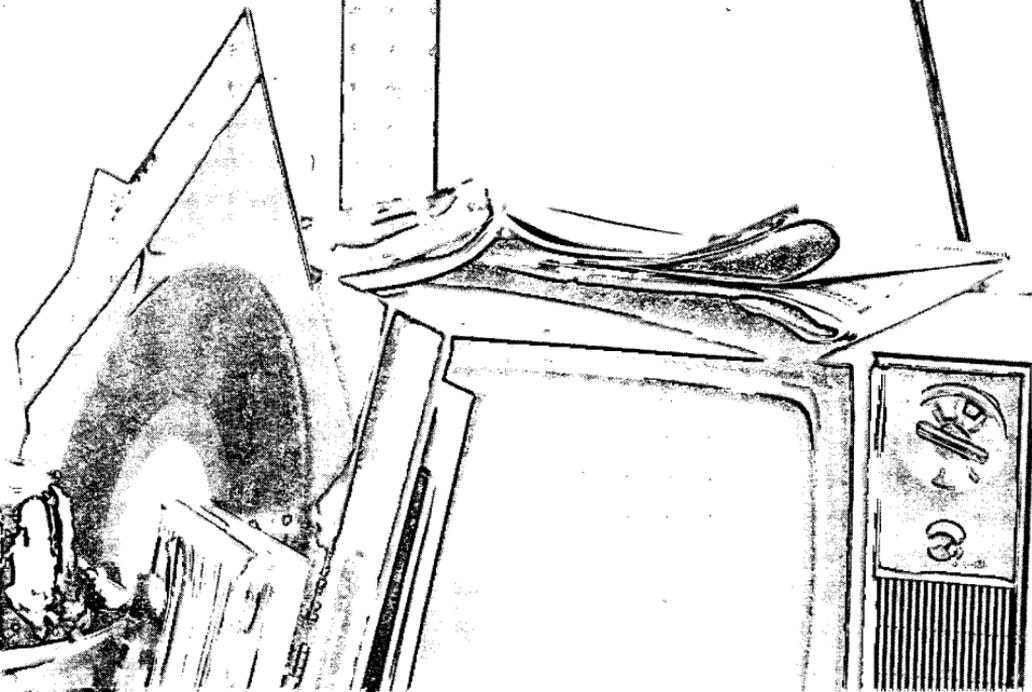
The opposite of submission and commitment is independence and a wait-and-see attitude. So the words of James are appropriate: “Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you” (James 4:7, 8). Too many submit the control of their lives to the devil and to themselves and thus resist God. Let us give earnest thought, as we study together this week, to what it really means to us to submit to Him who is “the way, the truth, and the life.”

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Servants of Sin**
(John 8:34)
2. **“Ye Shall Die”**
(John 8:24)
3. **“He Shall Know”**
(John 7:17)
4. **“They Did Not Confess”**
(John 12:42, 43)
5. **“He Worshipped Him”**
(John 9:35-38)
6. **“Many Believed on Him”**
(John 10:41, 42)



We Yield to Him



Part 1
SERVANTS
OF SIN

Does a sinner control his own life?

“Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin” (John 8:34).

The setting in which Jesus spoke these words was a conversation with some Jews who had come to believe on Him. He indicated that if they would continue in His word, then they would be His disciples and they would come to know the truth and the truth would make them free. This tended to rouse their national and racial feelings. They insisted that, as the descendants of Abraham, they were never in bondage to anybody. How could He say to them, You will be made free? Jesus' answer was our text for today. It implied that, regardless of ancestry or family tree, if a man sins, he is the slave, the servant of sin, and is not free.

How can a man who is in slavery to sin become free? Verse 36.

Perhaps the freest man in all the New Testament, other than Christ, was the man who repeatedly presented himself as the bond-servant or slave of Jesus Christ—the apostle Paul. It was he who understood so clearly the nature of freedom and bondage.

THINK IT THROUGH

Whose servant or slave am I?

“Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?”

“For when ye were the servants of sin, ye were free from righteousness.”

“But now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life” (Rom. 6:16, 20, 22).

“If we indulge anger, lust, covetousness, hatred, selfishness, or any other sin, we become servants of sin. ‘No man can serve two masters.’ If we serve sin, we cannot serve Christ. The Christian will feel the promptings of sin, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit; but the Spirit striveth against the flesh, keeping up a constant warfare. Here is where Christ's help is needed. Human weakness becomes united to divine strength, and faith exclaims, ‘Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!’”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 114.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 466.

Part 2 **How vital an issue is it whether or not we believe on the Lord**
"YE SHALL DIE" **Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world?**

"I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins" (John 8:24).

It would be difficult to find any time or place in human history when Christ was more forthright, more specific, and more objective with men than on this occasion. As we have said before, this matter of believing that Christ was who He claimed to be, was and is a matter of life and death. This is a reiteration of the truth spoken earlier in John 3:16-18, to the effect that whoever believes not is already condemned. This results from not believing on Him who alone can deliver from the sentence which Heaven pronounces against sin and sinners.

THINK IT THROUGH **What is the only effective means of deliverance from bondage and from the death which is the wages of sin?**

"In the work of redemption there is no compulsion. No external force is employed. Under the influence of the Spirit of God, man is left free to choose whom he will serve. In the change that takes place when the soul surrenders to Christ, there is the highest sense of freedom. The expulsion of sin is the act of the soul itself. True, we have no power to free ourselves from Satan's control; but when we desire to be set free from sin, and in our great need cry out for a power out of and above ourselves, the powers of the soul are imbued with the divine energy of the Holy Spirit, and they obey the dictates of the will in fulfilling the will of God.

"The only condition upon which the freedom of man is possible is that of becoming one with Christ. 'The truth shall make you free;' and Christ is the truth. Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one's self,—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is 'the law of liberty.' James 2:12."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

It is difficult for students in many parts of the world today to imagine what it meant to be an open follower of Jesus Christ when He was here. Those who have been disowned, consigned to a mental home, or divorced because they have accepted Christ can have some idea. Yet Jesus placed a terrible dilemma before men when He plainly stated that rejection of Him was the same as choosing to die in one's sins. It may not be long before belief is going to involve deep commitment everywhere.

FURTHER STUDY *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, "The Spirituality of the Law," (Matt. 5:30), pp. 60-63.

Part 3
"HE SHALL
KNOW"

What connection is there between a man's willingness to obey God and his capacity for knowing truth?

"If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of myself" (John 7:17).

This text is very much in the center of our subject and concern because understanding of truth comes to those willing to submit to Him who is the truth. Jesus actually indicated that those who were willing to do His will and His Father's will would know whether His teaching was of God or merely from a man. This clearly suggests that there would be a harmony between the individual soul and Heaven, and that there would be an enlightening of the mind and the development of a blessed assurance as to what is truth.

"In order to do the will of God, we must search His word, that we may know His doctrine, and put to the task all our entrusted ability. We must be diligent in prayer, and fervent in simple, wholehearted service to God. Those who are engaged as teachers in the Sabbath school should hunger and thirst for divine truth, that they may impart this Spirit to those under their care, and lead their pupils to seek for truth as for hidden treasure."—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 73.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I distinguish between those who speak for God and those who speak from their own human wisdom only?

"Man's advantages for obtaining a knowledge of the truth, however great these may be, will prove of no benefit to him unless the heart is open to receive the truth, and there is a conscientious surrender of every habit and practice that is opposed to its principles. To those who thus yield themselves to God, having an honest desire to know and to do His will, the truth is revealed as the power of God for their salvation. These will be able to distinguish between him who speaks for God, and him who speaks merely from himself."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 455, 456.

It would seem self evident that there would be a very close relationship between knowing that Christ was speaking from God and for God and believing in Him. It would seem illogical and unnatural to make a commitment of one's self to a person in whom he did not believe, in whom he could not have confidence, in whose word he could not trust. It seems therefore that there is indeed a very close correlation between this text in John 7:17 and the primary concern of this lesson—namely, that we submit to, commit to, wish to remain steadfast to, and have confidence in, Him who we believe speaks for God. And this belief, indeed this knowledge, this assurance, will come "if any man will do his will."

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "What to Do With Doubt," pp. 109-113.

Part 4
"THEY DID
NOT CONFESS"

We have already seen that there are different qualities to "believing." We have been reminded that the devils believe and tremble. In the text before us today we have a most interesting situation in which men believe in Christ at the same time that they are unwilling to "confess Him."

What kind of belief is it that will not permit the believer to confess what is believed?

"Nevertheless among the chief rulers also many believed on him; but because of the Pharisees they did not confess him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue: for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God" (John 12:42, 43).

Here is a clear contextual evidence that the word "belief" can have various shades of meaning. Perhaps we would not be ready to put these "chief rulers" in the same category with the devils who believe and tremble, but can we put them in the category of true believers? Did they really believe that Jesus Christ was who He claimed to be? What price were these men willing to pay for their belief that He was the true Messiah? What degree of commitment of themselves were they ready to make to Him? How far would they let Him redirect their lives, transform their entire life-style, reshape their interests and priorities? These are pertinent questions, not merely for the men of whom we have just read, but they are pertinent questions for us today.

What quality of faith or belief in Christ do we have? It is not without reason that we hear that the measure of a man's faith is the price he is willing to pay to be true to his faith, or, conversely, the price at which he will sell out his faith.

THINK IT THROUGH

Could I possibly have an intellectual belief in Christ which would not support a willingness to submit and commit all of my ways to His direction and will? What will be the results of a correct faith in Jesus?

"To save themselves from reproach and shame, they [the chief rulers] denied Christ, and rejected the offer of eternal life. And how many through all the centuries since have been doing the same thing! To them all the Saviour's warning words apply: 'He that loveth his life shall lose it.' 'He that rejecteth Me,' said Jesus, 'and receiveth not My words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day.' John 12:48."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 626.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Hidden Treasure," pp. 104-106.

Part 5
"HE WORSHIPPED
HIM"

The entire ninth chapter of John's Gospel is taken up with the inspired account of the healing of the man born blind. It would be well to read the account again in order to sense the significance of the text upon which we shall concentrate today.

You will recall that Jesus restored sight to this man on the Sabbath day, and this gave the Pharisees the occasion to challenge the authenticity of the miracle and the claims of Christ as to who He was. In the process, they tried to draw the parents of the man born blind into the contest in the hopes of countering and even denying the miracle of healing which had taken place.

In a remarkable way the healed man outshone his parents, whose fears silenced any convictions they might have had regarding the fact of the miracle or who performed it. The man himself courageously and effectively met the reasoning of his accusers and confronted them with some Spirit-directed arguments which they could not adequately answer. At least they would not. In stubborn unbelief the Pharisees and rulers cast this man out of the synagogue.

How did Christ provide the healed man an opportunity to reveal the quality of his faith?

"Jesus heard that they had cast him out; and when he had found him, he said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee. And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him" (John 9:35-38).

Here is a man whose faith involved commitment and a submission of his own will to the will of God, even if it cost him his place in the synagogue. (Remember that being cast out of the synagogue was equivalent to excommunication with dread consequences for the individual and his family.)

"Already, at great cost to himself, he had acknowledged Him as a delegate of divine power; now a higher revelation was granted him."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 474.

When Christ revealed Himself to the blind man as the One Sent by God, the man whose natural sight had been restored had also the eyes of his understanding open and he received Christ.

THINK IT THROUGH

What price have I paid for my belief in Christ?

In his full recognition of the identity of Jesus Christ, the healed blind man worshiped Him. There may very well be an illustration here of the close correlation between worship, faith, commitment, submission, and obedience.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 471-475.

Part 6
"MANY
BELIEVED
ON HIM"

What contrast does the Gospel of John provide between the convincing power of miracles and the convincing power of fulfilled prophecy?

"And many resorted unto him, and said, John did no miracle: but all things that John spake of this man were true. And many believed on him there" (John 10:41, 42).

These words are the witness borne to John the Baptist after his death by those who had heard what he had to say about Jesus. They noted that while John did no miracle unlike Elijah or Moses before him, all that he said about Christ had proved true, with the result that many at this time and place believed on Christ.

In this time of interest in charismatics, when so many are pointing to apparent miracles as proof of truth, it is well to remember this testimony concerning John the Baptist. If our faith in Jesus Christ is dependent upon miracles, we may find miracles coming from strange sources that will lead us to believe that which is contrary to the Inspired Word of God. It should not be the miracles that lead to the acceptance of the Word, but the acceptance of the Word should be the test of what is and what is not truly a miracle.

THINK IT THROUGH

Upon what is my confidence in the Lord based? Is it something which could be readily counterfeited? (Read 2 Peter 1:19.)

We recall the setting for this statement of the apostle Peter. He has been describing the experience shared with Christ on the mount of transfiguration when he saw a miniature of the coming kingdom of glory. There was no question in Peter's mind as to the reality of his experience, the voice which he heard, the light which shone round about them, the illumination of the Saviour. But certain as Peter was of this reality—a miraculous experience indeed—he pointed to the prophetic word as something more sure, more certain, more reliable, even than the phenomenal experience on the transfiguration mountaintop.

This is perhaps one of the most significant commentaries upon the quality of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. In the days when spiritism under many guises will perform undoubted miracles, in what shall we put our trust? Whose testimony shall we receive? To avoid deception we need the qualities of faith about which we have been studying in this week's lesson—submission, commitment, willingness to do God's will, willingness to make our commitment known, and a leaning upon the Word of inspiration as opposed to the performance of miracles. With such a faith, many others will come to receive our testimony.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 312, 349, 459.



**We Are Forgiven
Through Him**

**WELCOME
HOME**

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little. And he said unto her, Thy sins are forgiven. And they that sat at meat with him began to say within themselves, Who is this that forgiveth sins also? And he said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace” (Luke 7:47-50).

We have taken Luke’s account of Christ’s forgiveness of the sins of the woman who came and anointed His feet with costly spikenard. Only Luke associates Mary’s act with Christ’s statement of His forgiveness. It caused no little stir among the guests of the feast at Simon’s house that Christ would speak as though He could forgive sins. That is the blessed good news of this lesson. He forgave that woman. Her sin was such as might lead many of us to say, “I thank God that I am not like that woman.” Jesus did not hide her sins or rationalize them away. He acknowledged that her sins were many, and He could have said that they were grievous. But He did say that they were forgiven. Because her sins were so many, and their result so devastating, her love for Him was greater than that shown by many others whom He had forgiven. The Lord does not mean that we should wish that we had sinned more so that we could love more, having more forgiveness. What we ought to ask ourselves is why we do not love Him more, considering our sins that He has forgiven.

On what grounds can God forgive our sins, provided that we have met the conditions? On what grounds can He be just and yet the justifier of him

that believeth in Christ Jesus? He can do it because He has paid the penalty for our sins in His Son Jesus Christ who became our Sin Bearer. Though He knew no sin, He became sin for us. He was treated as sinners deserve to be treated and will be if they believe not on the Lord Jesus Christ. Because He was treated as we deserve to be treated, God is going to treat us as Jesus deserved to be treated, since He was without sin. Jesus was counted a sinner that we might be counted righteous. We cannot be counted righteous while clinging to known sin. So forgiveness of known sins is essential to being counted righteous or justified.

Let us believe, as we study this week, that God wants to forgive us personally and individually, and that when He forgives us, He counts us as though we had never sinned. This is the almost unbelievable glory of the love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. “Without Shedding of Blood”
(Heb. 9:22)**
- 2. “As We Forgive”
(Matt. 6:12)**
- 3. “Power . . . to Forgive Sins”
(Matt. 9:6)**
- 4. “Peace With God”
(Rom. 5:1)**
- 5. “Neither Do I Condemn Thee”
(John 8:11)**
- 6. The Kiss of Peace
(Ps. 85:10)**

Part 1
"WITHOUT
SHEDDING
OF BLOOD"

What truth about forgiveness is taught by the ceremonial law?

"And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb. 9:22).

There is a principle recalled by every sacrifice from the very gates of the Garden of Eden until the moment when Christ became the Lamb of God slain for the sins of the world. That principle is that forgiveness of sins requires death. We add "of sins" because that is the entire function of the sacrificial system. Forgiveness and remission are virtually identical in the original. The antitype of the sacrifices is the ground or basis for our forgiveness. Jesus Christ on Calvary's cross shed His blood in the act of becoming our Sin Bearer.

Where was the decision for our redemption sealed? Luke 22:41, 42.

"Christ [in Gethsemane] was now standing in a different attitude from that in which He had ever stood before. His suffering can best be described in the words of the prophet, 'Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the Lord of hosts.' Zech. 13:7. As the substitute and surety for sinful man, Christ was suffering under divine justice. He saw what justice meant. Hitherto He had been as an intercessor for others; now He longed to have an intercessor for Himself."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 686.

This is the struggle that brought the blood sweat and broke the heart of the Saviour. This was the price paid for our forgiveness. How can we question His love or His willingness to forgive when He paid such a price to make it possible?

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I accepted Gethsemane and Calvary as mine?

"Jesus loves to have us come to Him just as we are, sinful, helpless, dependent. We may come with all our weakness, our folly, our sinfulness, and fall at His feet in penitence. It is His glory to encircle us in the arms of His love and to bind up our wounds, to cleanse us from all impurity.

"Here is where thousands fail; they do not believe that Jesus pardons them personally, individually. They do not take God at His word. It is the privilege of all who comply with the conditions to know for themselves that pardon is freely extended for every sin. Put away the suspicion that God's promises are not meant for you. They are for every repentant transgressor. Strength and grace have been provided through Christ to be brought by ministering angels to every believing soul."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 52, 53.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 685-693.

Part 2
"AS WE
FORGIVE"

Since Christ has shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, is there anything we need to do about it?

"And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12).

From childhood most of us have prayed the Lord's Prayer, including this particular petition. Have we really thought about its significance? If God truly forgives us only to the degree that we forgive others their trespasses against us, how is it with us? As we come to offer our gifts of penitence and prayer, asking forgiveness, do we need to go and be reconciled to a brother somewhere before we can come and offer our gifts?

After He had given what we speak of as the Lord's Prayer, Jesus went on to repeat, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses; your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (verses 14, 15).

It may lead us to wonder whether Jesus felt that this was the most difficult part of the Lord's Prayer for us to enter into—the conditions on which forgiveness would be granted to us.

THINK IT THROUGH

What other conditions are there to receiving God's forgiveness of our sins, apart from a willingness to forgive others? (See 1 Tim. 5:24, 25; Rev. 20:12, 13.)

"Some men's sins are open beforehand, confessed in penitence, and forsaken, and they go beforehand to judgment. Pardon is written over against the names of these men. But other men's sins follow after, and they are not put away by repentance and confession, and these sins will stand registered against them in the books of heaven."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 916.

Is there a limit to the frequency with which forgiveness should be granted? Matt. 18:21, 22. (See Luke 17:3, 4.)

"He who harbors within himself the idea that at some future time he will not forgive, is far from extending true forgiveness even though he may go through the form of forgiving. If the spirit of forgiveness actuates the heart, a person will be as ready to forgive a repentant soul the eighth time as the first time, or the 491st time as the eighth. True forgiveness is not limited by numbers; furthermore, it is not the act that counts, but the spirit that prompts the act. 'Nothing can justify an unforgiving spirit' (COL 251)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 449.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Measure of Forgiveness," pp. 247-251.

Part 3
"POWER . . .
TO FORGIVE
SINS"

What vivid example does the New Testament offer us of Christ's clear recognition of His own right to forgive sins?

"But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house" (Matt. 9:6).

The Desire of Ages gives us a number of significant points on this healing of the paralytic. (1) His disease was the result of a life of sin. (2) Remorse had embittered his sufferings. (3) He had been renounced by Pharisees and doctors. (4) He had fallen into utter despair until he heard of the works of Jesus. (5) The reports of the healings of others as sinful as himself encouraged his faith. (6) He feared the purity of the Christ-physician. (7) He yearned for relief from the burden of sin even more than for physical restoration. (8) His condition was critical and there was no time to lose. (9) It was the paralytic's own suggestion that they enter Peter's crowded house through the flat roof. (10) Christ had convicted the conscience of the paralytic while he was yet at home. (11) Christ had watched the man's faith grow as he conquered each obstacle to come to the Lord.

This background explains Christ's immediate word, "Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee" (Matt. 9:2). Note that the paralytic makes no further request. Christ reads the hearts of the Pharisees present as He challenges which would be greater, to forgive sins or to cause the man to walk. Without awaiting their decision, He gives the command to the paralytic after a clear indication that He will now demonstrate "that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins."

To the paralytic He says, "Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house." The Gospels record the glorious results.

THINK IT THROUGH

Can you turn away from such a Saviour?

"Oh, wondrous love of Christ, stooping to heal the guilty and the afflicted! Divinity sorrowing over and soothing the ills of suffering humanity! Oh, marvelous power thus displayed to the children of men! Who can doubt the message of salvation? Who can slight the mercies of a compassionate Redeemer?"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 269.

How did the healing of the paralytic demonstrate Christ's right and power to forgive sins?

"He who at the creation 'spake, and it was,' who 'commanded, and it stood fast,' (Ps. 33:9), had spoken life to the soul dead in trespasses and sins. The healing of the body was an evidence of the power that had renewed the heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 270.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 267-271.

Part 4
"PEACE WITH
GOD"**What is the basis for a man's peace with God?****"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).**

We may question in our minds what connection justification may have with forgiveness. We may agree that being justified by faith produces peace with God but may claim that we do not see the relationship to forgiveness, which is the topic for this week's lesson. But if we will look back into the closing verses of Romans 4, we will see the very close relationship. Speaking of Abraham's faith and how it was counted to him for righteousness, the apostle continues, "Now it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him: but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification" (Rom. 4:23-25).

Clearly it is for our sins or offenses that Christ was delivered to the death of the cross, as we studied earlier in this week's lesson, and it was the acceptance by the Father of Christ's perfect sacrifice for our offenses that entitled Jesus to exercise His own power in rising from the dead so that He might count to us His righteousness and impart to us His life-giving power. And it is the life, death, and resurrection of our Lord that affords us peace with God through our justification. We have peace with God because we are counted righteous in Jesus Christ and, being counted righteous, we are treated by the Father as if we had never sinned. (See *Steps to Christ*, "The Test of Discipleship," p. 62.)

THINK IT THROUGH**How closely are pardon and justification identified one with the other?**

"Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: 'This is My child. I reprieve him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life insurance policy—eternal life—because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins. He is even My beloved son.' Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ's righteousness, stands faultless before God."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1070.

FURTHER STUDY*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1070-1073.

Part 5
"NEITHER DO I CONDEMN THEE"

With a seemingly foolproof case of a punishable sin before Him, how does Christ reveal the character of God?

"And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:11).

We may hardly need to sketch the experience which gave rise to these words. Let us, however, just remind ourselves of a woman supposedly taken in the act of adultery and being brought before Christ for His judgment. In the process, Christ is reminded of what Moses said should happen to such a woman; therefore He is seemingly placed in the dilemma either of agreeing with Moses and seeing this woman stoned or of openly rebelling against the teachings of the Old Testament. There was the additional problem that if He declared the woman worthy of death, he could be accused to the Romans as one who was assuming their prerogatives.

We remember what Jesus did in writing in the dust the sins of the accusers of the woman, those who themselves had led the woman into sin. They see their own guilty secrets traced in the dust, and they slink away one by one.

Finally left with the woman, her accusers gone, Christ asked her, "Woman, where are those thine accusers? hath no man condemned thee? She said, No man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee: go, and sin no more" (John 8:10, 11). This is God speaking to a pathetic and pitiful sinner.

"Jesus knows the circumstances of every soul. The greater the sinner's guilt, the more he needs the Saviour. His heart of divine love and sympathy is drawn out most of all for the one who is the most hopelessly entangled in the snares of the enemy. With His own blood He has signed the emancipation papers of the race."—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 89, 90.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the attitude of God toward the guilty secrets of our own hearts?

"Men hate the sinner, while they love the sin. Christ hates the sin, but loves the sinner. This will be the spirit of all who follow Him. Christian love is slow to censure, quick to discern penitence, ready to forgive, to encourage, to set the wanderer in the path of holiness, and to stay his feet therein."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 462.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Faith and Acceptance," pp. 54, 55; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 460-462.

**Part 6
THE KISS
OF PEACE**

In the plan and character of God, what is the relationship between righteousness and peace?

**“Steadfast love and faithfulness will meet;
righteousness and peace will kiss each other”
Psalm 85:10, RSV.**

In the character, government, and plan of salvation of our Lord, righteousness and peace are in perfect harmony. To put the matter less poetically than does the psalmist: There is no conflict between law and grace, between obedience and love, between repentance and faith.

The peace which passeth all understanding comes because God has made provision for Christ's righteousness to stand in place of our sinfulness, and indeed, in place of our righteousness.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why does Christ say to forgiven sinners, Go and sin no more?

The plan of salvation is not a device for excusing sin that we may continue therein. The plan of salvation is God's plan for destroying sin, ultimately forever.

“The law requires righteousness,—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God's holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. His life stands for the life of men. Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this Christ embues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can ‘be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ Rom. 3:26.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

What has been Satan's plan from the beginning?

“God's love has been expressed in His justice no less than in His mercy. Justice is the foundation of His throne, and the fruit of His love. It had been Satan's purpose to divorce mercy from truth and justice. He sought to prove that the righteousness of God's law is an enemy to peace. But Christ shows that in God's plan they are indissolubly joined together; the one cannot exist without the other. ‘Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other.’ Ps. 85:10.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 371, 372.

"Nicodemus saith unto him,
How can a man be born when he
is old? can he enter the second
time into his mother's womb,
and be born?" (John 3:4).



**We Are
Born Again**



In these words Nicodemus attempted to change the subject of his interview with Jesus. He was ready to debate on the "how" of the new birth, when Christ wanted to speak about

the "why" of it. So it is today. When the Spirit of God presses conviction home to the conscience, an enlightened reason says it is time to surrender; but pride says, How can

these things possibly be?

And how it would please the evil one to see us in contention over the manner in which our Saviour saves us, to see us in argument and debate over how these things can be! We may not know exactly how these things can be. We may not *need* to know exactly how these things can be. There is no legitimate reason for strife and debate over the manner in which the Lord would redeem His children. The vital question is, Are we ready to be redeemed? Are we willing to be born again? Are we prepared to be placed entirely under new management? Are we prepared to surrender the reins that govern the direction of our thoughts and affections? If not, our independence may cost us eternal life.

Shortly after the 1888 General Conference session in Minneapolis, there was a minister among us who was very certain that his ideas on things were the correct ideas, and that only those who saw things as he saw them were walking in the light. The rest he believed were walking in darkness, and especially the ministers. He wanted to stand out, to be different. In his egotism he insisted that others should see things as he did or they could not be saved.

The servant of the Lord wrote a lengthy letter to this brother and repeatedly pointed out to him his danger in dwelling upon certain subjects, certain ideas, in which he felt he was far out in front of almost everybody else. The Lord's messenger went so far as to indicate that at times this man's mind was "unbalanced from trying very hard to study into and explain the mystery of godliness, which is just as great a mystery after your study and explanations as it was before." He was further counseled that he was not leaving the Lord enough room to work upon people's minds and to speak to their souls and to impress their understanding. In this

setting he was told, "It is not essential for you to know and tell others all the whys and wherefores as to what constitutes the new heart, or as to the position they can and must reach so as never to sin. You have no such work to do."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 177.

The reason given that this brother should not attempt to explain all the whys and wherefores, even of the new birth or of the new heart, was the fact that "all are not constituted alike. Conversions are not all alike." Different individuals have different experiences in conversion, but no one is to judge the conversion of another not genuine because the experience is not exactly like his own. So even in our study of this week's lesson, we may not all see it just exactly alike. But what we all do need to do is to see Christ lifted up. "With outstretched arms He is ready to receive and welcome not only the sinner but the prodigal. His dying love, manifested on Calvary, is the sinner's assurance of acceptance, peace, and love. Teach these things in the simplest form, that the sin-darkened soul may see the light shining from the cross of Calvary."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 178, 179. With that caution and with that appeal, let us proceed to study this vital subject; for without the new-birth experience no man shall see the Lord.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. "Except"
(John 3:3)
2. "Of Water and of the Spirit"
(John 3:5)
3. Listen to the Wind!
(John 3:8)
4. Look and Live
(John 3:14, 15)
5. Believing and Deliverance
(John 3:18, 19)
6. Believing and the Spirit
(John 7:37-39)

Part 1
"EXCEPT"

Just how essential is it to salvation that a person be born again?

"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (John 3:3).

Nicodemus was not accustomed to having his needs pointed out by anyone. But there was reason for him to be shocked out of his complacency and self-righteousness by this bold and deeply personal assertion: You, Nicodemus, you must be born again.

What symbol did the Lord use in Old Testament times to communicate the idea of a person's changing from a life of sin to one of righteousness? Eze. 36:25, 26.

Note that it is the work of God to give a heart of flesh; and that the direction of the new birth is from above. It is in no way an improving of or modifying of the old life to make it better. It is to be "born over again" (NEB).

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it really mean to be born again?

"Satan leads people to think that because they have felt a rapture of feeling, they are converted. But their experience does not change. Their actions are the same as before. Their lives show no good fruit. They pray often and long, and are constantly referring to the feelings they had at such and such a time. But they do not live the new life. They are deceived. Their experience goes no deeper than feeling. They build upon the sand, and when adverse winds come, their house is swept away."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1164.

Perhaps someone is objecting that we have switched from the topic of the new birth to that of conversion. It is not a switch in topics, because the inspired counsel uses "new birth" and "conversion" to refer to the same experience.

"The youth especially stumble over the phrase, 'a new heart.' They do not know what it means. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, 'Ye must be born again.' . . .

"When Jesus speaks of the new heart, he means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—a changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1164, 1165.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 167-171.

Part 2
"OF WATER
AND OF THE
SPIRIT"

As Nicodemus attempts to parry Christ's insistence upon the new birth by debating the literal meaning of Christ's words, what response does he receive?

"Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God" (John 3:5).

"Nicodemus knew that Christ here referred to water baptism and the renewing of the heart by the Spirit of God. He was convinced that he was in the presence of the One whom John the Baptist had foretold."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

Nicodemus was acquainted with the preaching of John the Baptist on the subjects of repentance and baptism. He had heard the prediction of One who should come to baptize with the Holy Spirit. He had felt that there was a great spiritual need among his own people, but he had not yet come to see that he, a leader in Israel, could have any such spiritual need.

"Nicodemus anticipated admission into the kingdom of God as a natural-born, devout Jew, but Jesus declared that anything less than a complete transformation of the life by the power of the Holy Spirit was inadequate. . . .

"To be 'born of water and of the Spirit' is equivalent to being 'born again,' that is, 'from above.' . . . Those who are born from above have God as their Father and resemble Him in character (see 1 John 3:1-3; cf. John 8:39, 44). Henceforth, they aspire, by the grace of Christ, to live above sin (Rom. 6:12-16) and do not yield their wills to commit sin (1 John 3:9; 5:18)."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 928.

THINK IT THROUGH

Could I be hiding behind a doctrinal debate my inner conviction of my own soul's great need of Christ? (See 2 Peter 1:3, 4.)

"The old nature, born of blood and the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The old ways, the hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up; for grace is not inherited. The new birth consists in having new motives, new tastes new tendencies. Those who are begotten unto a new life by the Holy Spirit, have become partakers of the divine nature, and in all their habits and practices they will give evidence of their relationship to Christ. When men who claim to be Christians retain all their natural defects of character and disposition, in what does their position differ from that of the worldling? They do not appreciate the truth as a sanctifier, a refiner. They have not been born again"—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p.1101.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 366-368.

Part 3
LISTEN TO
THE WIND!

When Nicodemus continued to have difficulty accepting the remedy which Christ offered for his sinful soul, what illustration did Christ use to help him?

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

Even with our modern, sophisticated methods of meteorological investigation, we cannot control the wind. We cannot see the wind, but we can see the effects of its work. And in Christ's day, even more than in our own, the point of origin and the point of destination of the wind were beyond human comprehension, let alone control. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." When the wind blows, there is evidence of its action. We may not be able to see it, measure it, or control it. The evidence is there. The trees bend, the dust flies, the giant windmill turns, creating power. The calm lake is whipped into a frothy fury. There are results. There are changes. These are perceptible. "So is every one that is born of the Spirit." So the little song is true, "Things are different now, something's happened to me since I gave my heart to Jesus."

THINK IT THROUGH

How does the figure of the wind illustrate the work of the Holy Spirit?

"The wind is heard among the branches of the trees, rustling the leaves and flowers; yet it is invisible, and no man knows whence it comes or whither it goes. So with the work of the Holy Spirit upon the heart. It can no more be explained than can the movements of the wind. . . .

"While the wind itself is invisible, it produces effects that are seen and felt. So the work of the Spirit upon the soul will reveal itself in every act of him who has felt its saving power. When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. . . . The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.

"It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet He who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 172, 173.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "The Test of Discipleship," pp. 57-59.

Part 4
LOOK AND
LIVE

After giving Nicodemus some gentle reproof for his ignorance of basic truths, what more familiar illustration did Christ use to help Nicodemus to understand the plan of salvation?

"And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:14, 15).

Nicodemus had been drawn by what he had seen and heard of Christ before he obtained this personal interview with Him. Jesus pierced through his defensiveness and had been very forthright and deeply personal with him. But Nicodemus sensed such love in the Saviour that he took no offense. Christ had even pointed out how little he knew of the things that really mattered for one who held such a position of leadership in Israel.

There was a growing longing in the heart of Nicodemus for the experience which Christ was presenting as a new birth. The Lord gave him an illustration that he would readily grasp.

"Here was ground with which Nicodemus was familiar. The symbol of the uplifted serpent made plain to him the Saviour's mission. When the people of Israel were dying from the sting of the fiery serpents, God directed Moses to make a serpent of brass, and place it on high in the midst of the congregation. Then the word was sounded throughout the encampment that all who would look upon the serpent should live. The people well knew that in itself the serpent had no power to help them. It was a symbol of Christ. . . . Whether for the healing of their wounds or the pardon of their sins, they could do nothing for themselves but show their faith in the Gift of God. They were to look and live."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 174, 175.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are pride, independence, or demand for scientific or historical justification of Christ's claim depriving me of the look that gives life?

"Not through controversy and discussion is the soul enlightened. We must look and live."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.

As stressed in the introduction to this lesson, not all experiences are alike, because not all individuals are alike. But all true conversions have this in common: They result from our faith in what Christ has done for us, and not from one shred of confidence in anything that we have done or can do for ourselves. It was unscientific to expect the brass serpent to heal the people. There was no historical precedent for believing in such a thing. But God had made the provision, and God had made the promise; and the only requirement of the dying victims in Israel was that they look and live.

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 430-432.

**Part 5
BELIEVING
AND
DELIVERANCE**

What evidence is there in Scripture to show that either choice of wrong or rejection of right leads to eternal loss?

"He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:18, 19).

It is a solemn thought that we are in the land of the enemy, that we come into the world with inherited propensities to evil. But God has given us hope through the death of Jesus for our redemption. Condemnation in the day of judgment will arise from an unwillingness to accept the means which God has provided. The lost thus show the same type of independence and determination to go their own way and have their own will as brought sin into the world in the very beginning. Just as those who refused to look upon the brass serpent died, so those who refuse to look in faith to Christ will perish.

"While the sinner cannot save himself, he still has something to do to secure salvation. 'Him that cometh to Me,' says Christ, 'I will in no wise cast out.' John 6:37. But we must *come* to Him; and when we repent of our sins, we must believe that He accepts and pardons us. Faith is the gift of God, but the power to exercise it is ours. Faith is the hand by which the soul takes hold upon the divine offers of grace and mercy."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the origin of my faith, my believing, that brings me deliverance from the sting of the serpent?

Inadvertently, it is possible that many are making *faith* their savior, or the *name* of Jesus their savior. And some quote Acts 4:12 in support of their position: "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved." But does that mean that our salvation has been obtained by a *name*? Has our salvation been obtained by our *faith*?

"Through faith we receive the grace of God; but faith is not our Saviour. It earns nothing. It is the hand by which we lay hold upon Christ, and appropriate His merits, the remedy for sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.

It was not a name that came and died on Calvary. It was Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of the living God.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 367-370.

**Part 6
BELIEVING
AND THE
SPIRIT**

Believing brings deliverance from condemnation of sin. How does believing relate to the work of the Holy Spirit in human hearts?

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:37-39).

It is important to remember that in His conversation with Nicodemus Jesus indicated that the new birth is the work of the Holy Spirit. While Christ has purchased the means of redemption, the application in the individual heart and life of that redemption and redeeming grace is brought by the Holy Spirit. (See John 3:8.)

What is the way that old things pass away and all things become new, when a man becomes a new creature in Christ? 2 Cor. 5:17-19.

"Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 57.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I have to go in search of the Holy Spirit to receive the presence and power of Jesus Christ? Have I received the Holy Spirit? How can I know?

Note the words of our text of the day particularly: "But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive." The Holy Spirit is engaged in drawing us to Christ in the first place. When we respond in faith and acceptance, when we trust Christ and surrender to Him, the Holy Spirit comes to bring the presence and power of Christ into the heart. Then, as it were, "out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." The power of the Spirit for overcoming sin, and the power of the Spirit for effectual witness, come to the believer as a consequence of his faith in Jesus Christ.

By what four questions did Jesus teach us of His Father's willingness to give us the Holy Spirit? Luke 11:11-13.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "The Test of Discipleship," pp. 60-65.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 16:3).

Recently an aged apartment dweller spoke of a contact with a Jewish neighbor. They became good friends and spoke together of things spiritual. On one occasion the Christian brother greeted his Jewish friend thus: “Shalom, shalom.” “Oh,” said the Jewish friend, “do you really mean that?” “Yes,” said the Christian, “Shalom, shalom.”

These are the words in our text as we begin this lesson study. Thou wilt keep him in *shalom, shalom*—in peace, peace. To the Hebrew the repetition of a term gave to it a depth of meaning, a measure of appeal which is difficult for the Western mind to comprehend perhaps. We have picked up in modern parlance this term and use it rather freely as a greeting, “Shalom, shalom.” But God will keep him in peace, peace, *shalom, shalom*, whose mind is stayed on the Lord, because he trusts in Him. And there is good reason to expect to find this peace in Him, for the messenger goes on to instruct us, “Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord JEHOVAH is everlasting strength” (verse 4).

Has there ever been a time in human history when men were more fearful of what the future holds? Where is security? Where is peace to be found? Those with little or nothing are fearful about how they will survive, as their little has less and less power to supply their needs. Those who have much are fearful of how much they will lose when their much comes to naught.

There is less and less confidence to be had in those things in which men have always thought that they could have confidence. Distrust is in the very air we breathe. It is no longer distrust of thieves and murderers and extortioners only that men endure. They no longer are sure that they can trust those who are the appointed peace-keepers, those who have been

appointed to rule and to lead in the affairs of men and nations.

Sometimes those who have attempted to send relief to countries devastated by natural disasters have been appalled to find fellow countrymen of the suffering multitudes attempting to take by force from the rescue workers food and clothing being brought in by the relief agencies. These men would then sell the supplies on the “black market” for exorbitant personal profit, while their own perishing fellow countrymen died of starvation and exposure.

But heartrending as these happenings are that shatter our peace and drive sleep from our pillows, they are not quite the equal of the nagging condemnation and inner restlessness of spirit which are the consequence of one’s personal guilt. So often those whose minds are breaking down under modern stress and tension are losing their equanimity because of the deep depressions and self-condemnation that come with awareness of guilt. Men may escape the law and pay no penalty imposed by society upon their deeds. But they have to live with themselves, and often it seems more than they can do.

As we have studied thus far this quarter the means by which we can be reconciled to God, we have been confronted with the opportunity of taking those steps to Christ which would make us at peace with God and bring into our lives *shalom, shalom*.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **“My Peace”**
(John 14:27)
2. **“He Reconciled”**
(Col. 1:21)
3. **“He Is Our Peace”**
(Eph. 2:14)
4. **“God . . . in Christ Reconciling”**
(2 Cor. 5:19)
5. **“Merciful . . . High Priest”**
(Heb. 2:17)
6. **“In Me . . . Peace”**
(John 16:33)



We Are at Peace

Part 1 **Just before He went to the cross, what marvelous assurance did Christ share with His band of disciples?**
"MY PEACE"

"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

These were among the many precious words which Jesus spoke to His disciples in the last few hours before He went to Gethsemane and the cruel mockery of trials leading to Calvary. It was the time when He promised that He would not leave them orphans, that He would send the Comforter to them, the *Paraclete*—the One who would be alongside them in the place of Jesus. And with all that He knew was just hours away from Him and them, He could offer them peace—not just the world's peace, but His peace. What is wrong with the world's peace? It is so uncertain, so unpredictable. But Jesus Christ offers peace like a river to my soul—not a shallow, bubbling brook, but a deep-flowing crystal-pure river of the water of life.

We know what kind of peace Christ offered to His disciples because He exhibited that peace in His own person. In the midst of the caviling scribes and Pharisees, under false condemnation of hired false witnesses, under the threats, epithets, and curses of the mob, He was at peace. The only disturbance of Jesus' peace that we see was when in Gethsemane He became our Sin Bearer. This is why His body swayed as though beaten by a tempest. This is why He clung to the ground as though to hold Himself back from the abyss into which our sins were pressing Him. This is why He sweat as it were great drops of blood. This is why He cried out in anguish for the Father to take away the cup if possible. He made the renewal of the commitment and agreement which He and the Father had made before the foundations of the world were laid. He determined to go through with the contract, to complete the mission. An angel sent from heaven strengthened Him, and He came forth from the agony of Gethsemane with peace in His heart and peace in His countenance.

THINK IT THROUGH **What easily troubles my heart? What makes me afraid? Could it be that I have not yet accepted the peace which Christ left for me?**

"This peace is not the peace that comes through conformity to the world. Christ never purchased peace by compromise with evil. The peace that Christ left His disciples is internal rather than external and was ever to remain with His witnesses through strife and contention."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 84.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 672.

Part 2
"HE RECONCILED"

When we by nature are enemies of God, how can we be at peace with Him?

"And you, that were some time alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled" (Col. 1:21).

We stressed in the introduction of the lesson that guilt is the greatest destroyer of our inner peace, and that Christ has made provision for us to receive His peace. This the apostle Paul well understood and explained to the church at Colossae. Yet he pointed them to the cross and the blood of the cross by which peace has been made between God and sinful man, because through the blood of the cross it is possible for all things to be reconciled to God through Christ. And we who by nature were alienated and enemies of God by our wicked works and our inherited propensities toward evil—even we can be reconciled "in the body of his flesh through death" so that we might be presented "holy and unblamable and unreprouvable in his sight" (verse 22).

That term "reconciled" does not appear a great many times in the Scriptures. In the Old Testament it is mostly used in connection with the sanctuary services whereby the shed blood provides an atonement or a cover (*kaphar*) so that sinful man can be at peace with a holy and righteous God. In the New Testament it carries most frequently the thought of being thoroughly changed, and how beautiful a thought that is. Christ has made provision for us to be thoroughly changed so that, whereas we were at enmity with God through sin, we now can be at peace with God and be the friends of God through righteousness—not our own righteousness, but through the righteousness of Jesus Christ in whom we believe. And, strangely and beautifully, the more we contemplate our dependence upon His righteousness, then the more we recognize that we can make no contribution to improve upon that righteousness of His; with the result that our will is surrendered more completely to the indwelling of His Spirit, who creates within us a new man after the likeness of Jesus our Saviour and Redeemer.

THINK IT THROUGH

What grounds do I have for claiming or expecting reconciliation with God?

"We have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 395, 396.

Part 3
**"HE IS OUR
PEACE"**

What blessed assurance does the apostle Paul offer Gentile believers to share with Christ's followers in Israel?

"For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us" (Eph. 2:14).

"He is our peace. The 'he' is emphatic in the Greek. Christ is not only the peacemaker; He Himself is peace, the bond of union and of peace. In Him all the divisions of mankind are to be abolished. . . .

"Middle wall of partition. Literally, 'partition wall of the fence,' meaning, 'the partition wall which is the fence.' The imagery may have been derived from the barrier in the Temple separating the court of the Gentiles from the court of the Jews. . . . Beyond this wall no Gentile dared go."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1009.

Paul had been addressing himself to the Christians at Ephesus, many of whom, if not most, would be of Gentile background. He reminded them that at one time they were "without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world" (verse 12). But now he assures them that in Christ Jesus they who "sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ" (verse 13). And, really, that had been God's intention all through the Old Testament era, that those not of Israel should know from Israel and through Israel that the blood of Messiah would be shed for them as well as for Israel.

THINK IT THROUGH

What change in relationship between Jew and Gentile was effected by Christ's death upon the cross?

"Through Christ the hidden glory of the holy of holies was to stand revealed. He had suffered death for every man, and by this offering the sons of men were to become the sons of God. . . . The mercy seat, upon which the glory of God rested in the holiest of all, is opened to all who accept Christ as the propitiation for sin, and through its medium, they are brought into fellowship with God. The veil is rent, the partition walls broken down, the handwriting of ordinances canceled. By virtue of His blood the enmity is abolished. Through faith in Christ Jew and Gentile may partake of the living bread."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1109.

"Christ recognized no distinction of nationality or rank or creed. . . . Christ came to break down every wall of partition. He came to show that His gift of mercy and love is as unconfined as the air, the light, or the showers of rain that refresh the earth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 190.

FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, pp. 369-372.

Part 4
"GOD . . . IN
CHRIST
RECONCILING"**Who takes the initiative in creating peace between man and God?****"To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:19).**

One thing for sure is implied by these inspired words of the text today: There is need for a reconciliation. Some have the idea that Christ is shielding us from a God who is angry with His creatures—that Christ has to reconcile His Father to us. In order to know that an enmity had arisen, we have only to go back to the Garden of Eden to see our first parents hiding in the recesses of the Garden from the God who had given them life. Man had sold out his first options to Satan. He was utterly helpless to buy them back. God gave him the first promise that there would come a Man who would be at enmity with the serpent and not in league with him. This Man would conquer the serpent and offer all the sons of men the opportunity to be reconciled to God.

THINK IT THROUGH**Do the words of Second Corinthians 5:20 contradict those of verse 19?**

No, the expression "be ye reconciled to God" is still an appeal from God to man, and the apostle Paul indicates that he and his fellow laborers are apostles, or ambassadors, who speak for Christ, urging sinners to be reconciled to God. The initiative is with God, the provision is made by God. Let us never forget that it is *God in Christ*, reconciling the world unto Himself.

The very next verse—verse 21—gives us the ground for this work and act of reconciliation. It provides the justification, the legal rationale, for this to be done. The Revised Standard Version reads, "For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."

Here in these few words we have the ground upon which it is possible for sinful man to be again at peace with the holy and righteous God. It is a glorious exchange that is offered for which there is no basis other than the eternal love of God.

What spirit of prophecy statement closely parallels the profound thought of Second Corinthians 5:21?

"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.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.

FURTHER STUDY*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 64.

Part 5
"MERCIFUL
... HIGH
PRIEST"

What sanctuary office again portrays Christ's key role in bringing us to be at peace with God?

"Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people" (Heb. 2:17, RSV).

Think for a moment of the work and service of the high priest in the earthly sanctuary. Think particularly of the fact that his major work in the whole series of sanctuary services fell on the annual Day of Atonement. On that day in a particularly specific and awesome manner he became the direct mediator between the people of Israel and Yahweh. It was his solemn task, after due preparation of himself and his family, to go in before the manifestation of God's glory—the shekinah. There, veiled only by the rising incense from the censer in his hand, he made an atonement, a covering, an expiation, a reconciliation of and for the people and their sins before God.

How prayerfully, how earnestly, how penitentially the believing Israelites gathered about the sanctuary. There they awaited the return of the high priest in order to know that the offering had been accepted. Only then would they know that the reconciliation of the sins sent in penitence to the sanctuary had been effectual, and that the waiting worshipers were reconciled anew to God. Their sins would then be removed from their place of record before God and His commandments.

So Christ, after He was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15), after He was tested and tried and afflicted as no other man ever can be, became our High Priest and also our Sacrifice—the Lamb of God—and through His own sacrifice He has made provision to remove from us our sins; and, if the whole world were willing, the sins of the whole world.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I truly believe and count as mine personally the assurance that I am at peace with God?

"When we become absorbed in worldly things so that we have no thought for Him in whom our hope of eternal life is centered, we separate ourselves from Jesus and from the heavenly angels. These holy beings cannot remain where the Saviour's presence is not desired, and His absence is not marked. This is why discouragement so often exists among the professed followers of Christ. . . .

"It would be well for us to spend a thoughtful hour each day in contemplation of the life of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 83.

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 254-256.

Part 6
"IN ME
... PEACE"

Is the peace which Jesus offers one that is free from trouble?

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It should be noted that the promises which Jesus offers in this verse today were made to His disciples just before He would be taken by the mob and led from trial to trial. The Lord predicted that every one of His seemingly faithful followers would forsake Him, and He would be left alone. "And yet," said Jesus, "I am not alone, because the Father is with me" (verse 32).

No, the peace which Jesus offers is not peace which guarantees immunity from trouble. But His peace is one which endures in spite of trouble. In His own trials and agonies He had about Him a peace which impressed the beholders that they were looking upon the Majesty of heaven.

THINK IT THROUGH

Could the peace just described above be the peace of which Paul was speaking in Philippians 4:7?

It is interesting again to note that this promise of "the peace of God which passeth all understanding" is assured to those who are anxious for nothing but who "in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving" make known their requests unto God (verse 6). And these words were spoken by a man who had been through every type of trial and persecution short of the Gethsemane agony of the Lord Jesus Himself.

"Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged; and His followers are to manifest a faith of the same enduring nature. They are to live as He lived, and work as He worked, because they depend on Him as the great Master-worker."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 39.

"In order to be candidates for heaven we must meet the requirement of the law: 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself' (Luke 10:27). We can do this only as we grasp by faith the righteousness of Christ. By beholding Jesus we receive a living, expanding principle in the heart, and the Holy Spirit carries on the work, and the believer advances from grace to grace, from strength to strength, from character to character. He conforms to the image of Christ, until in spiritual growth he attains unto the measure of the full stature in Christ Jesus. Thus Christ makes an end of the curse of sin, and sets the believing soul free from its action and effect."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 395.

Shalom, shalom.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 84-86.

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God? You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body" (1 Cor. 6:19, 20, RSV).

It is in response to the love of God that we consecrate ourselves to Him. It is recognition of the fact that we must be wholly His or not His at all that leads us to consecrate ourselves to Him.

"To consecrate" is a term largely drawn from the Old Testament and for which there is no one equivalent in the Hebrew language. It is at various times translated from Hebrew words that have the basic meaning of "to devote," "to separate," "to set apart," "to fill the hand." Our English word itself derives from a Latin word meaning "to make sacred." On the principle that no man can serve two masters, the Lord asks complete control, complete change, complete dedication of ourselves to Him. Knowing that it is our nature to lean toward sin and selfishness, He must have our whole heart or the old nature will control in the end.

Although it is beyond our comprehension to grasp fully the price which Heaven has paid for our salvation, it is the constancy of our look in faith to the cross that helps us to be somewhat aware of the price that has been paid to set us free from the bondage of sin. And, like the freed slaves in the days of Israel, we choose to serve our Master voluntarily for the rest of our days. Such a slave did so out

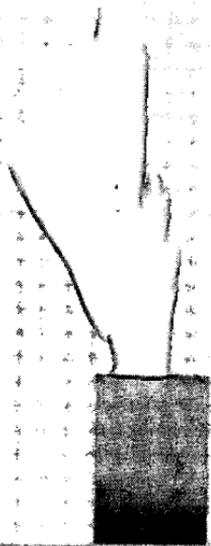
of love for the master and/or love for the wife that he had gained while in service and love for his children. And while the law permitted the master to retain the wife and children if he had given the wife to his servant, the servant could choose to belong to his master forever. In that case he was brought before the judges, and his ear was perforated so that he would be forever a marked man—a man who could have gone free, but who chose bondservice. We can only assume that the apostle Paul may have had this Old Testament practice in mind when he so often spoke of himself as Christ's bonds slave. (See Exodus 21:1-6.)

We do not find the term "consecrate" or "consecrated" or "consecration" used very frequently in Scripture. When we do, it is largely drawn from the record of the dedication of Aaron and his sons to the priestly ministry of the sanctuary services. Thus people were devoted to a sacred work, separated for a sacred task, set apart to a sacred task, and the two New Testament references are really translations of terms "to dedicate" and "to make perfect."

Let us ask ourselves as we move into this week's lesson if we will not joyfully consecrate ourselves unto the Lord and His service all the days of our lives.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. "Who . . . Is Willing?"
(1 Chron. 29:15)
2. Who Opens the Door?
(Rev. 3:20)
3. Keep Your First Love
(Rev. 2:4)
4. "He . . . Does God's Will"
(1 John 2:17)
5. Not a Sinner
(1 John 5:18)
6. "Do His Commandments"
(Rev. 22:14)



We Consecrate Ourselves

Part 1 **In the preparation of the materials for the building of the temple of the Lord, what appeal did David make to the congregation of Israel?**
"WHO . . . IS WILLING?"

"And who then is willing to consecrate his service this day unto the Lord?" (1 Chron. 29:5).

We remember well the desire of King David to build a temple unto the Lord, but he was not permitted this privilege primarily because he had been a man of war. We recall, however, that he desired to do everything possible short of building the temple, and so he gave generously of the riches that were his at the peak of the power of the kingdom of Israel. He accumulated gold, silver, brass, iron, wood, precious stones of varying kinds and colors, and marble in abundance.

In the light of his consecration to God's service, David appealed to the princes and to the congregation of Israel also to make a consecration to the Lord.

There was great rejoicing as the people brought in their gifts. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the Lord: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy" (1 Chron. 29:9).

The dedication of the people and of their gifts was made with the whole heart. They were not holding back. Their dedication was complete, finished, and whole—a genuine consecration.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is my personal brand of Christianity the dedication of my whole heart?

Ellen G. White wrote of the rich young ruler that he "must accept the conditions of discipleship. He must give himself unreservedly to God. At the Saviour's call, John, Peter, Matthew, and their companions 'left all, rose up, and followed Him.' Luke 5:28. The same consecration was required of the young ruler. And in this Christ did not ask a greater sacrifice than He Himself had made. 'He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.' 2 Cor. 8:9. The young man had only to follow where Christ led the way."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 393.

"To the rich no less than to the poor are the words of the Holy Spirit spoken, 'Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price.' 1 Cor. 6:19, 20. When men believe this, their possessions will be held as a trust, to be used as God shall direct, for the saving of the lost, and the comfort of the suffering and the poor. With man this is impossible, for the heart clings to its earthly treasure. . . . But with God all things are possible. By beholding the matchless love of Christ, the selfish heart will be melted and subdued."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 394.

FURTHER STUDY

Matthew 19:16-30; 20:1-16.

Part 2
WHO OPENS
THE DOOR?

How would Christ's message to the Laodicean church relate to the question of consecration?

"Here I stand knocking at the door; if anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and sit down to supper with him and he with me" (Rev. 3:20, NEB).

Let us never overlook the fact that Christ is standing at the heart door of the people of this church, and He is knocking for admission. In one sense this is not an experience unique to any single individual, or to any particular period of the church's history, or to any one segment of human history.

With every believer in Christ there has been the experience of His knocking at the heart's door. At no time has He forced an entrance. At all times He has been the pursuer of the lost rather than the reverse. The Laodicean church in a unique way has this problem of the human heart. Whereas others have kept Christ at the door because of covetousness, riches, lust, or false doctrine, the Laodiceans keep Him at the door because they do not feel their need of Him. Spiritually speaking they feel rich and increased with goods and in need of nothing. This condition blinds them to their true spiritual state, so that when the heavenly Merchantman offers them the riches of eternity, the spiritual equipment to be ready for His swiftly coming kingdom and the hour of judgment, they feel no need.

THINK IT THROUGH

Can a person maintain his Laodicean condition of heart and still consecrate himself to the Lord?

He who persists in maintaining his Laodicean condition will keep the Lord standing at the door of his heart.

Do we perhaps weary of hearing the Laodicean message?

"Some may say, Why is this message sounded so constantly in our ears? It is because you do not thoroughly repent. You do not live in Christ and have Christ abiding in you. When one idol is expelled from the soul, Satan has another prepared to supply its place. Unless you make an entire consecration to Christ and live in communion with Him, unless you make Him your Counselor, you will find that your heart, open to evil thoughts, is easily diverted from the service of God to the service of self."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 107, 108.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Go Into the Highways and Hedges," pp. 235-237.

Part 3
KEEP YOUR
FIRST LOVE

Can one be truly consecrated to God if his love is any less than once it was?

“I have this against you, that you have abandoned the love you had at first” (Rev. 2:4, RSV).

The following verse clearly answers the question by indicating that those who have abandoned their first love “have fallen” and need to “repent and do the works . . . [they] did at first” (verse 5). It is impossible to have true consecration when there has been a lessening of the love that once we had for our Saviour. This manifested itself in that faith which works by love.

How is it in human relationships? Do you love your wife or husband as once you did? Do you love your son or daughter as once you did? Do you love father or mother or brother or sister as once you did?

True, there may be a modification of the love, the maturing of it. It may have elements of greater peace and quiet confidence in it than originally. But is it less intense, less wholehearted? Is it subtle to the point of being deceptive? Is it clever?

THINK IT THROUGH

What test might I apply to know whether or not I have lost any measure of my first love for Christ?

“The atmosphere of the church is so frigid, its spirit is of such an order, that men and women cannot sustain or endure the example of primitive and heaven-born piety. The warmth of their first love is frozen up, and unless they are watered over by the baptism of the Holy Spirit, their candlestick will be removed out of its place, except they repent and do their first works. The first works of the church were seen when the believers sought out friends, relatives, and acquaintances, and with hearts overflowing with love told the story of what Jesus was to them and what they were to Jesus.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 167, 168.

In what way is Solomon’s experience an illustration of a loss of first love?

“Did Solomon know God when he was doing according to the ways of idolaters?—No; he had forgotten the rich experience of his youth and the prayers he had made in the temple. [Rev. 2:4, 5 quoted.]

“The candlestick was removed out of its place when Solomon forgot God. He lost the light of God, he lost the wisdom of God, he confounded idolatry with religion.”—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1032.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 279, 280.

Part 4
"HE . . . DOES
GOD'S WILL"

What characteristic does John see belonging to those who will stand for eternity?

"And that world is passing away with all its allurements, but he who does God's will stands for evermore" (1 John 2:17, NEB).

John has just been urging us not to set our hearts upon the godless world. He has pointed out that anyone who loves the world is a stranger to the Father's love. Everything the world affords—all that panders to the appetites or entices the eyes, all the glamour of its life—springs from the godless world. And *that* world is passing away. (See verses 15 and 16.)

We can only believe that under inspiration and in the experience of revelation, John has foreseen the disintegration of this world and all that belongs to it as the godless world. By contrast he sees those who do God's will standing eternally. We cannot rejoice with the thought that the people of the godless world will be destroyed with it, but we can rejoice that those who do God's will will stand forever.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there generally a relationship between consecration and obedience?

"Moses defines genuine consecration as obedience to God, to stand in vindication of the right and to show a readiness to carry out the purpose of God in the most unpleasant duties, showing that the claims of God are higher than the claims of friends or the lives of the nearest relatives. The sons of Levi consecrated themselves to God to execute His justice against crime and sin."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 301.

We may wonder what was the setting for this definition of consecration as obedience to God. It is an inspired commentary upon the occasion when Israel, with Aaron's cooperation, made a golden calf such as they had seen worshiped in Egypt and caused the people to bow down to it and to inflame their senses with rioting and drunkenness. It was on this occasion, as Moses returned from the presence of the Lord, that he took a strong and awful stand in the face of apostasy. (See Exodus 32.)

This is a side to consecration that we hear or see little of today. We may console ourselves that we are not living under a theocracy and therefore such stern steps as these cannot be taken. Certainly the fact that the church today is living under many different jurisdictions, different governments, different philosophies of government, differing laws, has a bearing. But it is a solemn question whether the church of Jesus Christ today, through its leadership and ministry, through its institutional directors, is prepared to equate obedience and consecration as was done when Moses came down from the mount.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 300-304.

**Part 5
NOT A
SINNER**

According to the apostle John, what is the relationship of a consecrated man to the practice of sin?

“We know that no child of God is a sinner; it is the Son of God who keeps him safe, and the evil one cannot touch him” (1 John 5:18, NEB).

Almost any translation of this text carries the same message. “The true child of God does not sin, he is in the charge of God’s own Son and the evil one cannot touch him” (Phillips).

There can be no compromise with sin on the part of him who is consecrated to God. Sin and he are in opposite camps. Sin belongs to the camp of the evil one, and righteousness belongs to the camp of Jesus Christ. A man cannot be serving in both camps. This is not to say that he will never falter, never fail, never stumble; but it is clear whose side he is on, which direction he is traveling, and for which cause he is fighting. When he falls, he acknowledges it; he grieves that he has fallen; he confesses his error, and he seeks restoration in the Lord; and he listens even more carefully to his Commander. Sinning is the contradiction of consecration. “No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him” (1 John 3:6, RSV).

“It is through faith in Jesus Christ that the truth is accepted in the heart and the human agent is purified and cleansed. Jesus was ‘wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.’ Is it possible to be healed, while knowingly committing sin?—No; it is genuine faith that says, I know that I have committed sin, but that Jesus has pardoned my sin; and hereafter I will resist temptation in and through His might.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 297.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do the thoughts just presented mean that we have moved back to righteousness by works?

“We do not earn salvation by our obedience; for salvation is the free gift of God, to be received by faith. But obedience is the fruit of faith. [1 John 3:5, 6 quoted.] Here is the true test. If we abide in Christ, if the love of God dwells in us, our feelings, our thoughts, our purposes, our actions, will be in harmony with the will of God as expressed in the precepts of His holy law. . . .

“That so-called faith in Christ which professes to release men from the obligation of obedience to God, is not faith, but presumption.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

Sinning is not the climate for consecration. The climate for consecration is joyous, willing obedience to God’s will.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 352, 353.

Part 6
"DO HIS
COMMANDMENTS"

What is to be the privilege of those who obey God?

"Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city" (Rev. 22:14).

Some of the ancient authorities read this text as "Blessed are those who wash their robes." If one's robes are washed in the blood of the Lamb, will not such a person keep the commandments? Or can a person truly keep the commandments apart from the cleansing blood of Jesus?

"Obedience to all the commandments of God was the condition of eating of the tree of life. Adam fell by disobedience, forfeiting by sin all right to use either the life-giving fruit of the tree in the midst of the Garden, or its leaves, which are for the healing of the nations.

"Obedience through Jesus Christ gives to man perfection of character and a right to that tree of life."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1086.

It is one of the greatest tragedies of our time that some among us are fearful of speaking of obedience anymore, lest the very mention of obedience to the commandments of God would suggest legalism. How successful the devil has been in confusing the signposts on the highway of eternal life! It may help us to keep our thinking straight on this matter if we will remember what the plan of salvation is designed to do. It is designed to bring the ultimate conquest and destruction of sin.

Sin is disobedience to the law of God. It is a placing of one's own will above the will of God. The plan of salvation is designed to restore man to that harmony with the will of God in which he was first created. So who can do anything but rejoice when men choose the commandments of God as the rule of their lives? If they are unhappy in their obedience to God, perhaps they have not washed their robes recently.

THINK IT THROUGH

By what means may I be numbered with that innumerable company that will stand before the throne and before the Lamb clothed in white robes with palm branches in their hands? (See Rev. 7:9, 13, 14.)

"All who are found worthy to be counted as the members of the family of God in heaven, will recognize one another as sons and daughters of God. They will realize that they all receive their strength and pardon from the same source, even from Jesus Christ who was crucified for their sins. They know that they are to wash their robes of character in His blood, to find acceptance with the Father in His name, if they would be in the bright assembly of the saints, clothed in the white robes of righteousness."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 259.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 285-288.



We Bear Fruit

**“For this very reason make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these things are yours and abound, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ”
(2 Peter 1:5-8, RSV).**

Fruit bearing is the key to survival in the world of nature. It should not seem strange, therefore, that in spiritual matters the Lord would desire His true children to be fruitful. The apostle Peter really understood and expressed this in his second letter as he lists a group of characteristics or qualities that remind us strongly of Paul's listing of the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22, 23.

Peter goes on to indicate that a lack of these characteristics or qualities in the believer would indicate that he has become shortsightedly blind and has forgotten that he was cleansed from his old sins. He also indicates that those who will have that zeal that would be productive of such fruit would confirm their call and election. He points out that if they would continue in this fruitfulness, they would never fall, and an abundant entrance would be provided for them into the eternal kingdom. (See 2 Peter 1:9-11.)

Sometimes our attention is drawn to a letter like Galatians or Romans, and we are almost given the impression that the only subject of significance presented in that letter is the subject of faith or grace. What we often seem to overlook is that in almost every one of the New Testament epistles, while there may be invitations to faith and acceptance of grace in the early part of the letter, the second major portion of the letter invariably deals with the kind of life that should be the result or fruitage of faith and grace. Sometimes the inspired writer gets down to some matters which some of us might think of today as being highly personal, highly regulatory, certainly bordering on the dangerous edges of legalism. But such matters are presented by the inspired writers without any trace of apology.

We must not fall into the trap of separating in any way our faith from our works, any more than we would try to hide the fact that grapes grow on grapevines. Just the opposite is the scriptural teaching and experience.

Fruit bearing is the evidence of the liveness of the tree. If the tree bears no fruit, it is under suspicion, under investigation, and is perhaps given a time limit in which to give evidence of fruitfulness or perish. If a fruit tree is healthy and old enough, it will be fruit bearing. So we may order from the nursery catalog trees of such an age that they are known as fruit-bearing trees. We can expect them within the first or second season of placing them in our orchard to bear fruit. If they do not, we can usually make a claim against the nurseryman who has sold us the stock.

What if a home gardener were to hang some borrowed or purchased fruit on his tree and say, Look at that beautiful fruit tree? It would not require much discernment to see whether or not the fruit was attached to the tree as a vital and living part of it.

The Scriptures even present the Lord as one who is looking for fruit on the vines planted in His vineyard, as though He had a right to expect fruit. But the vine does not concern itself, in one sense, with fruit bearing. It concerns itself with finding adequate water supply and searching out the nutrients in the soil. It lifts up its branches also so that its leaves will receive the life-giving rays of the sun. If it has these necessities, it will bear fruit.

As we study together this week's lesson, may there be an earnest prayer and longing in our hearts for fruit bearing to the glory of God.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. "If You Have Love"
(John 13:35)
2. "That the World May Know"
(John 17:22, 23)
3. "I Am the Vine"
(John 15:5)
4. "My Father . . . the Gardener"
(John 15:2)
5. "Bear Much Fruit"
(John 15:8)
6. "Abide in Me"
(John 15:4, 7)

Part 1
"IF YOU
HAVE LOVE"

What is one of the clearest evidences that we are living followers of the Lord Jesus Christ?

"By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 RSV).

It may be natural for love to exist within a family, brother for brother, parent for child, husband for wife. It is not natural, however, for the divergent personalities which make up the church to be marked with mutual love and forbearance, each for each and all for all. Individuals with different personalities and backgrounds are drawn together and others are repelled.

Two of the clearest evidences to the world that we are Christ's and that we are bearing fruit as a result of our life in Him will be (1) the unity of the church and (2) the mutual love and respect of all the varying members of that church.

If we are not convinced about the variables within the membership of the church, why not look at the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ? How natural was it for them to love one another and to give each other the place of honor? Do we recall the very human reaction of the ten when the two asked for the two top places of honor in the kingdom? (See Matt. 20:20-24.)

THINK IT THROUGH

Can I just decide to make myself love those who are not "my type"? (See "Testimonies," vol. 7, p. 266.)

Note that loving one another is the evidence to the world that we are Christ's disciples. We do not make ourselves love one another, and then say, "Please notice us, this makes us disciples of Christ." Because we are His disciples, we do love one another, and this fact is an evidence to all men that we are disciples of Christ.

"In this last meeting with His disciples, the great desire which Christ expressed for them was that they might love one another as He had loved them. Again and again He spoke of this. . . . His very first injunction when alone with them in the upper chamber was, 'A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.' To the disciples this commandment was new; for they had not loved one another as Christ had loved them. He saw that new ideas and impulses must control them; that new principles must be practiced by them; through His life and death they were to receive a new conception of love. The command to love one another had a new meaning in the light of His self-sacrifice. The whole work of grace is one continual service of love, of self-denying, self-sacrificing effort."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 677, 678.

FURTHER STUDY

Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 51; *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 161-165; *The Sanctified Life*, p. 82.

Part 2
"THAT THE
WORLD
MAY KNOW"

What close parallel to love within the church is evidence to the world of the effectiveness of Christ's mission?

"The glory which thou hast given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, I in them and thou in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that thou hast sent me and that thou hast loved them even as thou hast loved me" (John 17:22, 23, RSV).

Love and unity are almost twin experiences. It would be extremely difficult to think of a situation where love could reign and unity not result: or where unity exists without love being present unless the unity were of the superficial variety for mutual self-interest (like the unity between two former national enemies who become allies in the face of a mutual foe).

Let us note that it is no ordinary unity that is here made an evidence to the world of the effectiveness of Christ's mission. The unity is of the caliber and character of the oneness between Christ and His Father. One would hesitate to give expression to such a thought were it not given us in Holy Scripture. But that is indeed Christ's prayer (for this is part of His great intercessory prayer) that His disciples should be one in the same way that Christ and His Father are one—obviously we in our sphere, and the members of the Godhead in their sphere.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does unity require conformity?

If by conformity we have in mind lack of conviction, surrender of conscience, a fawning adulation of those in position, then—No. On the other hand, how can a person who is automatically against what someone else is for think that he is in any way a part of the answer to Christ's prayer for His church?

"When men are bound together, not by force or self-interest, but by love, they show the working of an influence that is above every human influence. Where this oneness exists, it is evidence that the image of God is being restored in humanity, that a new principle of life has been implanted. It shows that there is power in the divine nature to withstand the supernatural agencies of evil, and that the grace of God subdues the selfishness inherent in the natural heart."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 678.

"We must study the truth for ourselves. No living man should be relied upon to think for us. No matter who it is, or in what position he may be placed, we are not to look upon any man as a perfect criterion for us. We are to counsel together, and to be subject to one another; but at the same time we are to exercise the ability God has given us to learn what is truth."—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, p. 45.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Rejoicing in the Lord," p. 115; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 375.

Part 3
"I AM THE
VINE"

What is the relationship between the fruitful follower and the Lord Himself?

"I am the vine, you are the branches: He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit: for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5, RSV).

Perhaps in no other place in Scripture is the relationship between Christ and His follower more clearly illustrated and more fully expounded than in His illustration of the vine and the branches. And if there is any one thing more than another that is stressed in this illustration, it is that the branches should be fruitful.

It was particularly significant that Christ would give this illustration to His disciples on that night on which He was to be betrayed. Within a very few hours He was to be taken from them as they each fled in search of self-preservation. Yet He intended that they were to be as close to Him as branches are to a vine.

"The connection of the branch with the vine, He said, represents the relation you are to sustain to Me. The scion is grafted into the living vine, and fiber by fiber, vein by vein, it grows into the vine stock. The life of the vine becomes the life of the branch."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 675.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the major requirement of the branch if it is to be fruitful?

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me" (John 15:4).

How does the principle of unity apply in the illustration of the vine and the branches?

"The branches of the vine cannot blend into each other; they are individually separate; yet every branch must be in fellowship with every other if they are united in the same parent stock. They all draw nourishment from the same source; they drink in the same life-giving properties. So each branch of the True Vine is separate and distinct, yet all are bound together in the parent stock. There can be no division. They are all linked together by His will to bear fruit wherever they can find place and opportunity. But in order to do this, the worker must hide self. He must not give expression to his own mind and will. He is to express the mind and will of Christ."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1143.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, pp. 228-232.

Part 4
"MY FATHER
... THE
GARDENER"**What interest does the heavenly Father have in the fruitfulness of the branches?****"I am the real vine, and my Father is the gardener. Every barren branch of mine he cuts away; and every fruiting branch he cleans, to make it more fruitful still" (John 15:1, 2, NEB).**

It is significant that the heavenly Father is portrayed as the Husbandman, or the Gardener. The gardener controls the vine. The heavenly Father is concerned about the fruitfulness of the individual branches of the True Vine. He supervises the grafting of the branches into the parent stock. It is He who prunes the branches (purges them) in order that they might become increasingly fruitful.

Think of it, those of you who tend plants and trees—whether for a livelihood or as a hobby—the heavenly Father watching tenderly over His vine and over the branches! With what care the skillful horticulturist grafts buds into the parent stock! How carefully he binds about the union to exclude undesirable elements (insects, bacteria), to shelter the new part of the plant from undue stress that might destroy the union that is taking place, as fiber by fiber and vein by vein the life of the vine becomes the life of the branch. It is the heavenly Father who takes this kind of care.

THINK IT THROUGH**What means does the Father use to prune the human branches?**

"From the chosen twelve who had followed Jesus, one as a withered branch was about to be taken away; the rest were to pass under the pruning knife of bitter trial. Jesus with solemn tenderness explained the purpose of the husbandman. The pruning will cause pain, but it is the Father who applies the knife. He works with no wanton hand or indifferent heart. There are branches trailing upon the ground; these must be cut loose from the earthly supports to which their tendrils are fastening. They are to reach heavenward, and find their support in God."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 676, 677.

Compare church membership with fruitfulness.

"While the graft is outwardly united with the vine, there may be no vital connection. Then there will be no growth or fruitfulness. So there may be an apparent connection with Christ without a real union with Him by faith. A profession of religion places men in the church, but the character and conduct show whether they are in connection with Christ. If they bear no fruit, they are false branches. Their separation from Christ involves a ruin as complete as that represented by the dead branch."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 284, 285; *Steps to Christ*, "Growing Up Into Christ," pp. 68-75.

Part 5
"BEAR MUCH
FRUIT"

What is the one purpose of the vine in supporting its branches?

"Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (John 15:8).

There is only one purpose in the fiery trial, the numbing disappointment, the almost overwhelming sorrow, that you have just endured. The gardener does not carelessly wield the knife. He does not permit trial and tragedy to come to us indiscriminately. Neither, on the other hand, is there any assurance that we are automatically immune from the common tragedies that may occur at random throughout the human race.

Jesus Himself came to this world to do His Father's will, to bear fruits of righteousness in human flesh, to demonstrate the character of God and the possibility of man. It is only natural then that those who would constitute His branches would have the same purpose, the same reason for existence.

"God desires to manifest through you the holiness, the benevolence, the compassion, of His own character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 677.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is fruit bearing the result of our own striving?

"The Saviour does not bid the disciples labor to bear fruit. He tells them to abide in Him. 'If ye abide in Me,' He says, 'and My words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you.' It is through the word that Christ abides in His followers. This is the same vital union that is represented by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. The words of Christ are spirit and life. Receiving them, you receive the life of the Vine. You live 'by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' Matt. 4:4. *The life of Christ in you produces the same fruits as in Him.* Living in Christ, adhering to Christ, supported by Christ, drawing nourishment from Christ, you bear fruit after the similitude of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 677. (Emphasis supplied.)

What was Peter's summary of Christ's earthly life? Acts 10:38.

"It was not on the cross only that Christ sacrificed Himself for humanity. As He 'went about doing good' (Acts 10:38), every day's experience was an outpouring of His life. In one way only could such a life be sustained. Jesus lived in dependence upon God and communion with Him."—*Education*, p. 80.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Lord's Vineyard," p. 301; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 118.

Part 6
"ABIDE IN ME"

How does Jesus abide in the believer?

"Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me."

"If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you" (John 15:4, 7).

If by His word Jesus abides in us, then we abide in Him by faith in what He says. Ellen G. White wrote, "This spiritual relation [of abiding in Jesus] can be established only by the exercise of personal faith. This faith must express on our part supreme preference, perfect reliance, entire consecration. Our will must be wholly yielded to the divine will, our feelings, desires, interests, and honor identified with the prosperity of Christ's kingdom and the honor of His cause, we constantly receiving grace from Him, and Christ accepting gratitude from us."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 229.

Faith determines the whole life! To have faith is to be wholly for Christ in every possible way.

What result does John attribute to faith? 1 John 5:4.

This is a faith that works by love and purifies the soul. It is an active faith, a fruit-bearing faith. But it is a dependent faith—as dependent as a branch upon the parent vine. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 314.)

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it mean to abide in Christ and He in us?

"Abiding in Christ means a constant receiving of His Spirit, a life of unreserved surrender to His service. The channel of communication must be open continually between man and his God. As the vine branch constantly draws the sap from the living vine, so are we to cling to Jesus, and receive from Him by faith the strength and perfection of His own character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

What are the characteristics of that faith which will give us victory over the world?

"It is not enough to believe *about* Christ; we must believe *in* Him. The only faith that will benefit us is that which embraces Him as a personal Saviour; which appropriates His merits to ourselves. Many hold faith as an opinion. But saving faith is a transaction, by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power."—*Gospel Workers*, p. 261.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels to Teachers, p. 182; *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 335, 381.

“According to his promise we wait for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells” (2 Peter 3:13, RSV).

The fulfillment of this text will bring the final fulfillment of all the promises of the Scriptures that pertain to our salvation. When the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells shall have been established, the great controversy between Christ and Satan will have come to its victorious end. Those who have accepted all of the promises of God for salvation will delight in this new home where righteousness will dwell. It will be “the home of justice” (NEB). Man lost his first home in which righteousness dwelt because of his sin. When the plan of salvation has run full circle, man will be restored to a home of justice.

The apostle Peter has reminded us earlier in his epistle that while men count God’s promises as slack or slow of fulfillment, we must not deceive ourselves into thinking that they will never meet fulfillment. The antediluvians were confident that the earth would never be destroyed by water, but nevertheless the day came when it happened. Just so certainly, says Peter, will the day come when “the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up” (verse 10, RSV). Many are troubled by what seems an inordinate delay in the fulfillment of these promises. Perhaps in Peter’s day some were already becoming weary with awaiting their fulfillment. But Peter assures them that the day will come. With the Lord time is not a problem,

for with Him, “one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day” (verse 8, RSV).

But while we view with regret the seeming delay in Jesus’ return, we should remember the seriousness of closing the door of mercy. God finds no pleasure in the death of the wicked. With Him it should be our desire, our supreme desire, that all come to repentance.

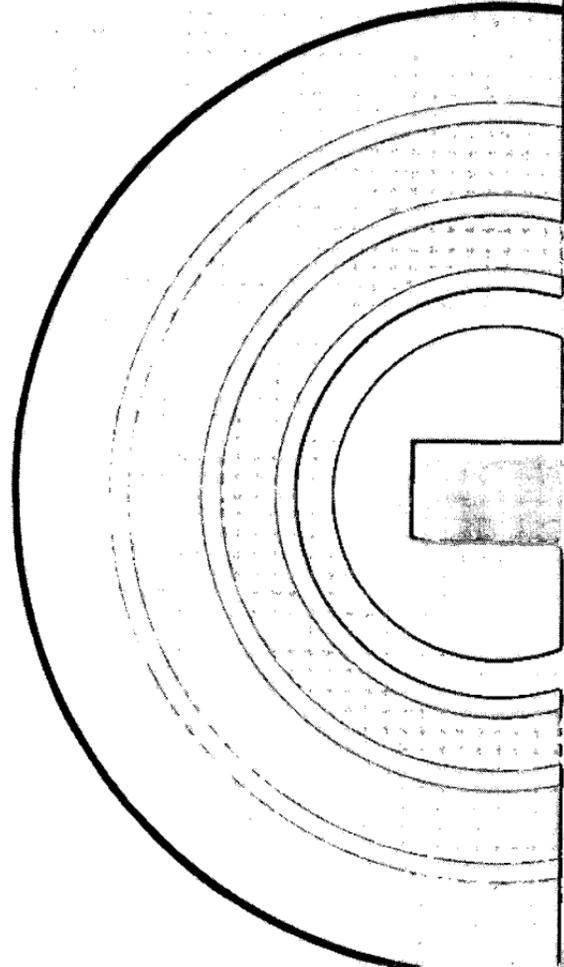
Of all people on the face of the earth, Seventh-day Adventists should be living witnesses to their expectation of the coming of the Lord. No other people at any time in earth’s history have had more light flooded upon their way. Perhaps that is because no people have needed more in terms of what they have to meet in the conflict with the enemy of all souls.

Will we be at home in “the home of justice” (2 Peter 3:13, NEB)? That will depend upon our relationship to justice and righteousness here and now. But God has given us unbelievably great promises that are sufficient to transform our lives and to make us righteous by faith in Jesus, so that in Him we can be and will be at home in a world in which righteousness dwells continually and perfectly.

We have really been studying many of the great promises in the lessons already covered this quarter, but this week let us begin to summarize and in a special way appropriate to ourselves the reality of God’s promises.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. “Exceeding Great . . . Promises”
(2 Peter 1:3, 4)**
- 2. “No Wise Cast Out”
(John 6:37)**
- 3. “Help My Unbelief”
(Mark 9:24)**
- 4. “The Father . . . Loves You”
(John 16:27)**
- 5. “I Have Overcome”
(John 16:33)**
- 6. “We Have an Advocate”
(1 John 2:1)**



**We Have Great
Promises**

Part 1
"EXCEEDING
GREAT . . .
PROMISES"

What is Peter's description of God's promises?

"According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust" (2 Peter 1:3, 4).

It is as though Peter reached out for words that are not in language in his effort to ascribe sufficient greatness and preciousness to the promises of God. How great is "exceeding great"? And how precious is "exceeding . . . precious"? There is no top limit to the measure of these promises. They are available "through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ" (verse 1). They are ours only because of "his divine power" (verse 3). Then comes the incredible assurance that through the acceptance, the claiming of these unbelievably great promises, we actually become "partakers of the divine nature."

Now we need to remind ourselves constantly that, in the person of His Son Jesus Christ, God came down and took upon Him our human nature with its risks, its weaknesses, its liabilities. And that is incomprehensible enough! But for the Lord to indicate that we poor sinners can, by His grace, receive His great promises and in receiving them become partakers of the divine nature—that is almost too much for our feeble human comprehension and vision to grasp.

THINK IT THROUGH

What condition must be met by those who would partake of the divine nature in connection with the acceptance of God's great promises?

"Let every one who desires to be a partaker of the divine nature appreciate the fact that he must escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. There must be a constant, earnest struggling of the soul against the evil imaginings of the mind. There must be a steadfast resistance of temptation to sin in thought or act. . . . We should meditate upon the mission of Him who came to save His people from their sins. By constantly contemplating heavenly themes, our faith and love will grow stronger. Our prayers will be more and more acceptable to God, because they will be more and more mixed with faith and love. They will be more intelligent and fervent. There will be more constant confidence in Jesus, and you will have a daily, living experience in the willingness and power of Christ to save unto the uttermost all that come unto God by Him."—Ellen G. White *Comments, SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1145.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 123, 671, 675.

Part 2
"NO WISE
CAST OUT"

Is there any reason for us to question Christ's willingness to receive us?

"All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37).

This is a pure and unadorned promise of God. It has no conditions, no qualifications other than an attitude on our part of believing what He says. He invites us to come. We believe that He means what He says. We come. As we come, we are assured that we will not be cast out. He will never turn us away. Does it not remind us of the other illustration where Christ is knocking at the heart's door, and gives assurance that, if any will hear His voice and open the door, He will come in? That is the mirror image of the promise we have before us today.

THINK IT THROUGH

What inherited and cultivated tendencies toward evil make it seem difficult for me to come to Jesus? Should these prevent my acceptance of the "exceeding great and precious promises"?

"It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong. But many feel that they lack faith, and therefore they remain away from Christ. Let these souls, in their helpless unworthiness, cast themselves upon the mercy of their compassionate Saviour. Look not to self, but to Christ. He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

Should I try to improve before I come fully to the Lord? (See Luke 15:18.)

"Do not listen to the enemy's suggestion to stay away from Christ until you have made yourself better; until you are good enough to come to God. If you wait until then, you will never come. When Satan points to your filthy garments, repeat the promise of Jesus, 'Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.'"—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 205, 206.

"Let none look to self, as though they had power to save themselves. Jesus died for us because we were helpless to do this. In Him is our hope, our justification, our righteousness. When we see our sinfulness we should not despond and fear that we have no Saviour, or that He has no thoughts of mercy toward us. At this very time He is inviting us to come to Him in our helplessness and be saved."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p.431.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Lost and Is Found," pp. 202-206.

Part 3
"HELP MY
UNBELIEF"

"Immediately the father of the child cried out, and said 'I believe; help my unbelief!' " (Mark 9:24, RSV).

If I tell the Lord my problem with unbelief and solicit His help, will He accept me on such a feeble approach?

It may be difficult to see one of God's exceeding great and precious promises in this rather negative declaration of faith, and some who consider themselves strong in faith may be ready to despise this poor father who confessed to the Saviour his terrible weakness of unbelief.

We can discover in this father's plea, and in God's response to it, one of the most exceeding great and precious promises of all, especially to those who feel themselves exceedingly weak in faith, those who feel overwhelmed by doubt and unbelief.

The Lord Jesus Christ responded to this pitiful heart cry from the father whose son was possessed of a "dumb spirit." (See verse 17.) He rebuked the evil spirit so that it came out of the boy and left him in normal health and strength.

THINK IT THROUGH

How does the spirit of prophecy turn this declaration of unbelief into an exceeding great and precious promise?

"Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' You can never perish while you do this—never."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

Spend whatever time may be necessary to let feeble faith grasp this glorious assurance. No one need wait for faith. Even asking the Lord to help and relieve our lack of faith will bring a quick connection with Heaven and strength for coping with the powers of darkness. It is our need that argues with Heaven with undeniable eloquence—nothing else.

What could have cost the life of the demon-possessed son?

Suppose that the father had persisted with the attitude, "If thou canst do any thing, have compassion on us, and help us." Would Jesus have healed his son? (See Mark 9:22, 23.)

"There is no lack of power on the part of Christ; the healing of the son depends upon the father's faith. With a burst of tears, realizing his own weakness, the father casts himself upon Christ's mercy, with the cry, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' "—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 428.

FURTHER STUDY

Fundamentals of Christian Education, pp. 341, 342; *Prophets and Kings*, p. 157.

Part 4
"THE FATHER
... LOVES YOU"

How does the heavenly Father Himself feel about people?

"The Father himself loves you, because you have loved me and have believed that I came from the Father" (John 16:27, RSV).

We have made reference to this point earlier in the quarter. Too many of us still think of the Father as one to be feared and of Christ as one to be loved. Jesus spoke the above text to His disciples in an attempt to comfort them and to prepare them for the tragedies of Gethsemane and Calvary. Do you believe, my brother, my sister, that the Father loves *you*? that the *Father* loves you? that the Father *loves* you? Emphasize the words as we will, this is an assurance to our faith.

Some may say that the Father loves only those who love Christ and who believe that He came from God. But that is not the emphasis here. Christ is about to leave His disciples. He is seeking to direct their faith and trust to the Father—through the name of the Son, it is true, but still to the Father. They need to believe and understand before Jesus leaves them that they can approach the Father, for the Father Himself loves them.

It is like *shalom, shalom*. You've got to believe it. It is true that the Father can do for those who respond to the love of His Son, the Sent of God, what He cannot do for those who turn away in unbelief, even though He loves them also. He made and sustains us all and causes His sun to shine on the wicked as well as upon the righteous. God has no prejudices and no favorites, but there is no way for Him to take into His kingdom of righteousness those who do not trust themselves to Him.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do we need one more and greater assurance of God's love for us? (See John 3:16.)

" 'And the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' The love of the Father, no less than of the Son, is the fountain of salvation for the lost race. Said Jesus to His disciples before He went away: 'I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: for the Father Himself loveth you.' John 16:26, 27. God was 'in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19. And in the ministration in the sanctuary above, 'the counsel of peace shall be between Them both.' 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.' "—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 416, 417.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 8, p. 178; *Steps to Christ*, "The Test of Discipleship," p. 64.

**Part 5
"I HAVE
OVERCOME"**

"These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

It is beautiful to read this text in various translations, but they all concur in the fact that Christ has overcome or conquered the world. He gives that as the reason why we should be of good cheer, even though we shall have tribulation in the world, and as the reason why in the midst of tribulation we may have His peace—peace in Him.

How does this text become one of the exceeding great and precious promises whereby we may partake of the divine nature?

To the extent that He is our victory, He is our conquest of evil. He is our Master over temptation. He is our sanctification, our complete holiness. He is our redemption, righteousness, and wisdom. All of these things He is for us; and because He is these for us, they are counted to us; they are ours.

What chance have we to be overcomers? In ourselves, none. In and of ourselves we are like those who are without God and without hope in the world. But Christ is our victory. Be of good cheer, He has overcome the world. It is not a question of whether one of us might yet make it. He has made it; He is our victory. Do we remember that: "Wonderful—almost too wonderful for man to comprehend—is the Saviour's sacrifice in our behalf, shadowed forth in all the sacrifices of the past, in all the services of the typical sanctuary. And this sacrifice was called for. When we realize that His suffering was necessary in order to secure our eternal well-being, our hearts are touched and melted. He pledged Himself to accomplish our full salvation in a way satisfactory to the demands of God's justice, and consistent with the exalted holiness of His law."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 309.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is some nagging weakness still robbing you of His victory?

"In our own strength it is impossible for us to deny the clamors of our fallen nature. Through this channel Satan will bring temptation upon us. Christ knew that the enemy would come to every human being, to take advantage of hereditary weakness, and by his false insinuations to ensnare all whose trust is not in God. And by passing over the ground which man must travel, our Lord has prepared the way for us to overcome. It is not His will that we should be placed at a disadvantage in the conflict with Satan. He would not have us intimidated and discouraged by the assaults of the serpent. 'Be of good cheer,' He says: 'I have overcome the world.' John 16:33."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 122, 123.

FURTHER STUDY

Gospel Workers, pp. 38, 39; *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 115.

Part 6
"WE HAVE AN
ADVOCATE"

We have been listing this week some of the exceeding great and precious promises. By these we may be partakers of the divine nature. There is no reason for us not to have a life of victory over temptation and therefore over sin. But God in His great mercy is fully aware of the weakness of the flesh. He knows of the persistent desire of the old man of sin to rise from the grave and be allowed at least a little more time of existence. Just a little time, and just a feeble existence—anything but permanent death.

What merciful provision has God made for those who have set their feet on the path to the kingdom to be overcomers?

"My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous" (1 John 2:1).

This exceeding great and precious promise is not written to unbelievers. It is written to "my little children" or "my children." It is a term of affection from the aged apostle John to the believers in the early church of Jesus Christ. He, too, has recorded in this very same letter repeated assurances and evidences that God has made provision for us to overcome sin. (See 1 John 1:7, for example.) He has written these things to help them and us to avoid sin. There is no excuse or reason for sin; but if, having said all of that, we fall into sin, the merciful God has provided us an Advocate, "Jesus Christ the righteous."

THINK IT THROUGH

How complete is the provision that my heavenly Father has delivered me from the power of darkness and accepted me into the kingdom of His dear Son?

Jesus, our Advocate, takes our place in every needful way. "The religious services, the prayers, the praise, the penitent confession of sin ascend from true believers as incense to the heavenly sanctuary; but passing through the corrupt channels of humanity, they are so defiled that unless purified by blood, they can never be of value with God. They ascend not in spotless purity, and unless the Intercessor who is at God's right hand presents and purifies all by His righteousness, it is not acceptable to God. All incense from earthly tabernacles must be moist with the cleansing drops of the blood of Christ. He holds before the Father the censer of His own merits, in which there is no taint of earthly corruption. He gathers into this censer the prayers, the praise, and the confessions of His people, and with these He puts His own spotless righteousness. Then, perfumed with the merits of Christ's propitiation, the incense comes up before God wholly and entirely acceptable. Then gracious answers are returned."—Ellen G. White Comments, *SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1078.

Here God's plan to save sinful men is made simple, clear, and appealing to our reason.

Every one of us knows that he cannot, in himself, live a life in harmony with the law of God. What was originally a law of life to us became, through the disobedience of our first parents and our own disobedience, the law of sin and death: Heaven has made provision that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus will set us free from the law of sin and death. Jesus Christ came "in the likeness of sinful flesh" and condemned sin in the flesh. He did this by living a righteous life through constant dependence upon His Father and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. Now, the righteousness of the law can be fulfilled in us as it was in Him.

The requirement on our part is that we walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit. He continues to show us that it is simply contrary to our nature for us to be at peace with God or to be in harmony with His law. Thus we cannot please God in our own nature and in our own strength. But please notice that the purpose for which God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh was "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us." (See Romans 8: 1-9.) At first glance that may seem contrary to the title of this lesson, "We Are Righteous by Faith." On the contrary, the title declares the only possible way by which man can be righteous. "Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be" (verse 7). It is as plain and simple as that. We cannot obey God's righteous law. We cannot live righteously. And it is not a question of trying a little harder, praying a little longer, reading the Bible more frequently. What, then, is the solution?

The only solution is that which Heaven has already provided by sending Jesus, the eternal Son of God,

in human form and flesh, with the decision announced before He came, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God" (Heb. 10:9). In this flesh He dwelt as the God-man, living in perfect harmony with His Father's will in all things. After some 33 years He suffered and died as the bearer of the sins of the whole world. Because He bore our sins, He became the first one in all eternity to partake of that dreadful cup of separation from His Father. The burden of that separation broke His heart as He gave up His life on the cross. Divine power was rightfully His as God, because He had not sinned as man. So death could not hold Him in its grasp. He arose victor over death and the grave and ascended to His Father to become our Intercessor, our Mediator, our High Priest. When He has ceased His work of mediation and all decisions have been made for eternal life or for eternal death, He will come for His own. They will never be separated from Him again, never shut away from communion with Him because of disobedience.

He who accepts this provision which God has made in Jesus Christ recognizes that in this alone is there the possibility of his being counted righteous and made righteous—here is the means to be righteous by faith.

As we have said earlier this quarter, faith is not our savior. Faith does not earn salvation. It is the simple matter that if we do not believe we will not be expecting anything from God and He will force nothing upon us.

As we move into our study this week, let us remember the cry of the father of the lad possessed with a dumb spirit: "Lord I believe, help thou mine unbelief." And let us remember also the inspired assurance, "You can never perish while you do this—never."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the spirit" (Rom. 8:3, 4).



We Are Righteous by Faith



DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- "As Filthy Rags"
(Isa. 64:6)
- Counted Righteous
(Gen. 15:6)
- Righteousness and Law
(Ps. 119:142)
- "Except Your
Righteousness"
(Matt. 5:20)
- "Righteousness . . . of Faith"
(Rom. 9:30)
- Doing Right
(1 John 3:7)

Part 1 **How does the prophet Isaiah classify human righteous-**
"AS FILTHY RAGS" nesses?

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isa. 64:6).

Isaiah was writing of the sinfulness of Judah. (See verses 9-12.) But the condition of Judah is the condition of all humanity. In the frankness of the Hebrew approach to life, this is Heaven's estimate of our righteousnesses.

"Unclean thing. Heb. *tame* , an adjective meaning 'unclean.' Standing by itself, as here, it may refer either to an unclean thing or to an 'unclean person.' *Tame* is the word that appears repeatedly throughout Leviticus describing ceremonial uncleanness. Left to himself, man cannot wash away the impurity of sin—he remains unclean.

"Filthy rags. Literally, 'as a menstuous garment.' Man's best efforts produce, not righteousness, but imperfection."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 327.

THINK IT THROUGH

If this is Heaven's estimate of our righteousnesses, how do our unrighteousnesses look?

After quoting Isaiah 64:6, Psalm 51:10, and Ezekiel 36:26, 27, God's servant writes: "Nicodemus had read these scriptures with a clouded mind; but he now [in the presence of Jesus] began to comprehend their meaning. He saw that the most rigid obedience to the mere letter of the law as applied to the outward life could entitle no man to enter the kingdom of heaven. In the estimation of men, his life had been just and honorable; but in the presence of Christ, he felt that his heart was unclean, and his life unholy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 174.

"Everything that we of ourselves can do is defiled by sin. . . . When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garments of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 311, 312.

What was the reason for the condemnation of the man who entered the feast without a wedding garment? (See Matt. 22:11-14.)

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 177-179.

**Part 2
COUNTED
RIGHTEOUS**

What is the earliest biblical reference to righteousness by faith, or being counted righteous?

“And he [Abram] believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (Gen. 15:6).

Some may be surprised that this text is in the Old Testament. We are aware of the use which the apostle Paul made of it in Romans 4:3 and Galatians 3:6 for example. But we often fail to recognize how much of the New Testament is drawn from and built upon the Old. Notice that our text does not say that Abram's belief in the Lord *made* him righteous, but his belief in the Lord *was counted* to him for righteousness. This is the basic biblical concept of justification by faith, the term for having righteousness counted to us—someone else's righteousness.

“Abram was a sinner and needed redemption, as does every other human being; but when righteousness was imputed to him, mercy and grace were also extended, effecting the pardon of his sin and bringing the rewards of righteousness. Here for the first time the full importance of faith is brought to view. Here also, for the first time, imputed righteousness is mentioned. From this point onward both fundamental concepts run through the Holy Scriptures, to find exhaustive and masterful treatment by the pen of the apostle Paul (see Rom. 4).”—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 312.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the relationship between faith and actions?

“Thus they [the Israelites] provoked Him [the Lord] to anger with their inventions: and the plague brake in upon them. Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore” (Ps. 106:29-31).

You will recall that on a number of occasions the New Testament points to the actions of Abraham as the evidence of his faith, which faith laid hold of the righteousness of God so that Abraham was counted righteous. It seems important to stress this matter, because some may feel that to be righteous by faith is unrelated to daily life. On the other hand, the Scriptures on numerous occasions state that action is the evidence of faith, as though it were the basis for the imputed (or counted) righteousness. (See *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 453, 456.)

The experience from the history of Israel referred to by the apostle Paul “and as recorded in the one hundred fifth and one hundred sixth psalms, contains lessons of warning that the people of God in these last days especially need to study. I urge that these chapters be read at least once every week.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 98, 99.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies to Ministers, pp. 98-104.

Part 3
RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND LAW

How does law fit in to righteousness by faith?

Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth" (Ps. 119:142).

In a typical Hebrew parallelism righteousness and law are made synonymous. The same truth is repeated using different but similar terms. And when one thinks about it, it is inevitable that righteousness and law would be synonymous, because the law of God defines righteousness. It expresses it. It explains it. It shows the limits and size of it. Until righteousness is described, it is an empty word. When God made it into a law form that governs human relationships with man and with God, it became something tangible, something that touched life and reality. So it is really impossible to have righteousness by faith divorced from law.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can we relate righteousness, law, and salvation?

Salvation is not an abstraction. Salvation is salvation from sin. Sin is without specific definition where there is no law. By the law is the knowledge of sin. Sin is the transgression of the law and the plan of salvation provides the means for victory over sin and its consequences and its power.

"The law of God, from its very nature, is unchangeable. It is a revelation of the will and the character of its Author. God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man. 'Love is the fulfilling of the law.' Romans 13:10. The character of God is righteousness and truth; such is the nature of His law. Says the psalmist: 'Thy law is the truth;' 'all Thy commandments are righteousness.' Psalm 119:142, 172. And the apostle Paul declares: 'The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good.' Romans 7:12. Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

How should we define the righteousness which is acceptable with God?

"The righteousness which Christ taught is conformity of heart and life to the revealed will of God. Sinful men can become righteous only as they have faith in God and maintain a vital connection with Him. Then true godliness will elevate the thoughts and ennoble the life."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 310.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 468, 469.

Part 4
"EXCEPT YOUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS"

What false type of righteousness was in evidence in Christ's day?

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20).

This is a serious indictment coming from the Lord of glory. He was speaking about men in His day, religious leaders of the chosen people. Immediately we should ask ourselves: What kind of righteousness had they?

"The righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted in external adherence to the letter of the law; Christ called for insight into, and cooperation with, the underlying principles of the law. . . . They taught that a man is to be judged by a majority of his deeds; that is, if his 'good' deeds are in excess of his evil deeds, God will adjudge him righteous."—*SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 333.

THINK IT THROUGH

What are the warnings for us in the righteousness claimed by the scribes and Pharisees?

"The greatest deception of the human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. . . . A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies a hatred of genuine truth as made manifest in life. The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists. The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God: yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy. They thought themselves the greatest religionists of the world, but their so-called orthodoxy led them to crucify the Lord of glory.

"The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the truth; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, it is a curse to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 309, 310.

"The only true faith is that which 'worketh by love' (Galatians 5:6) to purify the soul. It is as leaven that transforms the character."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 53.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Spirituality of the Law," (Matthew 5:20), pp. 53-55.

Part 5
"RIGHTEOUSNESS
... OF FAITH"

In contrast to Israel as a whole, what had Gentiles found with respect to salvation?

"What shall we say then? That the Gentiles, which followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is of faith" (Rom. 9:30).

We said at the outset of the lesson for this week that there is no other way for a human being to be righteous than to be righteous by faith. Paul is emphasizing that point here in his epistle to the Romans when he speaks of Israel, which followed after the law of righteousness but failed to attain to that law. He raises the question as to why they failed and gives the answer, "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law" (verse 32). So Israel's general failure to achieve to the very righteousness which she professed, and which she sought, is due to the fact that she sought it by works, her own works, rather than by faith in Christ Jesus, the only truly and perfectly obedient Man.

As we have been studying the simple steps in coming to Christ for salvation this quarter, how shall we assess our own righteousness? Where do we stand with regard to righteousness?

"By the wedding garment in the parable [see Matt. 22:1-14] is represented the pure, spotless character which Christ's true followers will possess. To the church it is given 'that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white,' 'not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing.' The fine linen, says the Scripture, 'is the righteousness of saints.' Rev. 19:8; Eph. 5:27. It is the righteousness of Christ, His own unblemished character, that through faith is imparted to all who receive Him as their personal Saviour."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 310.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have you ever earnestly and prayerfully said to yourself, "Christ is my righteousness"?

It may take continual repetition of that statement and prayer and study regarding it, before the human heart can find the humility to say "That is true. I know that it is true. Christ is my righteousness." This is the experience to which each must come in order to be counted righteous by faith.

God and His Son Jesus Christ, by the Holy Spirit, have told us that we can only be righteous by faith. Do we believe it? Do we accept it? Do we claim it? "Christ is my righteousness."

The sweetest joy ever known will flood the soul that believes and claims this offer of the righteousness of Jesus Christ by faith.

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 1, pp. 350, 351.

Part 6
DOING RIGHT

According to the apostle John, what is it that shows a man to be righteous?

“Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous” (1 John 3:7).

That is what righteousness is. It is right doing. This is not to say we do right in our own strength or by our own unaided will or in our own human nature just as it is.

“Many are losing the right way, in consequence of thinking that they must climb to heaven, that they must do something to merit the favor of God. They seek to make themselves better by their own unaided efforts. This they can never accomplish. Christ has made the way by dying our sacrifice, by living our example, by becoming our great high priest. He declares, ‘I am the way, the truth, and the life’ (John 14:6). If by any effort of our own we could advance one step toward the ladder, the words of Christ would not be true. But when we accept Christ, good works will appear as fruitful evidence that we are in the way of life, that Christ is our way, and that we are treading the true path that leads to heaven.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 368.

May we close this quarter’s lessons as we opened them—in gratitude for the simplicity of the instruction which God has given whereby we may know how to come to Christ. While many are asking where Jesus is and how they may find Him, He stands knocking, knocking at the heart’s door. Why not let us say with Ellen White as we go to open the door of our heart, “Come in, dear Lord.”

If she was so thankful for the simplicity of the instruction given as to how to find Him, perhaps we should be simple enough in our faith to find Him on the same terms. Then, when He enters, He comes not to find but to make “this troubled room” a dwelling worthy of Himself. When the branch is grafted into the True Vine, Jesus undertakes to make it fruitful. The divine nature is imparted to us, of which we partake. As the fruit of the Spirit is produced, and the Father does the pruning, we come to reflect the likeness of our dear Saviour more and more perfectly. But all the time, the nearer we come to Him the more faulty we see ourselves to be and the more utterly we trust in His righteousness, which is counted to us for righteousness. So let us look unto Jesus, “the author and finisher of our faith” (Heb. 12:2).

Lessons for 3rd Quarter/1978

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the third quarter of 1978 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. Title of the series is "Education for Eternity."

First Lesson

The School in a Garden. Memory text, Gen. 2:8.

1. *The Environment (Gen. 2:8)*
2. *The Teacher (Gen. 2:19; 3:8)*
3. *The Subject Matter (Gen. 2:19, 20)*
4. *Social Development (Gen. 2:18-22)*
5. *Character Development (Gen. 2:9, 16, 17)*
6. *Productive Activity (Gen. 2:15)*

Second Lesson

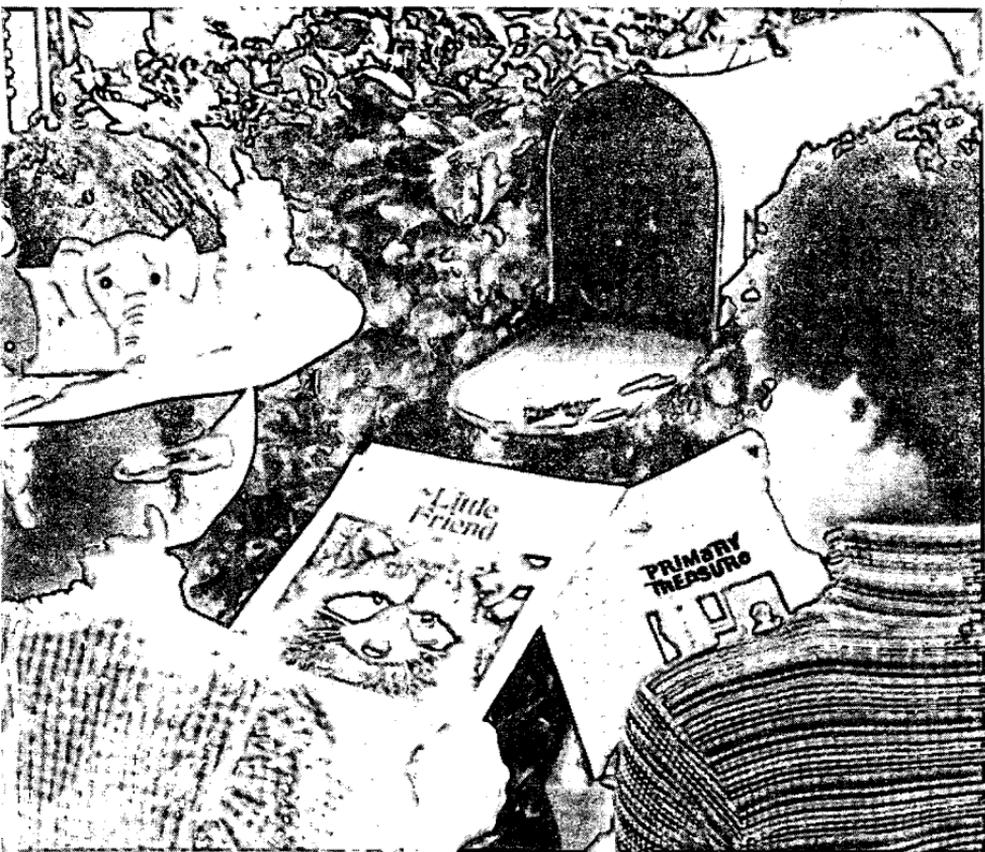
The Family—An Educational Center. Memory text, Gen. 18:19.

1. *Abraham and Isaac (Gen. 12:8)*
2. *Jacob and Joseph (Gen. 37:2-4)*
3. *Jochebed and Moses (Heb. 11:23-27)*
4. *Hannah and Samuel (1 Sam. 1:27, 28)*
5. *Daniel's Home (Dan. 1:3, 4, 8)*
6. *Mary and Elisabeth (Luke 2:39-41, 52)*

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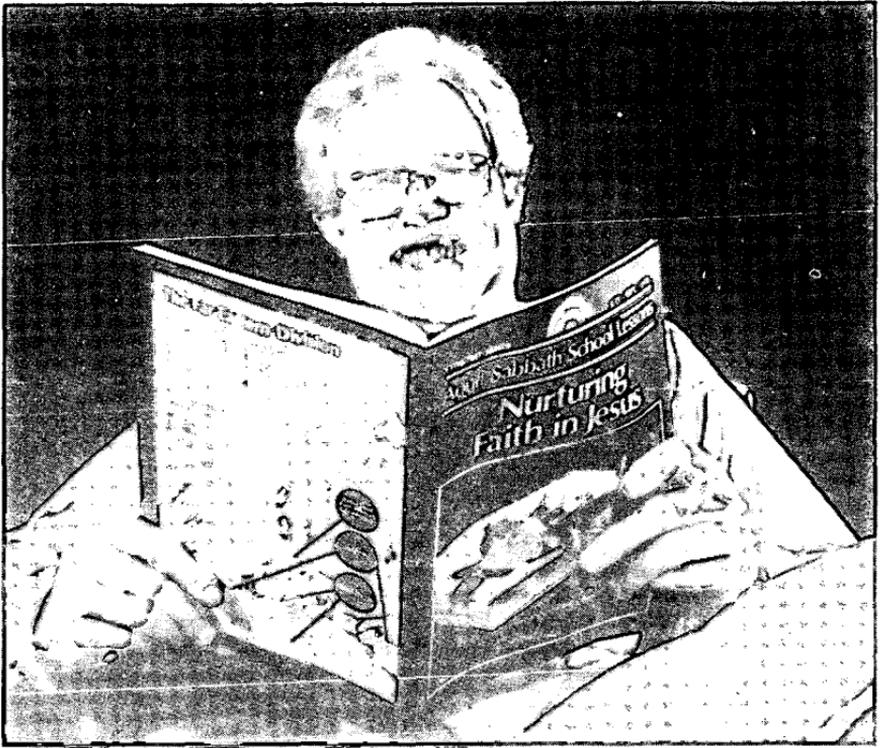
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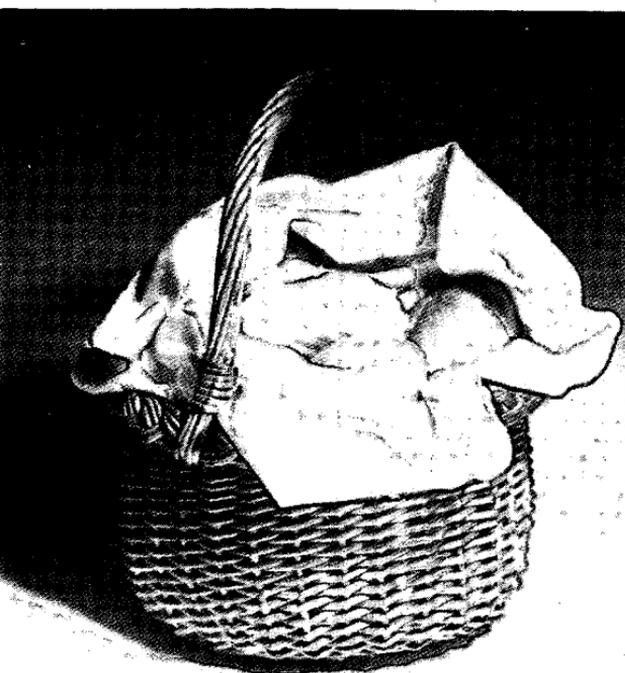
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South African	7,885,863	156	15,814	16,591
South-East Africa	4,916,020	189	37,531	88,297
Southern	19,800,000	182	14,586	56,573
Zaire	23,941,934	244	45,004	98,577
Zambesi	7,044,979	256	44,056	73,615
Zambia	4,000,000	184	27,685	102,751
Division Totals	75,169,286	1,784	291,273	853,476

Figures as of December, 1976

