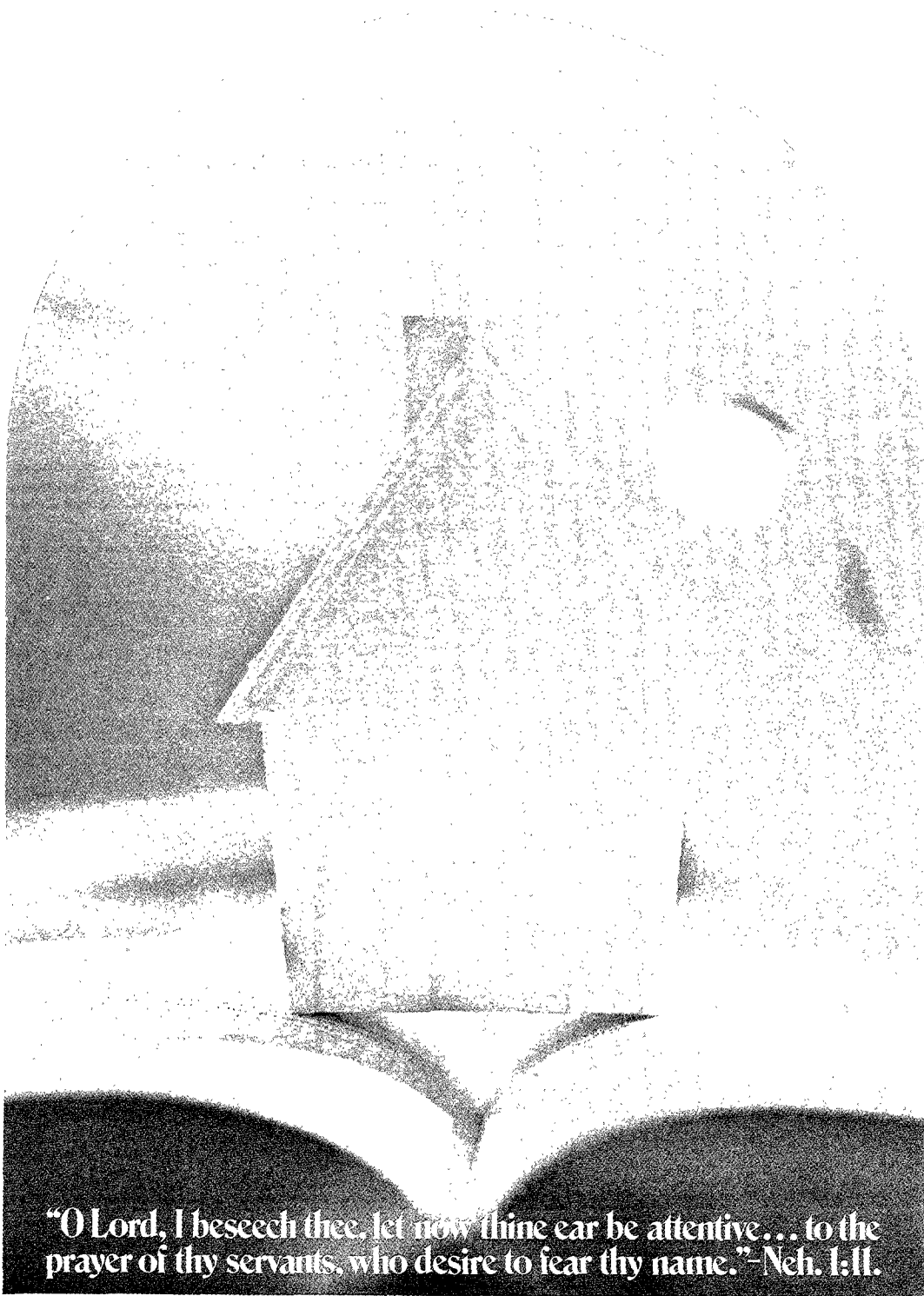


Review

OCTOBER 16, 1975

ADVENT REVIEW AND SABBATH HERALD ♦ GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS



"O Lord, I beseech thee, let now thine ear be attentive... to the prayer of thy servants, who desire to fear thy name."—Neh. 1:11.

WEEK OF PRAYER
readings for november 1-8

Message From the General Conference Officers

Our loving heavenly Father in mercy and tender compassion has granted us another special season when His worldwide church may unitedly join in repentance, commitment, thanksgiving, praise, and prayer. This Week of Prayer can be our opportunity for new victories in Christ. An abundance of divine help is available!

May we share with you reasons why we believe it is imperative that we agonize before God in prayer? Ellen White has warned, "Satanic agencies have made the earth a stage for horrors, which no language can describe."—In *Review and Herald*, Feb. 6, 1900.

Terrible, inhuman, criminal acts are perpetrated in our day. Newspaper, radio, and television daily chronicle incidents of bombing, robbery, theft, murder, rape, and terror. Supernatural evil powers, convulsed by anger and hatred for God and His people, marshal every force and device to destroy, deceive, and debase. Devils know and understand, perhaps better than we, that time is short (see Rev. 12:12).

In spite of devils and devilish men, these horrendously evil days are to be days of overcoming and victory for God's remnant. We must know the times and the seasons, and avail ourselves of the infinite help available to us. These evil days should be for our personal Gethsemanes when we make an absolute, irrevocable commitment to God of all we are and have. The consequence of failure here is fatally tragic.

Some governments have closed their territories to the proclamation of the Christian religion. Some of our literature evangelists have been slain. Workers in other places have been beaten and jailed. Visas and work permits are denied to missionaries. The outreach of the church is often thwarted. Money loses its value. Hospitals and schools may be closed or nationalized. But God's people must not be discouraged.

Prayer is omnipotence in the hands of the sincere believing Christian! "And whatever you ask in my name, I will do it, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13, R.S.V.).

So let us pray together, everyone, everywhere, during this special week of communion with God. In the strength He has promised to give, let us move onward, upward, in Christian living, looking for and hastening His return by faithful witness.

Let us pray for the power of the Holy Spirit and for the latter rain. Let us pray for repentance, revival, and reformation. Let us pray for each other, our loved ones, and the unsaved. Let us pray for the mission outreach of the church at home and abroad. Let us pray that the heavens will soon burst in a blaze of glory with the coming of our blessed Lord.

"Our heavenly Father waits to bestow upon us the fullness of His blessing."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 94.

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Review



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The Challenge of Renewal

Machinery, plans, programs, have their place, but the true source of help is Christ.



By ROBERT H. PIERSON

THE REMNANT CHURCH IN THE SEVENTIES faces the greatest mission challenge of all times. It is a herculean task. Among those to be reached with God's last message today are more than 2 billion people who have not even a nominal connection with the Christian church. Gottfried Oosterwal, head of the Department of Mission at Andrews University, estimates that some 1.6 billion people living today have never heard about Christ. This, also according to estimates, is about eight times as many as in the days of the apostle Paul.

Someone has declared there are more non-Christians in Africa now than when David Livingstone went to that continent decades ago. One third of the world's population is under regimes officially endorsing atheistic ideologies.

Already the doors to many lands are closed to the living preacher of the Advent message. To certain other countries we have but limited access. In Christian countries we have arrived at what has been called the post-Christian era, which must loom large in the church's thinking and planning. In these countries are millions who need the message of salvation and a returning Christ just as urgently as those who live elsewhere, for they have turned their backs upon the Word of God and the basic truths of the gospel.

The "world intellectual climate is rapidly moving further away from the Biblical view of God and man. In the West, a new and unprecedented rejection of Christian ideas, attitudes, and conduct is evident in the culture at large. Former bastions of Protestant orthodoxy are succumbing to a deceptive secularism that contradicts the revealed word of Scripture and distorts the meaning of the Gospel."—Editorial, "The Surging Wave of the Future," *Christianity Today*, Oct. 28, 1966, p. 32.

We live in a climate of unbelief and repudiation of God. Doubt, derision, and dissent seem to be in the very air we breathe. Talk about heathen—the so-called Christian world is filled with them.

On one occasion when I was visiting Europe, the workers asked whether we had literature for atheists. At first I thought their request was rather strange. We have literature for many

Robert H. Pierson is president of the General Conference.

different religions and Christian denominations, but I had never thought of needing literature for atheists. However, as I pondered this request further, I realized that their inquiry was pertinent, for atheism has a fearful grip on millions. We indeed need literature for atheists. In planning our soul-winning thrust for the church we must keep in mind this enlarged dimension of mission in the seventies—the post-Christian culture. Right at our doorstep waits a tremendous work to be done among those who a few decades ago would have considered themselves Christians.

As we approach the staggering task before us, let us take stock of our visible resources. The denomination's statistical report reveals that at the end of 1973 we have 4,309 educational institutions, ranging from elementary schools through two universities. We have 140 hospitals and sanitariums, 205 clinics and dispensaries, 16 medical launches, ten flying-doctor planes, and 22 retirement and nursing homes. These total 393 health-care institutions.

Our 50 publishing houses are turning out literature in 177 languages. These printed pages, together with our oral work in 351 other languages, enable us to reach people with the gospel in 528 languages. More than 70,400 workers (including ministers, teachers, office, medical, publishing, and all other categories) are working earnestly to do their part to finish the work of God in our generation.

Nearly 2.5 million church members should be available to carry their share of the burden, and I am happy to say that a large number of committed laymen who have responded to the challenge of a finished work are working and praying to spread the message of truth in their communities. Local welfare and Dorcas societies are doing much to break down prejudice.

Why Then an Unfinished Task?

The question naturally arises, then, What is the problem? Why has so little been done? Why is there such a staggering task still before us?

I believe we find at least a partial answer to these questions in the words of God's messenger: "As a people we are not advancing in spirituality as we near the end."—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 11. In this statement the servant of the Lord is not saying that we are short of funds, that there are not enough workers, or that our facilities are too limited, but she puts her finger on the spiritual condition of the church and declares that we are not advancing spiritually as we near the end.

It is true, brethren and sisters, that the elements of victory in our warfare are not inherent in the wood and mortar of institutions, nor in the surplus reserves and trust funds of a conference balance sheet. The apostle Paul reminds us that we are engaged in spiritual warfare, and such an encounter demands spiritual power. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph. 6:12). In the face of such a challenge, it is a solemn observation that "as a people we are not advancing in spirituality as we near the end."

There is a close relationship between the unfinished task and our spiritual experience. In an hour such as this, with the church lacking in spiritual wealth, the appeal of the prophet Hosea should challenge every member. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, reap in mercy; break up your fallow ground: for it is time to seek the Lord, till he come and rain righteousness upon you" (Hosea 10:12). Our problem is a spiritual problem, a problem of an unprepared people. The secret of power in a spiritual battle, such as the apostle Paul has described, lies in the proper relationship of the members of God's church to their Lord.

Consider the source of power in the apostolic church at Pentecost. Note well the harvest—some 3,000 souls in one day! This is more than most workers in our time would be successful in winning if they had a dozen lifetimes. This is more than the total worker force of many conferences are bringing into the church in ten years. What would happen in 1976 if every member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church worldwide entered into a Pentecostal, Spirit-filled experience? How soon the work of God would be finished in every land!

"It is time to seek the Lord." Ellen White reminds us, "A revival of true godliness is the greatest and most urgent of all our needs. To seek this should be our first work."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 121. I would like to make this challenge a personal one. A revival of true godliness is the greatest and most urgent of all my needs. To seek this should be my first work. This is a message for every one of us today.

Meeting Our Need

The need for revival and reformation is further emphasized by the Lord's messenger: "A revival and a reformation must take place, under the ministration of the Holy Spirit."—*Ibid.*, p. 128. It is evident that the Holy Spirit must do something for us as well as for the unsaved millions around us. He must do a work in the hearts and lives of God's people as well as for the multiplied millions in non-Christian lands. It is indeed "time [for us] to seek the Lord."

Let us notice the meaning of this word *revival*. It comes from a Latin word *revivere*, which means "to make alive," or "to make live." The English revival may be defined as "a reanimation from a state of languor or depression." The word *revival* per se does not occur in the King James Version, but by other terms and expressions the need for spiritual revival is upheld.

Actually, brothers and sisters, it takes the same power to bring revival to a church that is spiritually not alive as it does to raise the physically dead, and that power is the Lord Jesus Christ. Our only hope of being raised from spiritual death is in Jesus Christ: "Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). In other words, we must "seek the Lord" now.

Some in the church today are seeking other routes to a finished work. Machinery, plans, programs, all are put forward, but there is only one source of help for God's people in these last days. That help is in Christ. He alone can bring revival, reformation, and power. Before revival comes to the church there must be repentance. "Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37, 38).

Sincere repentance is the first step toward true revival. Before we can be saved we must first realize that we are *lost*. Before God can give us His robe of righteousness we must recognize that we are naked. We must come to Him just as we are, realizing that our sins have placed the Son of God upon the cross of Calvary and that our transgressions today crucify the Son of God afresh.

This realization is bound to bring to us deep heart sorrow for sin. This is the first step toward true revival. When we come in all our need, the precious promise is, "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). If we repent and confess, thank God, He forgives and accepts. We may stand before God as though we had never sinned. "The hum-

ble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary; and as a son confesses to a loving father, so will the truly penitent bring all his sins before God."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 41.

The step that God asks us to take is a reasonable one. It is simple and easy. Having repented, down on our knees we confess our transgressions. In true humility we cry out for forgiveness and cleansing. He says that when we do this our prayer will certainly be answered. Note these words of inspiration: "By faith he [the sinner, who has so grievously wronged and offended God] can bring to God the merits of Christ, and the Lord places the obedience of His Son to the sinner's account. Christ's righteousness is accepted in place of man's failure."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 367.

Thank God, we can be raised from spiritual death. The past is cared for. Our yesterdays are covered. Revival will be ours if we seek the Lord earnestly as He has instructed. Revival and power can come only when we are right with God and right with those about us.

Reformation Must Follow Revival

Revival alone is not enough. This first experience of spiritual arousal must be followed by a change in our life-style. There must be a true reformation. Says the servant of the Lord, "Confession will not be acceptable to God without sincere repentance and reformation. There must be decided changes in the life; everything offensive to God must be put away."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 39. This is an experience in which God helps us with our needs for today just as certainly as He cared for our needs of yesterday. This experience of reformation must be real and deep.

In the world around us there is a great deal of what might be termed cheap grace, in which the person merely makes a verbal recognition of Christ, prays a brief prayer, and goes out and lives as he did in the past. This is not reformation. Revival must not be just another kind of conformity, a sort of bandwagon experience in which a person accepts Christ, talks Christ, witnesses for Christ, because suddenly it is the "in" thing to do, the latest thing to "groove" on.

Since repentance is the first step toward true revival, before we can be saved we must realize that we are *lost*. Before God can give us His robe of righteousness we must recognize that we are naked.

God says there must be a genuine reorganization, a change in the ideas, theories, habits, and practices. New habits will replace the old habits of the world. Our reading, our dressing, our music, our eating, all will be different when we have truly had an experience with Christ that has wrought reformation in our lives. Jesus wants to do a thorough job in our experience; for when the real Christ revives and saves us, He will also bring about real reformation in our experience.

True reformation will bring a precious experience into the life of the child of God. This experience will be evident to all with whom he comes in contact, for the beautiful fruits of the Spirit will appear for all to see.

"The harvest of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience,

kindness, goodness, fidelity, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law dealing with such things as these. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the lower nature with its passions and desires. If the Spirit is the source of our life, let the Spirit also direct our course" (Gal. 5:22-25, N.E.B.).

When we truly seek the Lord the results will be visible in our experience. Revival, reformation, and power will be ours.

Picture of Power

"In visions of the night, representations passed before me of a great reformatory movement among God's people," the messenger of the Lord said, describing the vision she had had of the experience that will come. "Many were praising God. The sick were healed, and other miracles were wrought. A spirit of intercession was seen, even as was manifested before the great Day of Pentecost. Hundreds and thousands were seen visiting families and opening before them the word of God. Hearts were convicted by the power of the Holy Spirit, and a spirit of genuine conversion was manifest. On every side doors were thrown open to the proclamation of the truth. The world seemed to be lightened with the heavenly influence. Great blessings were received by the true and humble people of God."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 126.

What a scene—repentance, revival, reformation, prayer, praise, power, miracles, intercession, the Holy Spirit working in the church, open doors, a world lightened, a work finished, a Saviour coming! Isn't that a glorious picture? What greater anticipation could the child of God experience? This experience will be ours when true repentance, revival, and reformation have been wrought in the lives of God's people. I believe such an experience is beginning to come in among us in many parts of the world, but there is yet much to be done.

Is this not the experience that you, my dear fellow believer, want today? It may be yours, but you must be willing to pay the price, and that price is everything. The prophet Hosea said, "It is time to seek the Lord." The prophet Jeremiah describes the totality with which men must seek Him: "Ye shall seek me, and find me, when ye shall search for me with all your heart" (Jer. 29:13). This is an experience that cannot, must not, be entered into half-heartedly. The power of God for a finished work will come only to the individual who seeks the Lord with all his heart. "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies," the psalmist says, "and that seek him with the whole heart" (Ps. 119:2).

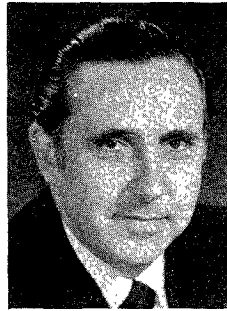
"Surrender your will and way to Him," Ellen White invites. "Make not a single reserve, not a single compromise with self."—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 514. "Nothing is apparently more helpless, yet really more invincible, than the soul that feels its nothingness and relies wholly on God."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 175.

If to you the achievement seems hard, remember there is daily and hourly help for each of us. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). We can come to Him just as we are in full and free repentance and confession. There will be no question but that He will receive us. Then through His grace and power we may do all that Christ expects of us in His strength.

Brother, sister, *it is time now diligently to seek the Lord*. It is time now to make certain that everything is right with God. It is time now to make certain that everything is right with our fellow men. When this experience is ours the revival, the reformation, the power, will come. May God hasten the day when such an experience will come into the lives of every member of God's remnant church so that we may see our Saviour face to face in the near, very near, future. *Won't you make such a commitment today?* God bless you all. □

Impelled by Love

Jesus has power to lift humanity above the soul-defiling vices and habits that destroy life.



By F. W. WERNICK

"He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him" (John 14:21).

THE CIRCUMSTANCES under which these words were spoken add significance to their meaning. The shades of darkness had fallen upon old Jerusalem as Jesus and His small band of disciples finished with the Last Supper in the upper room and made ready to leave. The tranquillity of the evening had been marred by the jealousy of the disciples and the hasty departure of Judas to fulfill his contract to betray Jesus. It was on this final evening before the crucifixion, with His betrayal only hours away, that Jesus chose to discuss certain great themes of His kingdom. This discussion, begun in the upper room, continued as the small band made their way through the night among olive groves and vineyards to Jesus' favorite place of prayer, the Garden of Gethsemane.

The struggle that had shaken the universe was soon to be decided for all eternity, and though the spirit of Jesus was heavy, the Saviour took time carefully to outline for the future leaders of His church those important principles that are to be part of every disciple's life. This instruction, recorded in John 13 to 17, later brought strength to the disciples as they set about establishing the church.

Among the principles that Jesus emphasized that night was the importance of love in one's relationship to God and to his fellow man (see chap. 15:12, 13). He declared that the act which above all others reveals this love is to sacrifice one's life for another, a statement that was to become full of meaning to His followers as they watched Him agonize and die upon the cross.

But the facet of love to which we will give our attention in this reading is that described in Jesus' statement that love for God expresses itself in obedience to His will. In reviewing John 13 to 17, we can find this truth referred to at least seven times (see chaps. 14:15, 21, 23, 24; 15:7, 10, 14). Jesus could cite His own perfect submission to His Father and observe—

"But that the world may know that I love the Father; and as

F. W. Wernick is a vice-president of the General Conference.

the Father gave me commandment, even so I do" (chap. 14: 31). While this was a reference to His coming crucifixion, Jesus made it clear that obedience to His Father was His daily practice. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" (chap. 15:10).

The life of Jesus had forged an inseparable link between His love for the Father and His obedience to His will. Every day a fresh revelation of His love could be seen as He submitted in willing compliance to every command of His Father. He said on another occasion, "And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (chap. 8:29).

It is significant that early in His ministry Jesus clearly stated His attitude toward the law: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matt. 5:17). That law was amplified on the Mount of Beatitudes. The one who spoke the law anciently and the preacher on the mount were the same, but with this difference, the giver of the law had now come in human flesh, having taken upon Himself human nature after 4,000 years of sin. He had exalted His Father's law by a life of perfect obedience in the midst of a perverse generation, a generation in which some practiced hypocrisy, others, open defiance of God's will. But not so much as a jot or tittle did Christ remove from the law; rather He showed in His daily life perfect conformity to the law's letter as well as its spirit. The world had never seen such beauty of character—His obedience, so natural and attractive, was the result of love that had found its highest joy in doing all that the Father asked. Perfect motivation had led to perfect obedience.

But let us explore this theme in more detail. A comparison between the life of Jesus and the requirements of the Ten Commandments, recorded in Exodus 20 and later amplified in the Sermon on the Mount, reveals perfect harmony. Jesus never permitted other gods to usurp the place of His heavenly Father. When tempted to worship another by the devil in the wilderness, He promptly replied, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. 4:10). For Jesus to have formed a graven image for worship would have been unthinkable. God cannot be represented by wood or stone, and even to worship the works of man exalting the human above the divine is a reproach to God. It is obvious that Jesus perfectly obeyed the first two commandments.

Purity of Thought and Speech

But what of the others? In the third commandment we find false oaths and idle speech are forbidden, as well as hypocrisy. This command Jesus upheld in both His life and teachings. He revealed His Father—full of love, grace, and truth. Gracious words proceeded from His mouth, and the purity of His speech matched the purity of His thoughts. Sincerity and consistency marked all that He said and did. He was the truth.

The Sabbath in the life of Jesus was lived in perfect conformity to its sacred purpose. As recorded in Exodus 20:8-11, it was to be a holy day, not devoted to man's own ways, words, and pleasures. Rather it was to be a day of beautiful fellowship with the Creator, a day of restful worship and joyful communion with the people of God and with the God of all creation.

Many centuries after Eden, the beauty of the Sabbath and the understanding of its divine purpose had been lost by nearly everyone in Israel. All about Him Jesus saw people seeking to please the rulers of the synagogue by strict adherence to man-made rules for Sabbathkeeping while the true purpose of the Sabbath was being unfulfilled. This purpose Jesus

restored by His example. He exalted Himself as Creator by healing broken and sick bodies on that day and emphasized the place of worship in one's life by attending the synagogue on the Sabbath (see Luke 4:16). In addition, He rescued the Sabbath from human hands by saying, "Therefore the Son of man is Lord also of the sabbath" (Mark 2:28). While Jesus did not offer any excuse for secular activities on the Sabbath, or for self-indulgence and pleasure seeking during its holy hours, He lifted the Sabbath to an exalted plane by making it a day of blessing as well as worship.

Jesus' life clearly reveals that He obeyed and honored His parents, that He loved all men, even His enemies; observed propriety of action and purity of thought, and never stooped to dishonesty or theft. He was free from all deceit and never was envious or covetous. His perfect obedience to all of the Ten Commandments is unquestioned.

The fact is that if Jesus had so much as broken even one of the ten, His life and death would have been in vain, for sin would have marred an otherwise perfect expression of the character of God. As John said, "Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law" (1 John 3:4). Only one transgression is enough to open the floodgates of iniquity and rebellion. James emphasized this by saying, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all" (James 2:10). But the love of Jesus for His Father was revealed in a character strong and beautiful, reflecting perfect obedience to every one of the Ten Commandments.

Intellectual Belief Not Sufficient

The life of Jesus was a rebuke to His archenemy and accuser, Lucifer, or Satan, who had contended that obedience to God was unjust and that the law was a restriction of personal liberty (see *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 18, 19). This false philosophy was communicated to Adam and Eve and has been passed on to every generation since. During the 6,000 years that have elapsed since the first act of disobedience in the Garden of Eden, rebellion and defiance of God has been growing. His law has, at times, been trampled in the dust even by those who profess His name. False philosophies have been developed to cast aspersion upon God's holy law. One such philosophy declares that since the cross, the Ten Commandments are no longer in force. The only obedience required now, so this philosophy says, is to a law of love. Such a concept does not take into account that God's love leads to obedience of all the Ten Commandments, not of just some of them. A dichotomy between love and God's law is not possible, even though millions have accepted this false concept.

In the meantime, others have been deluded by the belief that man can adopt low ideals and enjoy sinful vices that are attractive to the fleshly nature, so long as they believe in Jesus as a Saviour. The final end of this philosophy leads to indulgence in the lusts of the flesh, the lusts of the eyes, and the pride of life, while professing to believe Jesus is a Saviour. Thus, lower and lower goes the scale of living while lips continue to utter words of praise and worship to God. Under this delusion, man is soon reduced to the confusion of Israel under the judges when it was said, "every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

Today the rebellion of Lucifer against God is approaching its zenith as the devil seeks to enlist the entire world under his banner and has successfully secured an almost universal acceptance of one or more of his false philosophies about God and His law. The terrible results of these deceptions can be seen in a world filled with hate, fear, crime, injustice, death,

and deep sorrow. Disloyalty and selfishness have robbed millions of joy and peace. Many rise in the morning afraid to face the day, and go to bed at night with fear clutching at their hearts.

But the race is not left without hope, and there is good news for each one of us. The good news is that Jesus has power to lift humanity above the soul-defiling vices and habits that weaken character and destroy life. Despite our disobedient natures, Jesus wants to give us His peace and extend His loving forgiveness to bind up our wounds of rebellion and impart to us His perfect righteousness. John expressed the wish of God for all mankind when he said, "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (1 John 2:16, 17).

To deliver us from disobedience and death, Jesus has made provision to give us a new life. "He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (chap. 5:12). To submit the will to Jesus Christ and receive from Him forgiveness of transgression and the power of eternal life is Christ's answer to rebellion and sin. This experience leads to loyalty to God and love for His Word. It assures us a character like that of Jesus.

The love of Jesus demonstrated so beautifully in His life is the answer to the needs of the human heart, for it leads straight as an arrow to full obedience. Divine love never masks a careless attitude toward the law of God, neither does it provide cover for a willful disregard of the high standards of conduct that characterized the life of Christ. Love is not headstrong, nor unwilling to be instructed. The outward life of dress, deportment, recreation, and human relationships, if directed by the love of God, will be carefully considered that it might faithfully express the will of God and not the weak and natural inclinations of the human heart. The words of Jesus will be given new meaning. "If a man love me, he will keep my words" (John 14:23). It is this love Jesus offers to us.

The Law in the Heart

To the weak and erring, the promise is made, "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10). It is rebellion that must be quenched if obedience is to prevail. Only Jesus, our faithful High Priest, can perform this miracle in the heart.

Ellen White gives us this encouragement, "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."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

"When, through faith in Jesus Christ, man does according to the very best of his ability, and seeks to keep the way of the Lord by obedience to the ten commandments, the perfection of Christ is imputed to cover the transgression of the repentant and obedient soul."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 135.

God is waiting for a people who love Him so much that they "keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12). Do you secretly long to shed the old life of rebellion and disobedience? If you choose submission to Jesus Christ, His mighty power will free you and place a willing spirit within you—now, at this very moment. Then, the beautiful character of Jesus, woven in the loom of heaven, will be yours and your life will become a living testimony of love and joy expressed in full obedience to the law of God. □

Monday, November 3

The Relevance of the Advent Message

The church's basic task is to make converts. Everything else is really secondary.



By B. B. BEACH

IT IS SIMPLE TO STATE THE OBVIOUS, to say that men, their institutions, and their environment are in the throes of transformation and revolution. Indeed, the times are changing. There is nothing really new in the fact that things are changing. What is new is the accelerating impetus, the swiftness and radicalness of change. It is easier for us to understand how it is possible for such tremendous transformations to take place at this time, when we are given to understand that an estimated one quarter of the human beings who have ever survived infancy since the Flood are living in 1975 and approximately 90 per cent of all scientists who have ever lived are walking the face of the earth today.

As change has quickened its pace, more and more people have joined the race after newness. "Novelty, novelty—put everything in question," could be used as a slogan to characterize the midseventies. Young and old are stepping with increasing rapidity on the treadmill of up-to-dateness, latest fashion, and keeping pace with innovation. The "lover of the new" floats along with the modern current calling for *relevance*, which modern man usually associates with the latest trend, the newest fad, that which is popular. Nowadays, everything seems to be brought in question as regards its relevance and suitability: the structures of society and government, the family, the doctrines, and organization of the church, yes, religion, and God Himself.

Modern Society's Tragic Mistake

Some theologians tell us that "man has come of age" and God is irrelevant because man no longer needs Him, neither on earth nor on the moon. Modern society has made here a terrible and tragic mistake. Technological revolution, social and moral disintegration, chop and change, are fatally mis-

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construed as the throes of progress, the growing edge of maturity and evolutionary fermentation prior to the Golden Age of peace and prosperity that is just around the corner. On the contrary, these developments are, more often than not, indications pointing to the world's terminal condition.

It is evident that there is today a crisis in authority. In the past, religious relevance was associated with scriptural authority, ecclesiastical order, and traditional teaching. Today, relevance is attached to contemporary situation and egocentric self-realization. There has been an understandable reaction against authoritarian religion; antiauthoritarian, personal religion is the order of the day. In contrast, Adventism is neither *authoritarian* nor *antiauthoritarian*, but *authoritative*. The Advent message finds its underlying relevance in the authority of the Word of God, the revelation in Jesus Christ, the Spirit of Prophecy, the fellowship of the saints, and the Holy Spirit's guidance.

The Advent message is relevant in the deepest sense of the word. The English noun *relevance* comes from the Latin verb *relevare*, to lift up again, to liberate (as from a serious illness). The Advent message lifts up fallen men from the deathbed of sin. This is what salvation is all about. When religion does not do this, it becomes indeed irrelevant. I remember meeting a tourist couple at Taormina, on the island of Sicily a few years ago. We talked about the many lines of Adventist church and institutional work. They were not overly impressed. They wondered whether Christianity was still meaningful today. The husband asked: "Do you believe that your religion can really change people?" I told him about a man living in a town just a few miles away who had been the town's villain. He had given the police plenty of trouble. This ruffian met an Adventist minister giving Bible studies and told him, pulling out a sharp knife: "If you don't tell me the truth, I'll carve up your face!" But the Advent message became relevant for this man and lifted him, step by step, out of his den of iniquity. The scapegrace became heaven-born and resulted in a paragon of good behavior for the community. Our tourist couple had to admit that a religion that could do this was not passé, but very much relevant and real. Today Christ still discerns "in every human being infinite possibilities" (*Education*, p. 80).

The Message's Content

The central content of the Advent message, which more than two million Adventists must proclaim to a world nodding to its final fall, is that man was created in the image of God, but man sinned; he fell. The result has been separation and alienation, coupled with all the sorrow and suffering this has involved. But God went into action through Jesus Christ to bring about reconciliation. In Christ the "fallings aside" of men are forgiven.

God's children are called to be part of a *new humanity*, with Christ, the "heir to the whole universe" (Heb. 1:2, N.E.B.), as its head. Christ is coming the second time to eradicate decline and downfall, and to erect His *new kingdom*. Until the restoration comes" (Acts 3:21, N.E.B.), Christ has entered as "ministrant in the real sanctuary" and serves as "the mediator of a *new covenant*" to secure our "eternal inheritance" (see Hebrews 8 and 9, N.E.B.). These are the "newnesses" that make up the central content of the Advent message. But this message is even more specific and relevant: Not only is Christ coming again, but He is *coming soon*. This is the thrilling newness that makes the latest political and social fashions fade into comparative insignificance. God's judgment is no longer far off in the distant future, but it is to be proclaimed in letters of gold, for His judgment "is come."

We are living in the climactic period of human history, with the corridors of prophecy and history converging upon this hour.

The Seventh-day Adventist message is relevant philosophically. It provides unshakable certainty in a time of restless uncertainty. Certitude and conviction are woefully lacking today. Many have given up intellectuality, rationality, and hope in reaching past aspirations. A distinguishing mark of modern man is the thinking that truth as truth is gone, right as right is gone, and relativism reigns supreme. Individual feeling and self-consciousness have become the supreme authority, but what an airy and capricious foundation this is. Ellen White clearly described this current situation of perplexed bewilderment: "Spiritual darkness has covered the earth. . . . Nothing stands out in clear and distinct lines, upon rock bottom. This is one of the marked signs of the last days."—*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 15. It is not surprising that despair has taken over and led to anarchy and violence, opting out of society and the making of "chemical trips" into the psychedelic promised land. This note of absurdity and desperation can be heard or seen in aspects of electronic music, far-out cinema, and modern literature with its antihero. In inviting men to "look up, and lift up" their heads, the Advent message is not asking people to take a nonrational leap of faith into the dark, but to relate to a personal, infinite God and the verifiable knowledge He has given us for our salvation.

The Advent message is relevant doctrinally. In addition to personal experience, it emphasizes the vital need for a clear doctrinal belief based on the Bible. Much of what passes for religion today is vague indeed. Often there is little, if any, definition. It is faith without content; it is simply faith in faith, or religion for religion's sake. When approaching the quicksands of doctrinal softness, modern Christians risk being sucked into the jaws of spiritual death.

The Advent message gives importance to doctrine. Some say: "What counts is Jesus, not doctrine!" But doctrine is supremely relevant. It lifts up Christ and defines what we mean by faith in Jesus Christ. Of course, what matters is not just proving or disproving a doctrine, but having a personal encounter with Jesus Christ, and this comes through knowing what He taught.

The doctrine of the Second Advent is an essential part of the Christian message. When the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church stepped on the stage of history, the notion of inevitable progress was popular. Most people considered the idea of an end to the world as quite ridiculous. However, scientists and thinkers today do point to the end of the world in at least three ways: (1) a long-range end through the world dying of cold or heat; (2) a middle-range end through life in our biosphere being gradually choked off in an atmosphere of stinking pollution; (3) a short-range end through an atomic holocaust (or perhaps collision with some other heavenly body). In this setting, the doctrine of the Second Coming becomes very relevant indeed, all the more so since the signs of Christ's coming can be seen at every turn. The great controversy between God and Satan is growing in intensity. The Advent message is being preached to all the world. This is a clear sign, and we rejoice when the good news is proclaimed to the ends of the earth, bringing closer the Second Advent, this thunderclap of divine intervention.

The doctrine of the Sabbath strengthens belief in God the Creator and elevates man who is invited to worship and commune with God. This doctrine is of vital importance today because it saves Sabbathkeepers from the increasing idolatry or tyranny of things, persons, and ideologies, and enables them to give glory to God and "worship him that made heaven

and earth." It is a central part of the Advent message. In an age when the dignity of man is under constant attack, it makes relevant the Fatherhood of God and brotherhood of the worshipping community. In this context, any racial, economic, or other division in the camp must inevitably limit the blessing of Sabbath worship.

The Advent message is relevant prophetically. Late in the nineteenth century, well before the ecumenical tidal wave started sweeping through the churches after World War II, the prophetic voice of Adventism saw "unity" pitfalls ahead: "Papists, Protestants, and worldlings will alike accept the form of godliness without the power, and they will see in this union a grand movement for the conversion of the world and the ushering in of the long-expected millennium."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 588, 589. We have the sure word of prophecy to give guidance and provide interpretation of religious developments. There is no need to be misled by the ecumenical mirage or phony, counterfeit revivalism.

The Message Deals With Human Need

Finally, the Advent message is relevant to the crying needs of society. It does not simply announce "pie in the apocalyptic sky by and by." It deals with human need. After hearing God's call to *come out* of the Babylonian world, His children accept God's charge to *go* into the world and give purpose, promise, and possibility to lost and bewildered fellow creatures.

Adventist health principles in daily eating and living will be an example to others. These principles are especially relevant indeed, because research and statistics have provided evidence that the average Seventh-day Adventist is in better health and lives longer than his non-Adventist neighbor. The Advent message makes it imperative that, where possible, its heralds be in the forefront of the battle against the scourges of alcoholism, smoking, and drug dependence. They will be known for their medical institutions and their welfare and relief programs.

The Advent message challenges its representatives to sow seeds of peace and goodwill, and be conscientious cooperators in an embroiled world. However, the Seventh-day Adventist Church's responsibility toward the world is first and foremost to prepare men to meet their coming Lord. The basic task is to bring about conversions; everything else is really secondary. This presupposes sanctification, an exemplary life-style. The Advent message must first of all be relevant to Adventist existence before it can become attractive to non-Adventists. Wrote Ellen G. White: "God intends that His people shall be a peculiar people, separate from the world, and be living examples of holiness, that the world may be enlightened, convicted, or condemned, according as they treat the light given them."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 689.

Recently the French writer-philosopher Jean Guittou wrote: "The World seems to be preparing for a great unknown event." This is the same event Lord Tennyson was referring to in his famous verse from *In Memoriam*:

One God, one law, one element,
And one far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves.

However, both these writers are partially wrong, for this divine event is neither "unknown" nor "far-off." It is the promised return of our Saviour. This event is near and hastening on apace. Each passing day brings it closer and makes it more relevant. We must face our coming Lord and gather all the sparks and flames of relevance into one mighty gospel fire, which shall burn and glow until the whole world will be lightened with the glory of the coming King. □

Tuesday, November 4

Dimensions of Stewardship

God has made us managers of His work on earth and will ask each to render an account.



By ROBERT R. FRAME

"[STEWARDSHIP] . . . IS IN VERITY THE CHRISTIAN law of living. It forms the Christian appraisal of privilege, opportunity, power, and talent. It is necessary to an adequate understanding of life, and essential to a true, vital religious experience. It is not simply a matter of mental assent, but is an act of the will and a definite, decisive transaction touching the whole perimeter of life. The Christian principle of stewardship can not be rightly understood or practiced without recognition of the divine Person to whom we are accountable."—L. E. FROMM, *Stewardship in Its Larger Aspects*, p. 5.

Men are called by God to be His under-managers in the service of the gospel. Paul writes: "Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). This great stalwart of the cross is here writing of his own apostolic ministry and that of his associates. But management or stewardship involves also others of Christ's followers, and this is clear from the general teachings of Scripture, particularly from the parable of the talents and the householder who took a journey to a far land.

The Lord's messenger calls our attention to the rich young ruler as illustrating the principles of stewardship that are to motivate all who call themselves by the name of Christ. "The ruler's possessions were entrusted to him that he might prove himself a faithful steward; he was to dispense these goods for the blessing of those in need. So God now entrusts men with means, with talents and opportunities, that they may be His agents in helping the poor and suffering. He who uses his entrusted gifts as God designs becomes a coworker with the Saviour. He wins souls to Christ, because he is a representative of His character."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 523.

We are right, therefore, in insisting that our stewardship responsibility to God, the manager of all things, is a Christian doctrine—a doctrine indeed that touches our Christian experience at the very quick. It is entirely understandable that most of us apply this doctrine to the way we use our prop-

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erty and means, but the Bible reveals that stewardship has a far more extensive range. Let us look at some of these wider involvements and in so doing we shall have occasion to think of God's investment; that is, what He has committed to us and our improvement of that investment; what we do with what He has given us.

The Securities of the Faith. Writing to Timothy, Paul reminds him of that which God deposited with him. "O Timotheus, keep the securities of the faith intact: avoid the profane jargon and contradictions of what is falsely called 'Knowledge' " (1 Tim. 6:20, Moffatt).

We have already noted that Paul refers to himself and his associates as "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Cor. 4:1). Elsewhere he speaks of "the mystery of the gospel" (Eph. 6:19), and "the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh" (1 Tim. 3:16). As under-managers these are securities we are to guard and to keep intact. But how are we to be effective guardians?

In our prime responsibility as guardians of the securities of the faith, we must first of all be students of God's Word. This is the only way to become fully acquainted with the Chief Manager and His expectations of us. Such acquaintance is the first and basic responsibility of stewards. The future destiny of each of Christ's followers depends upon the vigor and vitality with which he gives attention to, and subsequently safeguards, the securities of the faith.

It has been Satan's studied effort to turn men from the simplicity of the gospel to the high-flown plains of man-made philosophies. We should not be surprised by this for Satan began his attack upon the human race at the tree of knowledge of good and evil. We should never imagine that the wisdom of this world can provide any significant insight into that which God has specifically revealed. We are not to mix the chaff of human invention with the wheat of divine revelation.

The Truth Must Be Shared. To be stewards of the securities of the faith means that we must share the mysteries of the gospel with others (see 2 Tim. 2:2, R.S.V.). To share the truth is to establish ourselves in it. Paul instructed Timothy to "entrust the word [we have received] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also." This is a priority that still needs to be recognized. There is no stewardship more important than this.

If a person's faith is established in the Word of God, then his heart will be set upon the work of God and he will support it with his means. Conversely, those who give little attention to the securities of the faith tend to restrict their general contributions to the upbuilding of the church of God.

The Resources of the Spiritual Life. Eternal life is the free gift of God in Christ: "Those who see Christ in His true character, and receive Him into the heart, have everlasting life. It is through the Spirit that Christ dwells in us; and the Spirit of God, received into the heart by faith, is the beginning of life eternal."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 388. What an investment on God's part! But this is not where the story ends, for the life of Christ in the soul has to be nurtured and developed by the resources available to us. This is emphasized forcibly in Scripture. The counsel is to keep on growing "in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). "As our physical life is sustained by food, so our spiritual life is sustained by the Word of God. And every soul is to receive life from God's Word for Himself. As we must eat for ourselves in order to receive nourishment, so we must receive the Word for ourselves. We are not to obtain it merely through the medium of another's mind. We should carefully study the Bible, asking God for the

aid of the Holy Spirit, that we may understand His Word. We should take one verse, and concentrate the mind on the task of ascertaining the thought which God has put in that verse for us. We should dwell upon the thought until it becomes our own, and we know 'what saith the Lord.' "—*Ibid.*, p. 390.

The Holy Scriptures, therefore, are the resources of the spiritual life. We appropriate the spiritual values of the Word through our reflection upon it and in an active communion with God: "Through continual communion He received life from God, that He might impart life to the world. His experience is to be ours."—*Ibid.*, p. 363. Again, "We need to look constantly to Jesus, realizing that it is His power which does the work. While we are to labor earnestly for the salvation of the lost, we must also take time for meditation, for prayer, and for the study of the Word of God. Only the work accomplished with much prayer, and sanctified by the merit of Christ, will in the end prove to have been efficient for good."—*Ibid.*, p. 362.

The Capital Fund of Our Divinely Entrusted Talents. As a church we claim that Jesus Christ is the hope both of the church and of the world. We profess to be waiting for His coming, but how are we to wait? G. Campbell Morgan suggests, "The true way to wait for the coming of the Lord is to fill up the 'little while' with evangelism in order to bring men to Jesus Christ."

Indeed, it was for this purpose that the Christian church was established and launched upon its mission, as clearly revealed in the gospel commission (see Matt. 28:18-20; Mark 16:16). The gospel commission embraces all believers: "All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves these sacred vows are therefore pledged to be co-workers with Christ."—*Ibid.*, p. 822. Every disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. We read: "Not more surely is the place prepared for us in the heavenly mansions than is the special place designated on earth where we are to work for God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 327.

Church Members Entrusted With Talents. In order to accomplish this task the Lord has given to us a capital fund of divinely entrusted talents (see Matt. 25:14-30). In the book *Christ's Object Lessons*, Ellen White gives classic treatment to this parable. Here she makes it clear that the talents comprise both "the gifts and blessings imparted by the Holy Spirit" (page 327). And "all gifts and endowments, whether original or acquired, natural or spiritual," "are to be employed in Christ's service" (page 328). Along with our time, our possessions, our wealth, our means, are singled out as a talent for which we will be especially held accountable to God.

What is more, the Lord's servant underlines the fact that we cannot with impunity be indifferent and careless or adopt a please-yourself attitude with reference to the use of our talents. For she says: "In the great judgment day those who have not worked for Christ, those who have drifted along, carrying no responsibility, thinking of themselves, pleasing themselves, will be placed by the Judge of all the earth with those who did evil. They receive the same condemnation."—*Ibid.*, p. 365.

Thus, "The development of all of our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men. No one who is not growing daily in capability and usefulness is fulfilling the purpose of life."—*Ibid.*, pp. 329, 330. Ellen White warns that "if you feel no care to be a blessing to others, if you are not laboring together with God here, right in this life, you will have no place in the mansions above."—*Review and Herald*,

Aug. 11, 1891. Again she says: "The parable of the talents should be a matter of the most careful and prayerful study; for it has a personal and individual application to every man, woman, and child possessed of the powers of reason. Your obligation and responsibility are in proportion to the talents God has bestowed upon you."—*Ibid.*, May 1, 1888.

Dr. A. T. Pierson has reminded us that "we are not responsible for conversion, but we are responsible for contact. We cannot compel any man to decide for Christ, but we may compel every man to decide one way or the other; that is, we may so bring to every human being the gospel message that the responsibility is transferred from us to him and that we are delivered from blood guiltiness. God will take care of the results if we do our duty."

Satan, of course, wants anything but this. Hence his continual attempt to vaccinate with a mild dose of Christianity. Looking at the Christian who neglects his duty as a steward of God, Dr. William Culbertson, in a sermon entitled "Taking the Cross and Following the Lord," stated the following: "Millions of Christians live in a sentimental haze of vague piety, soft organ music, trembling in the lovely light from stained glass windows. Their religion is a thing of pleasant emotional quivers, divorced from the real, divorced from the intellect, and demanding little except lip service for a few harmless platitudes. I suspect that Satan has called off the attempt to convert people to agnosticism. If a man travels far enough from Christianity, he is always in danger of seeing it in perspective, and deciding that it is true. It is much safer, from Satan's point of view, to vaccinate a man with a mild dose of Christianity so as to protect him from the real thing."

There is only one true corrective for this pernicious attitude, and that is to have the vision of the Chief Steward Himself, and that is to see men as He saw them. "In all men He saw fallen souls whom it was His mission to save."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 353.

Wider Aspects of Stewardship

True stewardship involves a man's attitude to all the things he controls. It is related to the things that are material because they have a definite bearing upon the higher life. As we come to sense the spiritual origin, purpose, and meaning of our possessions, stewardship brings our material things under the golden rule instead of into the clutches of the rule of gold.

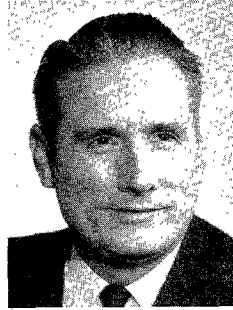
Whatever the business of the Christian, he should regard it as a business for God and in partnership with God. When S. M. Colgate, of the great soap-manufacturing firm of Colgate and Company, began to manufacture soap, he entered into a covenant with the Lord that he would pay a tithe of his profits for the support of the gospel. From the very inception of his program God blessed, and the business prospered. As income increased, he raised the amount of his gifts to the cause of God till he was contributing half of all he made to the proclamation of the gospel.

In conclusion let us remind ourselves that stewardship is a call to complete consecration. It was David Livingstone, the man who lived to bless others, who said: "I will place no value upon anything I have or may possess, except in relation to the kingdom of Christ. If anything I have will advance the interests of that kingdom, it shall be given away or kept only as by giving or keeping it I may promote the glory of Him to whom I owe all my hopes in time and in eternity." Finally he wrote in his diary: "My Jesus, my King, my life, my all, I again dedicate my whole self to Thee." May this be our determination as now, and always, we recognize God's priorities and ownership. □

Wednesday, November 5

Our Time and Our Mission

Calebs and Joshuas are needed today to arouse the church to finish her task and enter the Promised Land.



By DAVID H. BAASCH

"GO YE" (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15). With this straightforward command our Lord directed His disciples to their great mission. As they were empowered by the Holy Spirit, the response of those first emissaries of the gospel was impressive and the results were miraculous. Three thousand new disciples were baptized after the first evangelistic sermon (see Acts 2:41). In turn, new converts became missionaries of the gospel to their own people.

We, of course, believe that our Lord's command was directed also to us, His disciples in the late twentieth century. But we have questions: Lord, do You still mean what You did 2,000 years ago? Do You still ask that we go and preach to "every creature . . . all nations . . . all things"? Literally? Is that what You expect of us? Even with the population explosion, the deep religious prejudice, the numerous international barriers, the almost impossible ideological differences?

Yet, after all these questions have been asked and we ponder our Lord's command again, we find it still says clearly, directly, "Go ye into all the world . . . to every creature . . . all nations . . . all things." What does the command mean to us?

In our imagination let us go back to the time when Israel was camped at Kadesh-barnea on the border of Canaan. Twelve spies have just returned from a secret tour of that Promised Land. God had said, "'I will lead you to the land. . . . I will give it you for your possession'" (Ex. 6:8, N.E.B.). Yet, as we listen we hear ten of the spies saying, "We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we. . . . We saw the giants" (Num. 13:31-33).

But listen again! Two among them are giving a different report: "Caleb [and Joshua] . . . said, Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it" (verse 30). Their confident declaration was in striking contrast to the doubting pessimism of the other ten, who seemed impressed only by high walls, fortified cities, and fearful giants, before whom they said they felt as "grasshoppers" (verse 33). The

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fact was that Caleb and Joshua had seen the same giants and walled cities. The difference was that they believed God's promise. (See *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 149.)

What would have happened if the Israelites had accepted the good report of Caleb and of Joshua? What if they too had believed God's promise? The questions may be hypothetical, but the answer is not. Sacred history records that a generation later it all happened just as it could have happened then—a miraculous passage through Jordan (Joshua 6), tumbling walls at Jericho (chap. 6), victory at Ai (chap. 8), hailstones destroying the Amorites (chap. 10), the sun standing over Gibeon (chap. 10). All this, and more, God would have done for them a generation before, but He did not, for He could not because of their unbelief and their resulting disobedience.

Israel's unbelief was deepened by their incredibly short memory. How, for example, could they so soon forget God's marvelous providences wrought in their behalf—deliverance from Egypt only months before, the daily miracles of manna to feed them and of water to quench their thirst. Even as they rose up in their fateful rebellion they were standing in the cooling shade of the pillar of cloud. (See Ps. 78:10-54; Ex. 13:21, 22; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 282.)

Exaggerated Reports

Furthermore, was it really true that *all* the inhabitants of the land were giants? And was *every* city and town impregnable? To both questions the answer was almost surely No. Were they not then supporting their unbelief by indiscriminate generalizations and inaccurate assumptions?

The counterparts of the messages of those ten doubt-filled spies are heard today. In spirit their report is the same: invincible giants, insurmountable obstacles, impossible difficulties. And the facts appear to support them! There is, for instance, the fact of a world population explosion. Almost 4 billion people now live on planet Earth. Its population is increasing by 2 per cent (75 to 80 million) yearly and is projected to double to nearly 8 billion by the year 2,010. (See *Britannica Book of the Year*, 1975, p. 555.) It is obvious that more people are being born each year, each month, each day, than can possibly be reached with our present methods of preaching, educating, healing, and publishing. Statistically, therefore, it can be proved that we are falling farther behind each day in the fulfillment of our Lord's commission to "Go . . . , teach all nations" (Matt. 28:19). Even doubling, tripling, or quadrupling our present effort would still be inadequate. The statistics prove it. It is therefore a *fact*—a giant fact!

Frequently mentioned also is another fact: Significant groups in the world population still appear to be practically untouched by the Christian message, including the third angel's message, which we believe to be special truth for this time. Among these are the neopagans and unreligious who are found in increasing numbers even in the traditionally Christian areas of the world. Even where our church is strong and where there are large institutions and a relatively concentrated membership, the message we give is often heard by only the relatively few and accepted by the even fewer. The fortresses of human pre-judgment, indifference, and self-satisfaction seem so often to be impenetrable.

There are also those historians-turned-prophets who predict that this movement, represented by the Seventh-day Adventist Church, will eventually lose its clarity of purpose, its sense of mission. They recall other movements and churches that have forgotten their reason for existence. We also shall, they say, for history shows that human nature is too easily turned back from the demanding struggle for truth (Canaan) to return to comfortable coexistence with error (Egypt).

These then are the facts, and these, a few of the arguments. Yet, one more question must be asked. It is this: Is there a fact greater than all these facts, an answer to silence these arguments?

Let us consider Caleb and Joshua again. Were they presumptuous before the facts of their day? I think not, for they believed in a greater fact, the fact of God and of His promises. The record of history vindicates their belief, for all that God did for Israel 40 years later He most assuredly would have done *then* if Israel had believed and obeyed as did Caleb and Joshua.

Faith, Not Presumption

Consider now our time and our mission. Is it presumptuous for us today to say, "Let us go . . . for we are well able to . . ."? I think not, *if*, as did Caleb and Joshua, we believe in God and are willing to trust His purpose and follow His plan. We believe this for the following reasons:

It is God's purpose we serve. As we go "into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15) we are obeying God's command, fulfilling His purpose, extending His invitation to repentance (see Acts 17:30), giving men the assurance of His forgiveness (see 1 John 1:9), offering them the life-giving alternative of salvation in His Son (see 1 Tim. 2:4). We are using Paul's term, Heaven's "ambassadors," beseeching all men everywhere to be reconciled to God (see 2 Cor. 5:20).

It is God's message we proclaim. This is a special message from God for our time symbolized by three angels flying in the midst of heaven. It is the divine answer to the greatest needs of our human family today:

- The need to recognize the ultimate source of truth and authority—"fear God" (Rev. 14:7).
- The need to give honor to God, not to ourselves, for all that we are and have—"give glory to him" (Rev. 14:7).
- The need to live lawfully and orderly in the awareness of divine judgment—"the hour of his judgment is come" (Rev. 14:7).
- The need to worship the living God, our Creator, who also "made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters" (Rev. 14:7).
- The need for positive direction out of the confusion of sin and apostasy—"Babylon is fallen" (Rev. 14:8).
- The need for a clear view of the two great alternatives open to us—one, of eternal death and destruction, the result of disobedience to God's law; the other, life everlasting, the result of keeping "the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus" (Rev. 14:12).

God's power and His presence will enable. If we fulfill God's purpose in proclaiming His message, He promises us His power and His presence. The command, "Go ye," in Matthew 28:19, is preceded in verse 18 by a declaration, "All power is given unto me." It concludes in verse 20 with a promise, "Lo, I am with you alway." All power, that is, authority, is mine, Christ declares. Therefore, "Go!" And as you go, remember that "I am with you"—not only with the apostles, or the early pioneers, but "with you *alway*, even unto the end of the world."

God's plan will succeed. God's plan is a plan for success. The prophetic scenes described in the book of Revelation predict again and again the ultimate fulfillment of God's purpose. They portray an innumerable multitude of men redeemed from this earth and from every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation (see Rev. 5:9-11). This is not failure! It is success! We are thereby assured that God's message will be given, it will be heard, it will be accepted, and it will ac-

compish its intended purpose. God's plan, therefore, is a plan for victory, not defeat.

We submit that the Seventh-day Adventist movement today is in a position similar in many respects to that of old Israel at Kadesh-barnea on the border of the Promised Land. God has done much for us. His gifts have been immeasurably abundant. By His providence He has led us from small beginnings in a single country to the measure of a world church established in 189 countries and speaking in more than 500 languages (1973 *Annual Statistical Report*, pp. 31, 32). He has placed at our disposal many tools with full instructions for their use. Some of these tools are:

- A system of doctrine based solidly on Scripture, theologically sound and intellectually comprehensive.
- A worldwide organization united, yet adaptive to multiple cultures and varied circumstances; unified in its general direction, but decentralized in its responsibility for carrying forward "the work."
- A philosophy and system of education with the capacity for perpetuating not only the body but the spirit of our message.
- A plan for Christian stewardship that invites involvement by every member and area of the church in the support of "the cause."
- A plan for balanced living that enhances the opportunity for man to be restored to the image of God in which he was first created.

With these and other God-given tools a movement has been built that is unified in its teaching and in its worldwide mission, yet possesses in its various segments the potential for continued function even when isolated from the main body. Where no barriers exist this system offers the stimulating advantage of multiplied possibilities in the exchange of workers, concepts, and programs.

As we recount all that God has so graciously given, we must also remember that it has all been given for the fulfillment of a great mission: the proclamation of God's last message to the world. That message and that mission are the true basis for unity in the worldwide church.

Can the church fulfill God's purpose today? Can we give His message to all the world in our time? Is it possible to reach the multiplying billions of the human family in this generation? Can the prejudices of paganism and of false Christianity be overcome today? Can the indifference of secularism and materialism be shaken now? There are those who note these facts and straightway echo the doubt-filled words of the ten ancient spies—"we are not able . . . they are stronger."

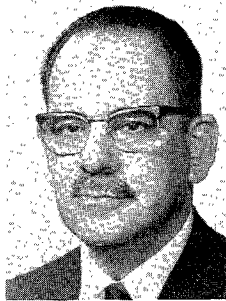
But listen, brother, sister, and fellow worker. Listen to Caleb and Joshua as they declare their faith in God's purpose: "Let us go up at once, and possess it [the land]; for we are well able to overcome it." For them the fact of God was greater than all the facts of circumstance, and their faith in His purpose was the complete answer to the arguments of doubt. Likewise, it will be for us if, with them, we believe our God and fully commit ourselves to fulfill His purpose. Hear the words of faith and courage from God's special messenger for this last time: "There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work. . . . Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port."—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 390.

Why doubt if we believe in God? Why fear if we accept His purpose? When He commands us "Go," He also assures us, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth" (Matt. 28:18). And He promises, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (verse 20). □

Thursday, November 6

Revival Through Bible Study

A superficial reading of the Bible is not sufficient. The Christian must eat and masticate the Word.



By M. S. NIGRI

IN MY DAILY SEARCH FOR GOD I have begun to understand that there is nothing better for an intimate and lasting communion with God than to be in contact with His Word, studying it with prayer every day.

Says Inspiration: "The Bible should be your constant companion."—*Life Sketches*, p. 326.

"The question is asked: What is the cause of the dearth in the church? The answer is: We allow our minds to be drawn away from the word."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 392, 393.

"When the work goes hard, and you become discouraged and are tempted to abandon it, take your Bible, bow upon your knees before God, and say, 'Here, Lord, Thy word is pledged.'"—*Life Sketches*, p. 285.

We can accumulate knowledge and science, wealth and properties, pleasures and power, reputation and fame, but if we do not accumulate the priceless treasures of Omnipotence that are released to us through the prayerful reading of the Bible, our communion with the Lord will be void; our concerns over material things will increase, our faith will diminish, and our spiritual lives will be little more than superficial experiences, futile and disastrous. If this is our condition, we need to change it. "Seek ye the Lord while he may be found" (Isa. 55:6).

I remember a time in my experience when I was strangely comfortable, imperceptibly caring more for the daily routine than for my spiritual devotion. It wasn't that I was lost, too far from God, oh, no! But I began examining my attitudes. I felt the necessity for a more effective and daily communion with my heavenly Father. I decided to spend more time every day with my Lord in prayer and the study of His Word.

There is no doubt that the Lord wants us to become more holy in our way of living (see 2 Peter 3:11, 14) and more aggressive in our witnessing (see 2 Cor. 4:13).

How can we accomplish this?

There is only one way, my dear fellow believers, and here it is:

Jesus said: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . Apart from me

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you can do nothing. . . . Abide in my love." "I chose you . . . that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should abide" (John 15:4-9, 16, R.S.V.).

Jesus is speaking not only of the intimate communion that we must maintain with Him but also of the consequent personal witnessing we must give, "You should go and bear fruit."

But someone must certainly be asking, "How can I abide in Christ and bear my witness?"

The initial step is to bring yourself into a close and daily relationship with the Bible. This must be one of your individual priorities as an Adventist. Do you want to know why? Let Sister White answer:

"There are very many who claim to serve God, but who have no experimental knowledge of Him. Their desire to do His will is based upon their own inclination, not upon the deep conviction of the Holy Spirit. . . . They have not a personal relation with a living Saviour. . . . Christ specified the things that are dangerous to the soul. . . . He mentions the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the lusts of other things. . . . And pleasures of this life. . . .

"But many become so absorbed in business that they have no time for prayer, no time for the study of the Bible, no time to seek and serve God. . . .

"They are working for others' good; their duties are pressing, their responsibilities are many, and they allow their labor to crowd out devotion. Communion with God through prayer and study of His word is neglected."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 48-52.

Really, it would be a blessing if many of us who live a self-centered and materialistic life could recognize our poor spiritual condition and cry, "O wretched man that I am!" (Rom. 7:24).

What should we do?

We must spend more time with the things of eternal value. Among these is the daily reading of the Word of God, with personal prayer. This is how faith and our trust in God's promises will be nourished and will grow. Our desire will be to tell others what we are feeling.

Faith Comes by Hearing

Paul wrote: "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17).

Do you know why?

Because "God speaks to us in His Word. We are in the audience chamber of the Most High, in the very presence of God."—*My Life Today*, p. 283.

"A voice from heaven is addressing us in its pages."—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 190.

In one of his articles, Robert H. Pierson wrote: "In the past, revival and reformation have been closely linked with study of God's Word. It must be so in the Adventist Church today as well. Real revival and reformation will come only when we as a people come back to the Bible. The Word of God again must become the great focus of Seventh-day Adventist attention and application."—*Review and Herald*, Aug. 15, 1974, p. 9.

He is right. If we want revival and reformation in our lives, in the life of the church, we must go back to the Bible to hear what God wants to say to us.

As a church we are known to other Christians as the people of the Bible. But what about you, personally? Are you concerned about your relation with the Bible? I am wondering how many among us, workers and laity, are really devout readers of the Bible? How many of us here are in love with this wonderful Book of God? Have you already eaten from the

bread of life today? Have you prayed for willingness to read the Book?

I am not speaking of the daily study of the Sabbath school lesson, nor of the devotional book that we use in our family worship. No! I am speaking of the time we need to spend alone—yes, alone—with God and His Word, as Jesus taught us in Matthew 6:6.

We believe that the Bible is the revealed word of God. But the question is not merely whether we believe this or not, but whether the Bible is a part of our lives, whether it is alive in us, and whether we recognize it is as essential to the sustenance of our spiritual lives as is natural bread to the sustenance of our physical lives.

Surely there is a need to go back to the Bible.

Do you know why?

There are many reasons. I want to mention the two I consider most important.

The first one is in Psalm 119:11: "Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee."

"Not sin," what a thought!

Sin is a terrible thing. It is a foreign element in our lives, because sin destroys—destroys our body, our health, our lives. More than that, sin destroys our faith in God, our confidence in Jesus, and our hope in His promises.

The Bible and Victory

Satan creates sin to confuse us and, worst of all, to separate us from Jesus. That is why God gave us His Word, the Bible, that we might not sin against Him. In the struggle with sin we need the Word of God. It is the light that guides us to Jesus, who pardons us and destroys the sin that was in us.

Jesus overcame Satan in the wilderness with the Word of God when tempted.

So it can be with us today. The only way to keep our lives pure is through the Word of God. In Psalm 119:9 we read: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to thy word" (R.S.V.).

Amplifying this text we find the following quotation from Sister White: "Let the youth, then, be taught to give close study to the Word of God. Received into the soul, it will prove a mighty barricade against temptations."—*Education*, p. 190.

George Müller, famed for his effectual prayers, tells us of his appreciation for the Bible:

"The vigor of our Spiritual Life will be in exact proportion to the place held by the Bible in our life and thoughts. I solemnly state this from the experience of fifty-four years. The first three years after conversion I neglected the Word of God. Since I began to search it diligently the blessing has been wonderful. I have read the Bible through one hundred times, and always with increasing delight. Each time it seems like a new book to me. Great has been the blessing from consecutive, diligent, daily study. I look upon it as a lost day when I have not had a good time over the Word of God."—HENRY H. HALLEY, *Bible Handbook*, p. 5.

How can some of us be so indifferent to the need to read the Bible daily? How can we go through life, facing sin and death every moment, without that daily companionship with our Lord through His Word?

One of the problems of modern Christians is that they try to accommodate the Bible to their way of living, instead of molding their life to the Word of God.

"Our salvation depends on a knowledge of the truth contained in the Scriptures. . . . Search, O search the precious Bible with hungry hearts. . . . Search until you have ascertained your relation to God and His will in regard to you."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 111.

The second reason we need to go back to the Bible is that the Bible presents Jesus as our Saviour (see Luke 24:27, John 1:1-4). If we need to find Jesus, usually we need to go to the Bible. It is the story of Jesus.

Really, the main reason God gave us the Bible is to reveal to us His eternal plan of salvation through His Son. Reading the Bible from the beginning to the end you can envision a red blood line of salvation, the blood of the Lamb of God, slain to blot out our sin. And we know that the Son was the Word and that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14, R.S.V.).

"The reception of the Word, the bread from heaven, is declared to be the reception of Christ Himself. . . . Man is called upon to eat and masticate the Word."—ELLEN G. WHITE, in *Review and Herald*, Nov. 23, 1897.

Daily Bible Study Essential

Yes, we need more than a superficial and occasional contact with the Bible; we need to eat and masticate it, to make it a part of our lives. Our real need is to be more in communion with the Bible every day. This is not an easy thing to do in these tumultuous and sophisticated days in which we live. But it must be a priority. I know this by experience. Determination and perseverance must be exercised (see 1 Tim. 4:16).

It was near the end of 1973 that I became concerned with my almost superficial contact with the Bible, even though I used to read it through every year. Then I decided to dedicate more time to the reading of the Word, changing some methods and procedures. I determined with the help of God to read and study the Bible in the morning after a private prayer, as the first thing in the day. Don't think it is easy to get started. I have to get up much earlier, but this closer and earlier communion with my God has been profitable to my spiritual life. I feel spiritually better in many ways. I used to leave the reading of the Bible for the end of the day, before going to bed, and, I must confess, many a night I just could not read even one entire chapter. Now I feel much happier because I give to my dear Lord the first and best time of the day.

This Immeasurable Power

By HARRY BERNARD RAMSEY

Through distances that stretch beyond men's ken,
Infinite in measure, the fleeing suns
Send forth the evidence of power that runs
Throughout all the ordered scheme of heaven.
The least of kind obeys and demonstrates,
Within, a limitless capacity for change;
Bears, too, this veracity:
That which God orders He facilitates.
So, then, to this immeasurable power
Insurgent man may yield and be transformed
From rebel heart to Michael's slave, conformed
To law and love's desire in this last hour
By His unchanging force, which has not erred,
Contained, and cogent still, within His word.

How many of you who are living in normal conditions are reading the Bible every day with prayer? How many have read the entire Bible through at least once in your life? Is it not a shame that some of the children of God let days, weeks, and even months go by without having been in communion with His Book?

Someone concerned with this subject wrote the following imaginary "Bible's Diary":

"January 15—I rested the entire week. My owner read me regularly for the first nights at the beginning of this year, but I think he has forgotten me by now.

"February 2—Housecleaning day. I was dusted along with the other objects and placed in my usual place.

"February 8—My owner used me for a few moments after dinner. He was looking for some references. I went to church today.

"April 2—I spent the day very concerned. My owner had to conduct a prayer meeting and he was looking for some references. He had a hard time finding one, even though it was in the usual place.

"May 1—I spent the entire afternoon on Grandma's lap. She is here visiting. She dropped a few tears on Colossians 2:5-7.

"May 6—again on Grandma's lap this afternoon. She spent most of the time meditating over 1 Corinthians, chapter 13, and the last verses of the fifteenth chapter.

"May 7, 8, and 9—On Grandma's lap all afternoon. It's such a comfortable place! At times she speaks to me and other times she reads me.

"May 10—Grandma went back home today. She kissed me good-by. I am again in my usual place.

"June 3—Someone placed a few small flowers between my pages.

"July 1—I was packed in a suitcase between some clothes and other objects. I think we will spend some time away from home.

"July 7—Still in the suitcase.

"July 10—Still in the suitcase although most of the other things have been taken out to be used.

"July 15—Home again and in my usual place. I made a long trip. I don't understand why I was taken along.

"August 1—What unbearable heat! There are two magazines, a novel, and a hat on top of me. Oh! If they would at least take these things off me!

"September 5—Cleaning. I was dusted and put in my usual place.

"September 10— I was used by Mary for a few minutes. She was going to write a letter to a girl friend whose brother had died and she was looking for an appropriate text.

"September 30—Housecleaning day. Dusted again and put in my place for a long rest."

We must fill the mind, the heart, and all our being with the Scriptures, reading them every day with prayer and meditation, memorizing, if possible, some parts and applying them to our lives. This is really what rejuvenates our minds, controls the thoughts, governs the emotions and feelings, and gives the right direction to our will, our decisions, and actions (see Rom. 12:2).

And best of all, this close communion with God through His Bible will make us conscious that we are His witnesses and it will move us to a practical and successful personal witnessing.

Remember what Jesus is asking for: "Abide in me, and I in you. . . . Abide in my love." "I chose you . . . that you should go and bear fruit."

Why don't you try it? □

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Dear Friends,

As long as I can remember, the **Review and Herald** has been a weekly visitor to my home. I can remember my days as a child living with my grandmother, and how she would daily look for the mail just to get her new copy of the **Review**. That's the way it is with so many. The **Review** is a way of life and has become a great blessing to so many.

I keenly feel that those who do not get the **Review and Herald** are not plugged in. For about \$1 per month, inspirational, informative, and practical information comes into the home every week. We keep in-tune not only with the thinking and theology of our day but also with the important happenings of the church. And believe me, it is exciting to watch the movings of God's Holy Spirit in this world. In fact, it's electrifying!

You know, I just figured that I spend \$4.75 each month for a newspaper and can't read very much of it.

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Very sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Edmund M. Peterson'.

E. M. Peterson, Manager
Periodical Department
Review and Herald Publishing Association



Elder Ed Peterson, manager of the **Review and Herald** periodical department, directs the flow of energy found in the fine periodicals published here. As these magazines go from us to you, it is his hope that you will receive the spiritual power necessary to keep you in touch with Jesus Christ, the only Source of real power for today.

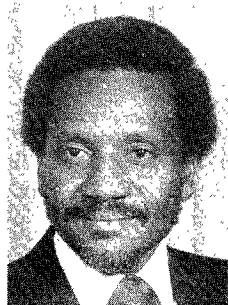
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Is the Young Man Absalom Safe?

Are our young people safe in our schools, churches, homes, or with themselves?



By CALVIN B. ROCK

TWICE THE ANXIOUS KING HAS RECEIVED couriers, first Ahimaaz, then Cush; twice he listens to the victory pronouncements of these breathless messengers who have run all the way from the scene of battle bringing news of the triumph of his forces. Twice David brushes aside the formal announcements of the successful defense of his kingdom apprehensively to ask the question, which was for this troubled father more important than the plight of the kingdom itself, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

The true slayer of Absalom, who perverted his love, distorted his judgment, inflamed his unholy ambitions, and finally drove him to a premature and ignominious death is still in relentless pursuit of the bodies and minds of youth today. Our sensuous and materialistic generation presents a veritable minefield of spiritual and physical snares. Each year brings thousands of unhappy casualties. Every parent in Adventism and every father and mother in Israel, though assured of the final triumph of the church of God, cannot but share the burden of that ancient potentate. On the surface of the mind of all sensitive adults rides the burning question, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

So overwhelming and so pervasive are the baneful influences with which this age bombards the sons and daughters of Adam that one might ask the question, Is *anyone* safe in these bewildering times? The hedges of conventional propriety, which to some degree at least insulated the Christian from the sights and sounds of fleshly society in days gone by, have been leveled by the inventions of a dynamic and mobile age. Whereas, in yesteryear, the battle could be viewed as a thing apart and there were citadels of safety to which the child of God, as David, could retreat for protection and consolation, today we find ourselves with former battle lines erased. The warfare now engulfs the very precincts of our distinctive communion; the enemy has swum the moats and climbed the walls of our once isolated culture; the sounds of hand-to-

Calvin B. Rock is president of Oakwood College, Huntsville, Alabama.

hand combat tell us that personal salvation is a full-time effort for every soldier of the cross. And yet above the din of battle, the anguished cry of troubled parents and anxious elders can still be heard, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

The situation begs for close analysis and demands an honest reply. Let us, then, ask ourselves the question, Are the youth of our church safe *in the community*? Or to put it another way, where do you live? In what kind of environment are you trying to rear your children? Spirit of Prophecy counsel on the matter is candid and clear: "In choosing a home, God would have us consider, first of all, the moral and religious influences that will surround us and our families."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 131. Life in the cities is false and artificial. Money getting, excitement, pleasure seeking, display, luxury, and extravagance, have an almost irresistible power upon the youth. "The children and youth should be carefully guarded. They should be kept away from the hotbeds of iniquity that are to be found in our cities."—*Ibid.*, p. 136.

Influence of Environment

Politics may differ from land to land, the historical antecedents that structure the attitudes and environment may differ, the overt manifestations of behavior and response may change, but spiraling crime rates, revolutions, assassinations, political scandals, and the social diseases of insanity, divorce, and suicide, which are sweeping the cities of our decadent sin-infested planet, defy solution. And while it is very true, as blacks on the early plantations of America used to sing, "There's no hiding place down here," we must act upon the premise that there is an obvious correlation between the apostasy rate of Adventist youth and the type of environment in which they are reared.

That we have jobs to protect, kinship ties to preserve, investments to guard, or even that we are already in the suburbs (let's not forget, Lot pitched his tent *toward* Sodom and not *in* it), or that the Lord understands, will not stop the relentless forces of the law of cause and effect from doing a destructive work upon our families. It is literally a life-and-death matter. Bold, faith-filled, urgent action is needed if we are to reply affirmatively when addressing the inquiry, "Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Are the youth of our church safe *in the school*? The moral depravity pervading all of our societal institutions (government, economics, religion, et cetera) is so obvious and so distasteful that no perceptive Seventh-day Adventist should have to be sold on the benefits of Christian education versus public education. Nevertheless, our discussion demands another look at the pointed counsel of the Lord's messenger: "Those who attend the public schools often associate with others more neglected than they, those who, aside from the time spent in the schoolroom, are left to obtain a street education. The hearts of the young are easily impressed; and unless their surroundings are of the right character, Satan will use these neglected children to influence those who are more carefully trained. Thus, before Sabbathkeeping parents know what is being done, the lessons of depravity are learned, and the souls of their little ones are corrupted."—*Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 173.

The commonplace acceptance of premarital sex, group marriage, infidelity, Spiritualism, the drug culture, and other forms of body- and mind-destroying intemperance ought to be sufficient reason to spur every parent to make whatever sacrifice of comfort and finance is necessary to give his child a Christian education from elementary school through the highest grade possible. In fact, so vital is a Christian education to personal salvation and the replenishing of the ranks

with workers that God has placed the responsibility of financing the education of our youth not only upon parents but upon (1) friends, (2) churches, and (3) conferences (see *Counsels to Parents and Teachers*, p. 69). But our probing must be deeper than this. Are the school boards and administrators of our day schools heeding Spirit of Prophecy counsel regarding the kind of students we should be admitting or are we not in too many instances, because of financial press, operating Christian community schools whose large percentages of non-Adventist youth greatly negate the schools' purpose?

And what about our two universities, our 462 academies and colleges and 3,847 elementary schools? Are they the models of life-style and conduct that we want them to be? Or, in fact, is it realistic to ask of them that they hold the line and set the standard for the rest of the church? Are they reflectors or reformers of the general life-style of contemporary Adventism? And, in either case, are our youth safe there? In the dormitories, with one another, before our teachers and counselors (many of whom have exposed themselves to volumes of error while earning their degrees), at the games in the gymnasium, at parties in the campus community?

The answers aren't easy, but the question persists—"Is the young man Absalom safe?"

Is he safe *in the church*? What kind of atmosphere are our churches creating for our youth? Do the youth who grow up in the church remain because of or in spite of the quality of our local church atmosphere? Let me be more specific. When measuring our lives by our doctrinal profession are the tender impressionable minds led to believe that holiness is really possible or do they conclude that it is an ideal, a pot of gold at the rainbow's end. Even worse, Is Adventist culture to them just one of the games played by older people who are anesthetizing themselves against the day of death? Are they safe in the matter of discipline? When they fall into sin, do we counsel? And when we correct, are our sanctions punitive or expressive of our regard for the fair name of the church? Are we terribly concerned, or terribly embarrassed?

What is the quality of our youth programming? Does the nominating committee more often than not leave the children and youth to willing but unknowledgeable personnel? Are they left with those mothers who just happen to have children in that particular age group, or worse yet, left to their own devices? Or are we careful to select for their Sabbath school teachers, MV leaders, the most qualified and dedicated persons among us? In the words of the prophetess, "The very best talent that can be secured is needed to educate and mold the minds of the young."—*Ibid.*, p. 175.

Vital, Living Connection Needed

In this vein, may I reminisce just long enough to recount that as a lad of 15 I was moving through the institutional machinery, attending church each Sabbath, but without a vital, living connection with the Master. What helped to warm my experience and crystallize my attitudes as much as anything else was discharging church responsibilities entrusted me by imaginative youth leaders and a concerned pastor. Impressive buildings, compact services, attractive landscaping, and a well-honed church machinery all helped create a positive atmosphere. But our church can have all this and yet be unsafe for our youth unless there is conscious calculated and persistent effort at recognizing their presence and projecting for their spiritual, educational, and social needs. Only in such a congregation can it be truthfully stated that the young man (or the young woman) is safe.

Is the young man Absalom safe *in the home*? Preposterous! Why, if Adventist youth are safe anywhere it's in our homes!

You're right, or at least this is the way it ought to be. But let's take a candid look. Are our children really safe at home? For instance, how about parental example in diet? Are we adults faithfully following Spirit of Prophecy counsel regarding what we eat, when we eat, and how we eat? Is it in safety that our children watch our living habits, or are we by our slackness and indifference to inspired counsel determining for them patterns that will affect them negatively for time and eternity?

What about the interpersonal attitudes between father and mother? Are our homes, in the words of the poet, places where "joy is duty, and love is law"? Or do recrimination and retaliation between parents produce a veil of tension that robs the youth of confidence and security? And what about that vital one-to-one relationship with our children? Have you Mr. Busy Executive taken time from your work and travels to form a personal friendship with your offspring or are you taking it for granted that because you are paying church school tuition and doling out allowances they will somehow do all right?

Again inspiration speaks: "Fathers, spend as much time as possible with your children. Seek to become acquainted with their various dispositions, that you may know how to train them in harmony with the word of God. . . . "[Fathers] give some of your leisure hours to your children; become acquainted with them; associate with them in their work and in their sports, and win their confidence."—*The Adventist Home*, p. 222.

Fostering Positive Attitudes

Turning to yet another common problem, Are we by our words fostering within our children negative or positive attitudes toward Adventists and Adventism? Are they safe at the Sabbath meal when we discuss the sermon, the minister, the choir, a weaker brother, or the neighbor across the way for that matter? Are we structuring in our homes a healthy concept of the church or do we who remember to "tell it not in Gath" forget and air it at home where consequences far more serious accrue? Safety at home is not comprised of soft rugs, deep-throated stereos, rich draperies, sunny patios, intercom systems, and three-car garages. Real safety is a diligent structuring of an environment built by careful perusal of the divine counsel not only in relation to where we live but in regard to the furniture we buy, the music we play, the regularity we employ, the economy we follow, the service we render, the love we display. Eli by his permissiveness, David by his disobedience, Noah by his drunkenness, Lot by his selfishness, Ham by his disrespect, each set in motion forces that negatively affected their children and demonstrates clearly that membership within a nuclear family of the household of faith is no guarantee of salvation. Unfortunately, good members sometime structure bad families. What is your answer to the critical comparison? Would your house and mine pass divine inspection? "Is the young man safe?"

Is he safe *with himself*? The nature of our final question is graphically illustrated by a bit of mini-drama with which the Detroit, Michigan, fire department deals every spring. According to Detroit firemen, each April when the ice and snow have melted and spring has come, they are besieged with canary calls. What is a canary call? Well, that's the anguished call of a distraught maid or distressed housewife whose canary or pet bird has escaped. It appears that Detroiters often welcome spring by opening their windows and their bird cages at the same time. Result—the pets are attracted to the sunshine and the open spaces beyond. Recovery is almost impossible, because the birds do not fly laterally. Once they are out of the house they almost inevitably take vertical flight

until they are out of sight and lost. The only explanation that I have heard given for this kind of behavior is that the birds get lost in quest of a ceiling. You see, all winter, and probably all of their short lives, since the birds were not taught or concerned with the why's or the how's of their restrictions, they were simply existing with the physical limitations of their benign captivity. Thus, with the sudden rush of freedom they instinctively reach for the heretofore ever-present ceiling. No wonder then that they pursue a dizzy dash to destruction.

Our question again, Are our young men and women safe with themselves? How do they perform when they are forced by time and circumstance to leave the hedges of home? Have we in the comparative quiet of their childhood and junior days taught them not only the rules but also the principles of Christianity? Have we trained them in decision making, to reason from cause to effect, to see God's laws as conditions of love given to enhance their happiness and longevity? Or have we simply physically confined them within an arbitrary doctrinal environment of scriptural walls and ceilings?

A prime example of the bird-cage mentality of some Adventist youth is expressed by the bland testimony of one who lamented:

My mother taught me not to smoke, I don't.
Or listen to a naughty joke, I don't.
She told me that I must not think about intoxicating drink;
At pretty girls I must not wink, I don't.
Wild youth chase women, wine, and song,
I don't.
To stay out late is very wrong, I don't.
I kiss no girls, not even one,
I do not know how it is done.

You wouldn't think I have much fun, I don't!

That such a mind set turned loose in society should take intoxicating flight to spiritual tragedy is no surprise. The point I wish to make is that if our youth are to be safe when at last we have guided them into adulthood, into marriage, into the job market, into society at large, our efforts to teach them while in the house, by the way, lying down, and rising up during childhood and youth must be more than attempts at indoctrination; we must also establish for them logical, wholesome, positive attitudes toward God's rules for living.

But do residence in a rural or suburban community, attendance at church school, membership at a church with a relevant youth program, correct parental example buttressed by careful indoctrination at home guarantee salvation of our youth? No! Solomon's injunction to train up a child in the way he should go and when he is old he will not depart from it (see Prov. 22:6), does not mean that a child properly reared will always manage somehow to be saved. The tragic fate of Lucifer and company is stark evidence of the fact that creatures with perfect environment, education, and example may choose the path of defiance. What this text, which we may call Solomon's law, does establish is the maxim that after maturity the likelihood of one's living in harmony with God's Word is highly proportionate to the accuracy and consistency with which one's parents or guardians have interpreted and applied that Word during his formative years. We have no way of knowing how a particular son or daughter will react to God's provision for spiritual refuge, the final choice is theirs.

Nevertheless, we must labor untiringly to provide the conditions most conducive for their positive responses to heaven's invitation. This task is our most critical responsibility and highest privilege; thank God we may approach it with optimistic enthusiasm as we follow the blueprint of the Word of God and the Spirit of Prophecy. □

The Church in the Last Days

The church must hold aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.



By ELLEN G. WHITE

WE ARE RAPIDLY NEARING THE CLOSE of this earth's history. The end is very near, much nearer than many suppose, and I feel burdened to urge upon our people the necessity of seeking the Lord earnestly. Many are asleep, and what can be said to arouse them from their carnal slumber? The Lord would have His church purified, before His judgments shall fall more signally upon the world.—*Review and Herald*, Nov. 8, 1906.

Every one whose name is on the church books should clearly understand what union with the church means. It means that you have pledged yourself to serve God. It means that you have fully surrendered self to Him, in order that Christ may reign where self once reigned. It means that you have given up the selfish ideas and plans that you cherished for so long, and have yielded your mind to the mind of Christ. It means that your fixed purpose is to be one with God, one with His people; that you will exercise self-denial and self-sacrifice to advance the interests of His kingdom; that you will strive to overcome everything that hinders growth in grace.—*Ibid.*, June 23, 1903.

We take upon ourselves a grave responsibility when we unite with the church. The church is God's family, and the members of this family are to be unselfishly interested in one another. They are to pray and work for one another's salvation.—*Ibid.*, Jan. 19, 1905.

The Church God's Vineyard

When Jesus came, He found sins, worldliness, and dissension in the church; but it was His work to reverse this order of things. He would have His church in the world, but not of it. He said, "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." The church was to be a divine inclosure in the world. It was to be as a vineyard planted by the divine Husbandman, and brought under cultivation by Him. It was to be as a nursery planted with trees of righteousness, and although surrounded by evil trees of the world, which brought forth fruit unto death, yet all within the inclosure was designed to be the planting of the Lord, bearing fruit unto righteousness. The followers of Christ were to re-

veal the power of the transforming grace of Christ to change the corrupt hearts of men. The church was to be as a field of wheat, but a strange hand has planted tares among the wheat, and it is this mingling of tares and wheat that causes the children of God to weep with sorrow.

The natural, unsanctified elements of human character work against the influence of the Spirit of God. Men of evil minds bring in false doctrines, and in many cases these false doctrines have supplanted the truth of God.

The Lord designed that His church should not receive the commandments of men, but acknowledge His law alone. He designed that the pure, unadulterated truth should be proclaimed in the world. Self-denial and cross-bearing was to characterize His children. They were to represent to the world the character of Christ, and keep before the world a representation of the eternal world; for among them was to be found the spirit, the character, that should be developed by coming under the control of the divine government. They were to be obedient to higher laws than the princes of this world originate, and yield submission to a greater power than kings can command.

While all the world is under the care of God, and angels are commissioned to do service in all parts of it, yet the church is the special object of God's love and care. In the church, He is making experiments of mercy and love, and drawing men to Himself. Through the grace of Christ an amazing transformation is taking place in the corrupt hearts of men.

The work wrought in the characters of sinners through the grace of Christ is a greater work than to perform a miracle upon the bodies of men. The old, carnal nature dies, and a new creature appears after the likeness of Christ. At this mighty work, angels look and rejoice. They see that upon this sin-cursed earth, Christ has His training-schools. He takes the ignorant children of darkness and of wrath, and brings them as willing subjects to His feet to learn of Him, that they may become laborers together with God; that they may wear Christ's yoke and bear His burden, and identify their interests with the interests and delights of heaven.

He has in prospect a well-trained, well-disciplined army of workers, with whom He can deposit His goods, and trust them to bring back His talents improved, and multiplied by being put out to the exchangers; to whom He can say at last, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant. . . . Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Ibid.*, Dec. 19, 1893.

Satan Works Against the Church

Satan seeks to counterwork the work of God, and he is constantly urging men to accept his principles. He represents the chosen people of God as a deluded people. He is an accuser of the brethren, and his accusing power is employed against those who work righteousness. The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan's charges by showing the results of obedience to right principles.

These principles are to be manifest in the individual Christian, in the family, in the church, and in every institution established for God's service. All are to be symbols of what can be done for the world. They are to be types of the saving power of the truths of the gospel. All are agencies in the fulfillment of God's great purpose for the human race.—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 296, 297.

There is nothing that Satan fears so much as that the people of God shall clear the way by removing every hindrance, so that the Lord can pour out His Spirit upon a languishing church and an impenitent congregation. If Satan has his way, there would never be another awakening, great or small, to the end of time. But we are not ignorant of his devices. It is possible

to resist his power. When the way is prepared for the Spirit of God, the blessing will come.

Satan can no more hinder a shower of blessing from descending upon God's people than he can close the windows of heaven that rain cannot come upon the earth. Wicked men and devils cannot hinder the work of God, or shut out His presence from the assemblies of His people, if they will, with subdued, contrite hearts, confess and put away their sins, and in faith claim His promises. Every temptation, every opposing influence, whether open or secret, may be successfully resisted, "not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts."—*Review and Herald*, March 22, 1887.

The Authority of the Church

God has made His church on the earth a channel of light, and through it He communicates His purposes and His will. He does not give to one of His servants an experience independent of and contrary to the experience of the church itself. Neither does He give one man a knowledge of His will for the entire church while the church—Christ's body—is left in darkness. In His providence He places His servants in close connection with His church in order that they may have less confidence in themselves and greater confidence in others whom He is leading out to advance His work.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 163.

In the record of the conversion of Saul important principles are given us, which we should ever bear in mind. Saul was brought directly into the presence of Christ. He was one whom Christ intended for a most important work, one who was to be a "chosen vessel" unto Him; yet the Lord did not at once tell him of the work that had been assigned him. He arrested him in his course and convicted him of sin; but when Saul asked, "What wilt Thou have me to do?" the Saviour placed the inquiring Jew in connection with His church, there to obtain a knowledge of God's will concerning him.—*Ibid.*, p. 120.

Christ here gives all His people an example of the manner of His working for the salvation of men. The Son of God identified Himself with the office and authority of His organized church. His blessings were to come through the agencies that He has ordained, thus connecting man with the channel through which His blessings come.—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 432.

Those who are inclined to regard their individual judgment as supreme are in grave peril. It is Satan's studied effort to separate such ones from those who are channels of light, through whom God has wrought to build up and extend His work in the earth. To neglect or despise those whom God has appointed to bear the responsibilities of leadership in connection with the advancement of the truth, is to reject the means that He has ordained for the help, encouragement, and strength of His people. . . . The Lord in His wisdom has arranged that by means of the close relationship that should be maintained by all believers, Christian shall be united to Christian and church to church. Thus the human instrumentality will be enabled to co-operate with the divine. Every agency will be subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all the believers will be united in an organized and well-directed effort to give to the world the glad tidings of the grace of God.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 164.

At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments—"Christ our righteousness." There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world in holding aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. The beauty of holiness is to appear in its native luster in contrast with the deformity and darkness of the disloyal, those who

have revolted from the law of God. Thus we acknowledge God and recognize His law, the foundation of His government in heaven and throughout His earthly dominions.—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 16.

Such an experience must be ours if we would be prepared to stand in the day of God. Now, while probation lingers, while mercy's voice is still heard, is the time for us to put away our sins. While moral darkness covers the earth like a funeral pall, the light of God's standard-bearers must shine the more brightly, showing the contrast between heaven's light and Satan's darkness.

God has made ample provision that we may stand perfect in His grace, wanting in nothing, waiting for the appearing of our Lord. Are you ready? Have you the wedding garment on? The garment will never cover deceit, impurity, corruption, or hypocrisy. The eye of God is upon you. It is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart. We may conceal our sins from the eyes of men, but we can hide nothing from our Maker.—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 220.

There is a wide difference between a pretended union and a real connection with Christ by faith. A profession of the truth places men in the church, but this does not prove that they have a vital connection with the living Vine. A rule is given by which the true disciple may be distinguished from those who claim to follow Christ but have not faith in Him. The one class are fruit bearing, the other, fruitless. The one are often subjected to the pruning knife of God that they may bring forth more fruit; the other, as withered branches, are ere long to be severed from the living Vine.—*Ibid.*, pp. 228, 229.

Those only who are constantly receiving fresh supplies of grace, will have power proportionate to their daily need and their ability to use that power. Instead of looking forward to some future time when, through a special endowment of spiritual power, they will receive a miraculous fitting up for soul winning, they are yielding themselves daily to God, that He may make them vessels meet for His use. Daily they are improving the opportunities for service that lie within their reach.—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

In the plan of redemption a place is allotted to every soul, and each one is to take the place assigned him and do the work appointed him. The work of God's people may and will be varied, but one Spirit is the mover in it all. God calls upon the members of His church to receive the Holy Spirit, to come together in unity and brotherly sympathy, to bind their interests together in love. Christian unity is a mighty agency.

When God's chosen people are of one mind, barriers of selfishness will disappear as by magic, and many, many more souls will be converted, because of the unity which exists among believers. There is one body and one Spirit. Those who have been building territorial lines of distinction, barriers of color and caste, might better take these down much faster than they put them up. Man is to obey the word of God declared in the seventeenth chapter of John. He is to be one with his fellow man and with Christ, and in Christ one with God. Then of him can be spoken the words, "Ye are complete in him."—Manuscript 83, 1899.

Dear brethren, the Lord is coming. Lift up your thoughts and heads and rejoice. Oh, we would think that those who hear the joyful news, who claim to love Jesus, would be filled with joy unutterable and full of glory. This is the good, the joyful news which should electrify every soul, which should be repeated in our homes and told to those whom we meet on the street. What more joyful news can be communicated! Caviling and contention with believers or unbelievers is not the work God has given us to do.—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 381.

Let the gospel message ring through our churches, summoning them to universal action. Let the members of the church have increased faith, gaining zeal from their unseen, heavenly allies, from a knowledge of their exhaustless resources, from the greatness of the enterprise in which they are engaged, and from the power of their Leader. Those who place themselves under God's control, to be led and guided by Him, will catch the steady tread of the events ordained by Him to take place. Inspired with the Spirit of Him who gave His life for the life of the world, they will no longer stand still in impotency, pointing to what they cannot do. Putting on the armor of heaven, they will go forth to the warfare, willing to do and dare for God, knowing that His omnipotence will supply their need.—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 14.

Final Victory and Triumph

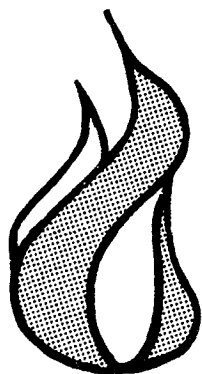
The course of God's people should be upward and onward to victory. One is with us, even the Captain of our salvation, who has said for our encouragement, "Lo! I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." "Be of good cheer. I have overcome the world." He will lead us on to certain victory. What God promises, He is able at any time to perform.—*Review and Herald*, Aug. 23, 1881.

With His eye upon the church, the Lord has again and again allowed matters to come to a crisis, that in their extremity His people should look alone for His help. Their prayers, their faith, together with their steadfast purpose to the true, have called for the interference of God, and then He has fulfilled His promise, "Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isa. 58:9). His mighty arm has been stretched out for the deliverance of His people. God reserves His gracious interposition in their behalf till the time of their extremity; thus He makes their deliverance more marked, and their victories more glorious. When all human wisdom fails, the Lord's interference will be more clearly recognized, and He will receive the glory that is His due. Even the enemies of our faith, persecutors, will perceive that God is working for His people in turning their captivity.—*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 372.

Not one cloud has fallen upon the church that God has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork the work of God but He has foreseen. All has taken place as He has predicted through His prophets. He has not left His church in darkness, forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and through His providence, acting in its appointed place in the world's history, He has brought about that which His Holy Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell. All His purposes will be fulfilled and established. His law is linked with His throne, and satanic agencies combined with human agencies cannot destroy it.

Truth is inspired and guarded by God; it will live, and will succeed, although it may appear at times to be overshadowed. The gospel of Christ is the law exemplified in character. The deceptions practiced against it, every device for vindicating falsehood, every error forged by satanic agencies, will eventually be eternally broken, and the triumph of truth will be like the appearing of the sun at noonday. The Sun of Righteousness shall shine forth with healing in His wings, and the whole earth shall be filled with His glory.—*Ibid.*, p. 108. □

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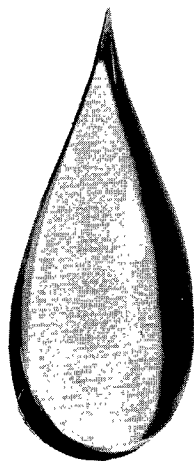


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How to Be Sure You'll Be in Heaven

By ROSEMARIE WHITE OSMUNSON

First Day

Are You Safe to Be Saved?

EVERYBODY WANTS to go to heaven! At least *almost* everybody. One day Randy told me that he didn't *really* care to be there. He was having so much fun here he rather hoped Jesus wouldn't come to take him away to some strange place where everybody wore white robes. Randy likes jeans.

And there were other things, too, that he'd imagined about heaven for which he was not ready just yet. The cloud, soft as a water bed, and the harp, perhaps like a guitar, that could be fun! But to wear a crown? And a mile-long table, but maybe no pizza? Randy's idea of heaven was pretty limited.

The weeks passed and Randy began to be more aware of the real heaven of which he'd not known. He heard Dad discussing famine conditions in various parts of the world, and telling about all the hungry people. Then Jeanie died and he really ached to know whether he'd be seeing her again.

There was that dollar he had stolen—really just swiped it, you know. That measly piece of green money kept plaguing him with misery. He also read the Gospel of John very thoughtfully and became acquainted with Jesus—the Jesus who was trying to show him what God was like. That God really loved *him* and wanted *him* in heaven.

Yes, he really did want to be saved. He wanted to see the place where people were treated fairly, where no one was hungry or hurting or lonely. Where fear was absent. Where the challenge of life was not to outwit or compete, but the challenge would be that of unsurpassed adventure in travel with others, learning together incredible things, power unlimited, true friendships galore. Every day he seemed to feel a stronger desire to be in heaven. But all these

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things would be little in comparison to his new desire to see Jesus. To understand the Holy Spirit. To meet God! What awe!

Sometimes the very thought of what it would be like made his mind spin, and then that warm feeling of anticipation would overwhelm him and he longed to share his thoughts with someone. But really, *really*, could he, Randy, be sure he would be in heaven? How could he know?

How about you? Can you be sure you'll be in heaven? Dare you think of it? Can you be certain?

This Week of Prayer the stories and thoughts will be devoted to considering these questions. We will discover that while we do not know the future, Christ has made provision whereby we can be certain of acceptance with Christ today.

And so, first of all, how does a person become a Christian? To begin with, Jesus helps us to realize that we are sinners. We talk to God, perhaps this way. "I look back on my life, God, and already I have made a bad record. In some places it was so bad I hate to think of it. The more I learn of Jesus, the worse I see I am. I'm so sorry. How can You help me?"

God answers, "Yes, I know all your history. It's no secret. Satan knows, others know, you and I know. But I'll forgive you and treat you as though you didn't do it at all. I'll treat you as if you had never done those sins. In fact, I'll treat you better. I'll treat you just like My Son, Jesus. Now, don't go away. I'll make something great of you. I'll trust you and not suspect you. I'll accept your weaknesses and help you to be strong. And if you let Me down, please hurry back, for I do love you."

Let's put it this way:

1. God loves me and wants me to be in heaven.
2. Sin brought a separation, but Jesus bridges that gap.
3. I am sorry for my sin.
4. I accept forgiveness and Jesus accepts me as His child.

The Bible makes it certain by saying, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins."¹ "God supplies the fact; you are made whole. . . . It is so if you believe it."² Listen, "If you believe the promise—believe that you are forgiven

and cleansed—God supplies the fact; you are made whole."³ Isn't that wonderful! What a loving God!

In a beautiful valley in El Salvador, Central America, a Christian man handed out an assortment of gospel literature containing small paper-bound New Testaments. All around the plaza, people looked at the gifts with interest until one man stared at the little book a moment, then began to deliberately tear it into pieces. Others began to follow his example and they threw the pieces into the air. Some cried, "Burn them," while others quietly hid them in their clothing. Someone struck a match to a pile of the literature but a large dog who had been cavorting around stuck his muzzle into the pile and grabbed a book and ran away. One of the most wicked men of the crowd gave chase and finally grabbed the book from the dog and stuffed it into his pocket. In his quiet little thatched-roofed shack he pulled out the book and began to read. Hour after hour passed. Finally he came to the words, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."⁴ Onto his knees he fell and prayed in Spanish, "Oh, God, forgive the wickedest man in this town all his sins. You say 'whosoever.' Lord Jesus, I believe. Thank You for everlasting life. Amen." Within a week his whole family had also accepted Jesus as their Saviour.⁵

Here is an illustration of how some people are converted suddenly and rather dramatically.

The thief on the cross next to Jesus at the time of His crucifixion is another example. You'll remember how he believed who Jesus was and that Jesus would forgive and accept him. Immediately Jesus promised him that he would be in heaven. That was it! He who had been a thief will be in heaven.⁶ Of course, if he had lived he would not have continued a life of stealing and expect to be safe to live in heaven. To let a thief into heaven would spoil heaven. What temptation he'd constantly be meeting with a golden street, jewels, and unlocked doors.

This is a question you might want to consider a bit more care-

fully. Will heaven be a safe place with you there? God has been spending more than 6,000 years of tedious, expensive, patient work to ensure that heaven and this earth made new will be safe places in the universe for all eternity. God wants to be really *sure*. Are you *safe* to be saved? This is what God considers when He is deciding who will be in heaven.

Process May Be Gradual

The man from Salvador and the thief on the cross could point to a special time when they accepted Jesus. There are those, however, who can't point to an exact moment when they realized salvation. At times the process is gradual. They may grow up in a home where they learned of Jesus as little children. They accepted Jesus all along and cannot point to some dramatic event as the time when God called them. They have always felt they belonged to Jesus. Fine.

Since there must not be grouches, murderers, and thieves in heaven because such people would spoil heaven not only for themselves but for the rest of us as well, we might ask, "What kind of person is one who is safe to take to heaven?" No doubt the first thing you think about is that the person is loving, unselfish, and kind. Surely this is what we would expect of these people. But there is more to their character than that. Notice this, "Christian life is more than many take it to be. It does not consist wholly of gentleness, meekness, and kindness. These graces are essential; but there is need also of courage, force, energy, and perseverance."⁷ And there should be a general trend in that right direction. Note this: "The character is revealed, not by occasional good deeds and occasional misdeeds, but by the tendency of the habitual words and acts."⁸

What kind of person will be in heaven? The person whose habitual words and acts are unkind, selfish, rough, discouraging, weak? Hardly. This kind of person would be most unhappy there. It would be torture for a person who loves sin to live in heaven.

I want to be saved, so I desire to have my habitual words and acts (we call that the character)

to be courageous, kind, forceful, good. So now I will try and *try* and *try* to be good. Can you find any place in the Bible where God says this is all that's involved? I can't. Does it say, This is the victory that overcomes the world, even our *trying harder*? Do you read, "By grace are ye saved through trying harder"? No. It says, "Not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."

By nature or by anything in us we cannot be good. Not really good from the inside out. We can develop good habits that make us look good. We can be fearful of our teachers' disapproval or punishment and so do the "right" things. We can put on an act. I may even find that it is just easier to do good things because those around me expect me to. Yet, inside is sin. I need to examine myself to see if all my trying was just a cover-up for what is naturally inside of me. What I need is a real change inside.

Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."⁹

Read that once more. "Born again." Since we are born human with the natural desire for sinning we need a real change—a rebirth. And that makes everything new. This illustration may help you to understand.

Lions were one of the most interesting animals we watched while visiting the game reserves of Africa. No one had to tell us about their character. We could see their fierce ways, their aversion to human beings, that they ate carcasses, and were feared by other animals. This is their nature. As an example, let's suppose that one day one of these lions is lying on a rocky knoll watching the surrounding countryside. In the distance he sees a flock of sheep drinking water from the river. Nearby some of the sheep are eating grass peacefully while the lambs are playing about. Thinks the lion, Now that looks like a good life. They look happy and seem to live very peacefully together. I wonder what it would be like to be a sheep. I think I'll become a sheep.

So finding sheepskins, he slips them carefully over his large mouth and long mane. Having noticed the ways of sheep, our lion strolls gently along the riverbank, drinking water slowly and carefully. The sheep are eating grass so the lion begins to munch the green blades. Tiring of this, he approaches some lambs and attempts to join in their romping games. When the sheep say *Baa, baa* our lion carefully imitates their tones, trying to keep the natural growl out of his

voice. He finds it hard to sleep at night as do the sheep, for he is so used to his night prowls. But he is really trying.

Our lion is conforming. But he is not happy. It's so hard to say *Baa, baa* when your nature is to roar. It is so hard to eat grass when your nature yearns for a carcass. Romping with the lambs is just not like chasing antelope. No wonder our lion soon gives up in discouragement. He isn't a sheep. He is a lion.

In disappointment he returns to his sandy, rocky mound of earth and slips off the disguise of sheepskins. Maybe he really wishes he could have been a truly happy, successful sheep.

Could he? Is there any way he could become a sheep? In the natural life there is no way. No way, but wait. There really is a way. God could re-create the lion and make him into a lamb. Then he would really *be* a lamb. He would have to be made new. It would be like a rebirth. This is a miracle—something he can't do by himself.

We are born in sin and we have sinful natures. So Jesus said in effect, "You can be born again; I will help you through a miracle. This will change your nature and you will be a different person." We are told, "When anyone is joined to Christ he is a new being: the old is gone, the new has come."¹⁰ He also promised, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you."¹¹

"When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. . . . Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God."¹²

"Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, 'Lord, I believe; help Thou mine unbelief.' You can never perish while you do this—never."¹³

Right now you can say, I believe. Then it is done. And when God has performed a miracle of change in your life, you are ready for heaven.

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- ¹ 1 John 1:9.
- ² *Steps to Christ*, p. 51.
- ³ *Ibid.*
- ⁴ John 3:16.
- ⁵ Carl G. Johnson, *52 Story Telling Programs—True Stories of Modern Miracles* (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1964), pp. 21, 22.
- ⁶ Luke 23:43.
- ⁷ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 497.
- ⁸ *Steps to Christ*, pp. 57, 58.
- ⁹ John 3:3, N.A.S.B.
- ¹⁰ 2 Cor. 5:17, T.E.V.
- ¹¹ Eze. 36:26.
- ¹² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 173.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 429.

Second Day

No Thanks, Not the Butcher

TODAY, can you say, "Yes, through Jesus, I have been born again"? A complete change must be made from our sin-loving natures to those that would make it safe for us to be taken to heaven. This change involves our becoming the person God finds safe to have in heaven, so safe that there will be no risk of our unhappiness or of our bringing unhappiness to others.

King Canute of England lived in the splendor of the kingly courts of years ago.¹⁴ Because he was surrounded with many servants, the courtiers often thought to please His Royal Majesty by praising him. In glowing terms they recounted his power, wealth, and wisdom. "Nothing in all the world would dare to disobey you. Your glory will last forever. Your kingdoms are safe from any army, and you are so great that no one will take a foot of land from you."

After a time King Canute became weary of all these compliments, for he knew they were not all true. But he waited silently, listening.

One day he ordered that his great chair of state be brought and he led the way out of the palace and through the palace gardens straight to the seashore. The tide was out so the king walked far down the beach and ordered his chair placed at the very edge of the water—facing the sea. Without further instructions he then sat down in the chair and looked out to sea. No one dared to ask the king what he was doing. And then the tide turned. A little wave slipped over the sand and washed right over the royal feet. The courtiers' feet got wet too.

Then King Canute rose, stretched out his hand toward the sea and called out in a loud and kingly voice, "This land whereon I stand is *mine*. None of the people on this land dare to resist my rule. I command thee, sea, not to mount up on my land, nor wet my feet. Retreat!"

Just as he finished saying this, another wave—this time a big one—came hissing and foaming up the beach. The frothing water wet not only the royal feet but the royal ankles, as well. More water poured over the legs of the courtiers who stood in baffled amazement.

Then King Canute rose again. "Let all the people on earth know," he said solemnly, "that kings have no power that God does not give them. The power of

kings is vain. No one is worthy of the name King except Him who made the land and the sea, and whose Word is the law of Heaven and earth."

In the town of Southampton, England, on a wall of a small house near the docks these words are inscribed:

On this spot
in 1032

King Canute rebuked
his courtiers.

King Canute and his wet courtiers walked silently back to the palace. It is reported that thereafter no one dared to praise the king for his absolute power and glory.

Here was a king who had learned the value of perspective. He could distinguish the important things in life from those of lesser importance. Although he was king, he realized from where he received his power and wisdom. God was the center of his life, and from this standard this king evaluated his own power as he ruled his people.

If Jesus is the center of my life I will not be carried away with my own self-importance, nor will I underestimate my part in God's plan. Through Jesus I can learn the value of perspective.

Christ in All You Do

"Do not allow anything to make you forgetful of God. Bring Christ into all that you do. Then your lives will be filled with brightness and thanksgiving. You will do your best, moving forward cheerfully in the service of the Lord, your hearts filled with His joy."¹⁵

Can it be that our relationship with Jesus could be similar to one that we have with a well-known friend? If Jesus is a close friend He soon becomes the center of our lives because of His faithfulness. Other friends may let us down—He won't.

In the book *Steps to Christ*¹⁶ we are told that we can tell whether we are really Christians when we consider of whom we love to think and talk. It is so easy to think of *things* to talk about. But *whom* do we love to think and talk about? If Jesus is the center of our lives will we not think about Him often?

The new post office was to cost \$2 million, and the people of the city chose fine architects to draw up the plans. In their enthusiasm these professional men became carried away with a lovely design, stunning colors, lines, and textures. On completion of the new city post office a formal opening was in process before it was realized that there was no place to mail a letter! The architects and builders had forgotten the most important function of the building.

When Jesus is the center of our lives we won't forget the real purpose He had in creating us. When God and Jesus were planning and designing people they looked forward to our companionship as friends. They have not forgotten this.

"God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view."¹⁷

Could we ask to be treated more generously? All God asks of us is that we love Him in return, and love Him enough to be willing to do things His way and so be made fit to live in His presence.

Of course, Satan can't sit back watching this without using his crafty and very effective means for undermining God's plan and our desires. "It is Satan's constant effort to keep the attention diverted from the Saviour and thus prevent the union and communion of the soul with Christ. . . . Many who . . . desire to live for God, he too often leads to dwell upon their own faults and weaknesses, and thus by separating them from Christ he hopes to gain the victory. We should not make self the center and indulge anxiety and fear as to whether we shall be saved. . . . If you will leave yourself in His hands, He will bring you off more than conqueror through Him that has loved you."¹⁸

It is Satan who wants us to keep our eyes from Jesus. He wants us to become discouraged because we see only our own faults. If he can keep us from having Jesus as the one we think of as our best friend we can easily become deceived.

Once some tourists were on their way to Palestine. The guide told them that perhaps they were used to seeing shepherds drive their sheep, walking behind the sheep with dogs to help them keep the flock together. He explained that in Palestine they would find it different. The shepherds walked before the sheep, and they followed. Then he quoted John 10:27, "My sheep hear my voice, . . . and they follow me."

When the people reached Palestine, to their great amusement, almost the first thing they saw was a man *driving* a flock of sheep along the road instead of leading them. The guide was astonished and humiliated. He immediately made it his business to speak to the man. "How is it you are driving the sheep? In the East, a shepherd always leads his sheep."

"Well, you are right. Here a shepherd always leads his sheep. But you see, sir, I'm not the shepherd, I'm the butcher."

Satan wants to "butcher" our lives, but in Jesus we have freedom, choice, friendship, and salvation.

God loves *people*. It is sin that He hates, because it separates us from Him. He hates sin but loves you. Doesn't this make you desire His help to keep away from sin so that He is the center of your life?

One of the ways I can know whether I'm ready for heaven is whether I want Jesus to be the center of my life, whether I'm happy when He is the center of my life, and whether indeed to the best of my ability I daily let Him be the center of my life.

REFERENCES

- ¹⁴ Canute, c. A.D. 995-1035, was king of England, Norway, and Denmark.
- ¹⁵ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 226.
- ¹⁶ *Steps to Christ*, p. 58.
- ¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 46.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 71, 72.

Discussion

Talk about some of the ways we keep Jesus as the one we love to think and talk about. Some of these ways may be:

1. Our own personal devotions morning and evening become natural.
2. Grace as we eat our food is real thankfulness.
3. Concern for the happiness and comfort of others is such as that we feel for ourselves.
4. Because we care so much for our best Friend we come to His defense rather than using His name in a degrading manner.
5. Each opportunity for worship, at home or at church, becomes a happy, peaceful time.
6. Soon Satan and his temptations are crowded out of our lives because we are busy in our life with Jesus.

Third Day

Hello, Can You Hear Me?

WE ARE discovering ways in which we can know how to be safe for heaven. If Jesus is to be the center of your life you certainly will want to become acquainted with Him. If you really get to know Him and are comfortable with Him and He is your friend, then obviously you will be comfortable in heaven. God can give you everything you need for living a truly good life! What a help that will be!

To know Him better and better means friendship with Jesus. It means communication, talking together, enjoying association as with a best friend. People were made for friendship with God and Jesus. This was the Creator's original plan.

Since God made the great outdoors for our pleasure, He uses nature as one of His most unique methods for talking with us.

Our family was enjoying a week in the High Sierra mountains. A good deal of our joy was found in talking, laughing, and discovering together. But one midmorning, alone, I sloshed through a 10,000-foot-high mountain meadow. Savoring deep breaths of the cold, rare air was exhilarating. I listened to the quiet sigh of breezes blowing through the low-growing gnarled firs and cedars, which had endured the assault of winter blizzards. In abandonment I waded ice-cold streams of water flowing from the great snowbanks still abundant even though it was July. Golden trout eyed me with some interest as I knelt to examine buttercups and giant shooting-star flowers along the shore of the tiny mountain lake. I clambered up giant bare rocks, anticipating a new view of Mount Ritter and Mount Banner.

And then, there they were! Growing from rugged gray granite rock crevices were a myriad of fragile Alpine snow-drop blossoms. I knelt close, longing to gather them all in my arms, yet fearful lest I disturb one waxy petal. Each leaf, each white bell flower, each shadowed silhouette, was exquisite. How like my Father to design this just for me, to delight my personal taste!

"Oh, God," I whispered, "please put this in my garden in heaven, just like this."

Sometime later I eagerly encouraged my family to share my delight in these flowers in "a crannied wall." As we gathered around, one stooping to get a clear view, others sitting on a boulder nearby, each was sure he had the best view as they shared my joy. My son took a picture, and then some more, and more.

We had to leave those sun-and-snow-splashed, flower-adorned mountains and meadows with their treasures, but when I look at the pictures, again I am filled with awe. I sense again how close I felt to God and how very much I want to be with Him in heaven. You see, out there I heard God. It was as though God had called, "Hello, can you hear Me? I'd like to talk with you."

"If we will but listen, God's created works will teach us precious lessons."¹⁹

People who have become intimately acquainted with nature often sense God's communication with them in a special way. It is as when we learn to know people personally that we find them interesting, so the more we become acquainted with the

names, the secrets, and the surprises found in living things, the more our discoveries bring a fascination to life that opens mysteries of our God. It is sad that many people are missing this incredibly wonderful source of communion with God. Yes, God converses with you in nature. Don't miss this experience.

And there are other ways God speaks to us—an answered prayer, the comfort of a friend during sadness or loneliness, the miracle of healing, or the realization of protection. Already you can think of more. Sometimes the awareness is so big that we are overwhelmed.

And then again, it may be something so small we almost missed His voice.

Patti's birthday was just ten days away. Already she and Mother were making plans for a party. They had decided on some of the games and the cake. As Patti was opening the small packages of invitations, preparing to address the first one to a friend, a new idea came to her. Slowly she laid down the pen and began to think. It was only yesterday that Melonie had admitted, ruefully, that she had never celebrated her birthday with a party. In fact, she confessed she'd never had a party at all. Patti could imagine the reason. Melonie's mother worked, her grandmother was ill at home, and there were other reasons. But that didn't matter. Melonie had never enjoyed a party of her own, and her birthday was next Thursday.

After confiding her new plan to Mother, Patti started toward Melonie's home. She smiled as she thought. In all my excitement over plans for a party for me, how did Jesus ever get through to me to show how I could share the fun?

Yes, Melonie was surprised, and delighted to help bake the cake, plan the games, decorate the back yard, and then be hostess at her own "first" birthday party. Maybe Patti was just "tuned in" so Jesus could give her such an unusual and unselfish but happy idea.

Personal face-to-face communication between God and people was lost in the Garden of Eden at the entrance of sin. And real friendship doesn't last long when there is no communication. So God set up a plan of communication. He would employ several methods. The Holy Spirit would always be available to them, the prophets would bring special messages, nature would reveal His love and concern, and God would even send Jesus. He would be able to reveal His Father perfectly because He was so close to Him. The instructions

of the prophets and the very words of Jesus would be written down as a constant letter straight from Heaven. "God speaks to us in His word."²⁰

"If you would become acquainted with the Saviour, study the Holy Scriptures."²¹ The Bible is a letter to you from the Person who is central in your life—the One you wish to think of most often.

Then how should the Bible be read? There are many ways used. Some read "hit or miss"—here a little, there a little; some read a chapter a day, perhaps hardly thinking what the words are saying—something like a vitamin pill, "Must be good for me, so here goes; now that's down, it better help!" A few well-disciplined folks read the Bible through from cover to cover following all the instructions given by their speed-reading instructor. And, surprisingly enough, God may even use these methods to get in a word edge-wise.

However, through experience, others have found ways of hearing God through the Bible more effectively. It's pretty hard for God to be heard when we are in a hurry or are tense. So relax. Pray. Then ask these questions:

Who is writing?

To whom was this directed?

What was the purpose?

In the context of all the verses or chapters around this thought, what is God saying?

How does it apply to me?

How shall I put it into practice?

When shall I begin?

Rehearse the words—think them over and over. If they are especially for you memorize them.

Why memorize? Several reasons. One: The study of the Bible is an excellent way to develop the mind. Another reason for memorizing: "Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God's promises and meet Satan with Scripture weapons."²² And another reason for memorizing Bible verses is that times come to each person when in isolation, illness, temptation, or in the darkness of the night with no Bible available, the actual words remembered mean courage and life.

To add interest and new meaning to your Bible study, try reading another version of the Bible. *The New American Standard Bible* is considered a very reliable translation using modern wording. Many boys and girls find the new modern-speech Bibles hold for them much personal meaning, as well as interest.

Through the lessons taught in the examples of people's lives faithfully recorded in the Bible, and also through direct instructions given, God tries to give us a pattern by which to live. Together God and Jesus and the Holy Spirit made intricate plans as they designed human beings at Creation. They know what makes us "tick," because they made us.

We use patterns for drawing, for constructing bridges and buildings, while pursuing a hobby or craft, when assembling engines, or perhaps organizing a business. The help of a professional designer, craftsman, or economist for the success of the project is a must.

Susan unfolded the gaily printed material and took the dress pattern from its envelope. Mother, nearby in the kitchen, could see Susan's happiness as she anticipated success in sewing her own dress. The table cleared, pins and scissors procured, Mother helped Susan pin the pattern pieces correctly on the material. After a final check Mother resumed her work, and Susan settled down to cutting each piece. It was quite a chore, for this was 11-year-old Susan's first major sewing project. Once the cutting was completed she tried to fit the pieces together just as she thought they should go.

"Mother, please come quick! Something dreadful happened. What did I do to make such a mess?"

Instantly Mother came to the table to look over the pieces of material Susan had pinned together.

"Well, now, what have you done?" Mother asked thoughtfully. "Did you use the pattern to pin it together by?"

"No-o-o-o, I didn't, I unpinned the pattern from the material and put the pattern back into the envelope, for I thought I was all finished with the pattern and didn't need it anymore."

"It's all right, Susan—that is, your dress will be all right. Let's get the pattern out again, read it carefully, and pin your dress together according to the pattern. You see, a pattern cannot help us do things right unless we use it." Susan thinks of that pattern when she wears her dress. It was a success.

As you let your heavenly Father communicate with you through these ways we have mentioned and then follow the pattern He has revealed, you may know you are safe for heaven.

REFERENCES

¹⁹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 85.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 88.

²² *The Great Controversy*, p. 600.

Fourth Day

On the Line to God

PASTOR WILLIAMS had been studiously working out some problems and preparing a sermon at the desk in his study, but somehow he was having success neither in the problems nor in the preparation for the sermon. Perplexed, he wandered about his home, and finding his wife ironing, he said, "I'm going to the sky room. Please don't let anyone disturb me."

Mrs. Williams understood. Often he had returned from the attic, which he called the "sky room," full of courage, ideas, and confidence. Quietly he climbed the stairs and with relief he tried to shut the world out when he closed the door. Before the window stood a comfortable chair and a small table holding a Bible. Sinking into the chair, he scanned the horizon, worry furrowing his forehead.

And then he heard soft footsteps coming up toward the door. Truly he did not want to be disturbed, but he greeted the trespasser, his young daughter. As she approached him, she said shyly, "Daddy, I haven't had a chance today to tell you that I love you. I missed telling you, Daddy." With that she pulled him to her and hugged him lovingly. A smile of understanding crossed her face, and she closed the door behind her.

Tell Him You Love Him

As her footfalls receded on the attic stairs, Pastor Williams bowed his head in his hands. "Father, I haven't had a chance today to tell You I love You. I missed telling You how much You mean to me, my heavenly Father."

In order to maintain a healthy Christian life we must realize that prayer is essential. God speaks to us through the Bible, nature, the Holy Spirit, but communication indicates a two-way relationship. It would be an insult to say that a person who does not pray is a Christian. He really doesn't even know Jesus.

In the story Pastor Williams' prayer was one of appreciation, friendship. "Prayer is the opening of the heart to God as to a friend."²³ When Jesus is the center of our lives this is the kind of friendship prayer that continues all through the day.

And then there are prayers asking forgiveness, for our sins separate us from God. But He is a friend who "forgiveth all thine iniquities."²⁴ Had Jesus not done what He did at Calvary there would be no possibility to come

to God. As we ask for forgiveness how often we wish never to repeat the mistake. "Examine me, O God, and know my thoughts; test me, and understand my misgivings. Watch lest I follow any path that grieves thee; guide me in the ancient ways."²⁵

After listening to some unchristian men talking at a meeting, a doctor said to a friend, "I don't know how you feel, but I feel as though I need a 'brain bath.'" You will need that daily "brain bath" and "soul bath" that prayer can give you.

"Satan well knows that all whom he can lead to neglect prayer . . . will be overcome by his attacks."²⁶ The angels must be amazed when they see how infrequently we turn to God for help. "They regard communion with God as their highest joy; and yet the children of earth, who need so much the help that God only can give, seem satisfied to walk without . . . the companionship of His presence."²⁷ "With watchfulness and prayer their [our] weakest points can be so guarded as to become their [our] strongest points, and they [we] can encounter temptation without being overcome."²⁸

When troubles come to us how often we have found our heavenly Father ready to hear and answer our prayers as He sees best for us. George Vandeman tells of the experience of some Christians of the early church who were hiding in a cave made by two crags high in the mountains. As they crouched apprehensively yet prayerfully in the darkness, listening to their approaching enemies, they watched a spider deftly spinning his web from one rock to another across the entrance of their small cave.

The Christians listened as their enemies searched nearby crevasses one after the other. Then they came to the cave. In searching they noticed the undisturbed spider's web, and felt sure that no one would be there, so hurried on. One Christian asked breathlessly, yet thankfully, "Why did the spider spin the web just then?" Another man remarked, "When you are on God's side, a web is a wall. If you are not on God's side, a wall is a spider's web."

We have mentioned some of the kinds of prayers people pray, such as expressing appreciation, asking for forgiveness, requesting help in meeting temptation or danger. Now let's consider some steps we may take when there is a definite problem and we desire a definite answer.

1. Decide what you really want, for if all of you doesn't really want it the prayer is blocked. Write it down. If you do, you probably really mean it.

2. Decide whether the thing you want is a Christian thing. Jesus showed us what God is like. Don't ask God to do something that isn't Christlike. He can't, for He can't do something against His own nature. Within that limit He gives you freedom to ask for "anything."

3. Talk with God about it. Listen so as to hear what God wants to say to you about it. Make your prayer a two-way conversation.

4. Promise God what you will do to help make this prayer come true. Just as you and God talked together, God works with you to answer the prayer. God's interest is not simply to give you things, but His interest is in you, what is best for you as the person He loves.²⁹

God's Way Is Best

5. Thank God for answering in His own way. Sometimes God answers Yes. Sometimes He says, "Not yet." At other times He says, "Here's something else." When He says, "Something else," it seems God has said No. If He refuses, it is only to make a better offer, which He can see is for our best good. The delays can seem frustrating, but could it be that sometimes God's delayed Yes is to deepen our characters so that we won't become spiritual crybabies if we don't get everything at once?

6. Now, trust God to do the right thing in the matter. Why be anxious when the whole matter is turned over to God, even the part you are to play in its fulfillment?³⁰

When we want to talk to our earthly father we sometimes talk to him by telephone. Let's suppose we could have a telephone conversation with our heavenly Father.

It's as if you dialed and a voice said, "Hello, this is the heavenly switchboard."

You are a bit stunned and then say, "This is Pam . . ."

The voice interrupts you, saying, "Since you're calling from Earth, I presume you want to be put through directly to the Top Office." There are a couple of clicks, and you hear a Voice say, "Pam, This is your heavenly Father. What can I do for you?"

"Excuse me, who did you say this is?" you venture.

"This is your heavenly Father. I'm glad you called, Pam."

"Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb You." You leave a long pause, for maybe you are afraid. Then you find yourself saying, "I didn't know I could talk to You so directly, God. Well, I guess in a way I knew I could reach You. They did give me Your number during the last Week of Prayer, but I lost it."

"Dear Father, I'm glad I got

through to You. I really need help. But I have to run now. I'll try to remember to call You back . . ." and you start to hang up when you hear His voice again.

"Pam, don't be so hurried; take a little time. Don't you know that you may keep all your wants, your joys, your sorrows, and your cares before Me? Nothing that in any way concerns you is too small for Me to notice. Let's have a visit. Tell Me more, Pam."

And so you have a long talk with your Father. He helps you answer your problem. He brings to your mind promises from His Word. Into your mind comes a heavenly peace so that you are reluctant to hang up this time.

Or maybe you are Heather, and you call, "Hello, it's me, Heather. I'm calling to thank You for helping me when I almost lost my temper with Mr. Turner. It was such a big help. Thank You so much."

Or perhaps you are Scott, and you dialed and a strangely familiar voice says, "Hello."

And you ask, "Who is this?" "This is your heavenly Father, Scott. Tell me how things are going with you."

There is a long pause. "Oh, I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb You. I didn't know I could talk to You so directly, God, so easily. I—I just don't know what to say."

You hear, "Go ahead, My child, don't be afraid; I'm on your side, I'm listening. Tell Me all about it."

"Well, things aren't very good with me here. You see, on the spelling test this morning I sort of cheated. I mean, I really did. It seems I try and try and try, yet I can't meet temptation like that. I am so weak and now I am so miserable and feel so ashamed. Will You forgive me?"

"Surely, I will, Scott. Remember in the Bible letter I wrote to you, if you confess, I am faithful and just to forgive and to cleanse you. Of course, to confess means you've determined never to do it again. Don't doubt. And you will go now, won't you, and make it right with the teacher. I'll be with you to give you courage."

Eagerly you answer, "Oh, yes, I surely will. I'll go do it right now and call You back. Thank You for listening and forgiving me. I have courage now!"

Tom dials heaven. He seems pretty eager—as though he can't wait for the connections to clear. Barely one ring, phone is lifted at the other end, and with joy Tom says, "Oh, Father, I just had to call You. I'm so excited. It's just the most, it's the greatest—I plucked up courage to talk to Neal. Something just clicked, and he's decided to give his heart to You. I want to put him on so that he can tell You all about it."

Have you ever really talked with your heavenly Father as you would with your earthly father or with a friend on the telephone?

God inspired Mrs. White to tell us, "Never is one repulsed who comes to Him with a contrite heart. Not one sincere prayer is lost. . . . God hears the cries of the weakest human being."³¹

When you can often talk to your heavenly Father and He talks to you, you will know that one of heaven's greatest joys will be open, face-to-face communication with God, whom, through prayer, you have learned to know intimately.

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Fifth Day

Happy People

HONESTLY NOW, yesterday did you try talking to your heavenly Father as if there were a two-way telephone conversation? Or was your prayer last night merely a thoughtless jingle? I hope not, for if it was, you cheated yourself. Your best Friend was waiting.

You see, with Jesus as your close friend and with communication between you through prayer and His Word, you can feel comfortable in saying, "By God's grace, I can have the assurance of acceptance today."

Now consider this quotation from the book *Messages to Young People*: "Those who in everything make God first and last and best, are the happiest people in the world."³² The happiest! God wants us to be happy even now.

One of the ways we can tell that Christ has accepted us is that there is joy and peace in our lives. But wait. No troubles? no sins? no sickness? no death?

Let's consider some of the troubles that perplex young people, preventing them from experiencing the peace and happiness they would so much like to have.

Worry. Worry over tests, friendships, illness, loneliness, money—it's depressing to continue the list! But we have this promise, "Not all that this world bestows can heal a broken heart, or impart peace of mind. . . . Fame, genius, talent—all are powerless to gladden the sorrowful heart. . . . The life of God in the soul is man's only hope."³³

One man had "a worry tree" in front of his house where he hung his worries before he came into the house. For the Christian, that "worry tree" is the cross. Hang your worries there.

Hate. Hate is the opposite of peace and joy. Jealousy, selfishness—these can be a part of hatred. How can we change hate to good will? Talk to God about it. Then talk to the person and ask forgiveness. Ask Jesus to bury these feelings miles deep, and He will. First, you give consent, and then His power will take them out.

Fear of danger. Surely God must have understood that this would be one of the greatest foes to real peace, for He has given so many promises to those who are fearful. Here are two from the Psalms. "The Lord is righteous in all his ways, unchanging in all that he does; very near is the Lord to those who call to him, who call to him in singleness of heart. He fulfills their desire if only they fear him; he hears their cry and saves them."³⁴

"The guardian of Israel never slumbers, never sleeps. The Lord is your guardian. . . . The Lord will guard your going and your coming, now and for evermore."³⁵

If fear is causing you unhappiness, try writing down some of God's promises in a special small book, or piece of paper that you can carry with you and read often.

Fear of death. When Paul was near death he expressed his confidence and lack of fear. Surely he must have had courage to write, "I am convinced that there is nothing in death or life, in the realm of spirits or superhuman powers, in the world as it is or the world as it shall be, in the forces of the universe, in heights or depths—nothing in all creation that can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."³⁶

If nagging fear of death robs you of the peace you desire, study for yourself what God has to say about death. To a person in Christ, death will seem as but a momentary separation.

Think of:

Waking from deep sleep, and finding the sky alight with angels!
Taking hold of a hand, and finding it's your best Friend's hand.
Stepping through a gate, and finding it heaven!

Breathing a new air, and finding it heaven's clear air.

Feeling well and strong, and knowing it will never end!

Leaving this broken earth, and seeing God make it new.

Looking up when your name is called, and seeing it's Jesus!

God would have us not afraid of dying.

Time. Tomorrow. What's go-

ing to happen? "Only one day at a time—think of this. One day is mine. I will in this one day do my best. I will use my talent of speech to be a blessing to some other one, a helper, a comforter, an example which the Lord my Saviour shall approve. I will exercise myself in patience, kindness, forbearance, that the Christian virtues may be developed in me today."³⁷

Are you unhappy today because you are afraid of tomorrow? Jesus said, "Give first place to his Kingdom and to what he requires, and he will provide you with all these other things. So do not worry about tomorrow; it will have enough worries of its own. There is no need to add to the troubles each day brings."³⁸

Kathy couldn't even turn her head as she lay encased in a cast up to her neck. She could only look up. Hospitals are such lonely places, especially at night.

"Kathy, don't you get very lonely when the nights seem so long?" questioned a visitor.

"Oh, nights aren't so bad," she said wistfully. "You see, I have the stars."

"Just stars?"

"Yes, I play a game with them. You see, I choose the silver one to be my mother, and the one that is so large to be my dad. Then I choose others to be my brother and my sister. I keep on naming all the stars for my friends, one by one. There's just one problem. My restricted vision doesn't allow me to see enough stars."

Restraint. Now this is an unhappy hazard everybody feels from time to time. David said, "Peace is the reward of those who love thy law; no pitfalls beset their path."³⁹ Freedom is such a happy feeling. Does the Christian life include freedom? With the rules and instructions of teachers and parents and others, how can one feel free?

"But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."⁴⁰ Was this written for young people only? When you read it again it seems Paul was writing to the adults, as well as to youth. Yes, everyone is tempted to chafe at restraint.

Growing against the redwood fence of our patio is a wisteria vine. Although it was planted only six months ago, it is flourishing beyond our greatest expectations. In fact, it takes our constant attention. The sturdy gray-brown trunk is tightly curled around a supporting post, and the top has a plume of rich-

green leaves. The first branches that sprouted we tied carefully to the fence, hopeful that the vine would decorate the entire side of the patio with its leaves and clusters of lavender and purple flowers.

The branches are interesting. When mature they are strong, but when they have just sprouted they are tender and vulnerable to the wind, which whips them about unmercifully against the slats of the redwood. But I was rather reluctant to tie them down, restricting their freedom to wave gracefully as they please. Then, unhappily, I noticed that the tips of these new branches had been crushed and the delicate leaves shredded when the late afternoon wind had caught them unprotected. So, it was snip, snip as I clipped them off. Of course, these were even more free from restraint, but in an hour the once lovely light-green three-foot branches were crumpled, limp, dead. In a few days more shoots began on the vine. This time I guarded them with restraining tape as I tied them securely to the fence. And as the tender new tips extend farther along the fence, new tape is added to support them so that they may grow safely, as well as freely.

"There may be no ecstasy of feeling, but there is an abiding, peaceful trust. Every burden is light; for the yoke which Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure."⁴¹

Sin. Sin separates us from God, and it is pretty cold out there alone! When a person comes into the atmosphere of God's presence something happens to the feelings of the sinner. Like Isaiah, he may say, "Woe is me!" Jesus said, "The eyes are like a lamp for the body: if your eyes are clear, your whole body will be full of light; but if your eyes are bad, your body will be in darkness. So if the light in you turns out to be darkness, how terribly dark it will be!"⁴² Jesus understood very well.

And then come the promises, "Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."⁴³ After David's problems went from bad to worse he asked forgiveness and then he exclaimed, "Happy the man whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put away!"⁴⁴

Discouragement. There is an old legend that may illustrate the last of the foes we face that may take peace from the life of the Christian. It seems the old devil himself was quitting business. A real sellout. So he set up all his crafty devices for

tempting people through 6,000 years and put a price tag on each ugly contrivance. It seems the sale went well. However, some complained at the extremely high price put on one small temptation artifice.

"Aha!" contended Satan, "the price is high, but it is right. You see, I have found that this is one of my inventions that works on everyone. When any or all others have been tried and then have failed, this one has never failed me."

Someone asked the name of this crafty little model.

The chief of tempters folded his arms smugly and announced, "It is called discouragement."

The legend ends, "And so, the price was so high that no one could purchase it. The devil still has it."

Discouragement is still the devil's most insidious instrument intended to entrap the unwary Christian.

You see, it is Satan who desires us to feel that the Christian life is one of gloom; toilsome and difficult. Now listen, God says that He "does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. In all that He does, He has the well-being of His children in view. Would that all who have not chosen Christ might realize that He has something vastly better to offer them than they are seeking for themselves."⁴⁵

"Yes, tell it in words full of cheer, that no one who perseveringly climbs the ladder will fail of gaining an entrance into the heavenly city."⁴⁶ What glad news! No one who, keeping close to Jesus, climbs the ladder will fail to gain entrance into heaven.

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Discussion

1. Using each of the hindrances to peace, the students may relate examples of how they have solved a problem or have seen others do so.

2. When should we talk to someone about our feelings of hatred or selfishness? Are there times when this would be unwise and we should only talk to God about it?

3. Can talking to someone in whom we have confidence help us overcome fear or worry? Who may these people be?

Sixth Day

Too Good to Keep

WHAT A DAY! Phil and Mark had cruised down nearly every street at their end of town on two new Hondas, stopping now and again to greet friends they'd known while attending the local church school. It gave them an excited feeling as they careened up to a strolling group, slowed, and stopped; then watched as they were finally recognized.

Sure, they knew they looked different now, smelled different, acted different, and sounded different. After a few words they would blast off, watching through their rear-view mirrors the sensation they had caused. Rounding a corner, they often found a new group out on this sunny Sabbath afternoon. Some came close to them and curiously or enviously examined the new bikes. Some even recognized them as the ones who had screeched around the corner by the church during services that morning. Phil and Mark recognized that they had made their desired effect on the community. Although the sun was going down and both boys were thirsty, there was time for one more run up the back hill and down the other side, over bike trails they had helped to make. Almost at the top of the first rise they came upon Steve sitting on a rock. With a clamping of brakes, a skid, and final revving of motors, they stopped, and there was quiet as the dust blew away.

Phil pulled his goggles down and removed his helmet, sweat staining his tanned forehead.

"Hi, Phil—Mark." Steve greeted them and rubbed his hand admiringly over the chrome to clear it of dust. He invited them to sit with him on the hillside. It was not the first time he had seen these former classmates since the fall they had not been admitted to the academy and so had begun high school. But the boys hadn't really had a chance to talk together. From what he'd heard, Mark and Phil had been making a record of recklessness. There had been lewd magazines in their lockers, they were members of a rock musical group, and they had been questioned about involvement in drugs. Seemed folks were just "giving up" on them now—all but one of the teachers, who encouraged them to come over when they needed help with tuning their Honda motors.

Steve was listening as they talked about their bikes, school, their plans for the summer. But from time to time his mind wandered as he remembered bits of the Sabbath school class dis-

cussion that morning. Someone had said that an unconverted person was not interested in heaven, because he really didn't know what heaven is like. He didn't even know what God is like. Jesus came to this earth to tell the truth about His Father. If a person didn't really know God, he would bring discord to heaven, and actually, heaven would be torture to him.

Suddenly Steve realized that his two friends were looking at him quizzically and there had been silence for some time. "Want us to split, huh?" offered Mark. "Sorry we disturbed you!"

"Wait, I was just thinking. Sorry, I really wanted to talk with you. I like your bikes. It's been such a long time, you know and—"

The boys swung off their bikes again, and Phil asked, "Well, what was it you were thinking about? Thought we'd lost you there. We can go, you know. What were you thinking about?" They pressed the question.

Steve Takes the Plunge

Steve shoved his hands deep into his dusty jeans. Should he take the plunge? "Uh-h, I guess I was thinking about heaven." Nothing was said, so he kept on. "You know, we haven't seen either of you around for a long time. Miss you. If you saw the sign outside the church you know we are having meetings there." No response yet, so he went on. "It's about heaven, I mean Sunday night is about heaven. You could come and meet me if you like. See, I'd like to have you come."

Phil and Mark gave each other amazed looks. Steve asking them to church yet! Incredible! Impossible. Them! With their record!

On Sunday night when Phil and Mark slid into one of the back pews with Steve it was his turn to be surprised. But they returned, night after night until the end of the series of studies, when they asked the youth pastor whether they could be baptized.

During that conversation they were asked, "What was it that influenced you to come that Sunday night? Why are you asking for rebaptism?"

"Steve invited us."

"How come you didn't come before?"

"Nobody ever asked us. We didn't know anybody really cared."

Nobody seemed to care. Could that be?

Phil and Mark went back to their high school. The noticeable change in their lives was soon evident, and taking advantage of the questions asked them, they

are bringing classmates home for Bible study and prayer and then to church with them. They care. Steve cared too.

Through this Week of Prayer each day we have been asking the question Am I a candidate for heaven? There is the assurance, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved" (Acts 16:31). After the miracle of "new birth" Jesus becomes the center of our life. Real friendship is realized when there is direct and frequent communication between me and Heaven through prayer, studying God's Word, and listening to God's voice in nature. Another evidence that I am a true Christian is the peace and joy I know because my sins are forgiven, and any fears I turn over to Jesus. There is direction in my life as I know Jesus is my personal Saviour and God my loving Father. Surely a friendship that is so secure means that I can say with confidence, "Yes, because of what God and Jesus have done for me, I am safe to save."

But wait, if this is true, would I not wish to share this tremendously rewarding life with others? Like Steve, and the teacher, and the minister, and the youth pastor, as well as many others whose lives touched Phil and Mark, we do care so much for others that we will show it. It's just too good to keep!

In Texas, where rain is desperately needed at times, someone asked a ranger about some clouds in the sky. He looked at them, shook his head, and replied, "They're just empties drifting by." When others are so much in need of the help we might give them, are we just empty and passing by?⁴⁷

John wrote from the Island of Patmos, "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us."⁴⁸ Does this mean the Christian should love people who are not easy to love? Some people are different, unlovely, even disgusting. Others reject them. It isn't "the in thing" even to like them. What would Jesus do? When He was young would He have cared?

Relief workers were being thanked in the capital city of Russia, Moscow. The Russian Government prepared a large banquet and program. In the speeches many organizations were mentioned for their help with food, clothing, money, and other aid. But the Quakers were thanked last. The toastmaster said, "Others may have fed more people than these Quakers have, but the Quakers wrapped every bottle of milk in a wrapper of good will."⁴⁹ The wrappers containing greetings of good will

made their gifts special, and the people of Russia did not forget, for the flavor lingered on after the food had gone. What a challenge to me to go out today and do something that nobody but a Christian would do, and be sure I do it in a Christian way.

Sometimes this is not easy. It may mean a big change in my plans. It meant a big change for Dr. George Washington Carver, the black scientist who has done more for the improvement of agriculture in the Southern States of the United States than any other man living or dead, white or black. George wanted to be an artist until a teacher said, "George, your people need agriculture more than art." He thought about that. Then he put those brushes and paints away in a trunk and didn't look at them for several years. He became so intent in the study of his people's need for food and improving their lives that he forgot art for a while. And now he has unconsciously painted his picture in the hearts of all of us. Dr. Carver cared.

And there was a Dorcas lady who cared. But she was asleep. Then God wakened her, impressing her to go to a home on the other side of her city. As she pulled the covers closer, she said, "Oh, Lord, I am so tired. Tomorrow?" But she felt intensely impressed to rise, dress, and drive over to a basement room where she had brought clothing to a family some months before. She didn't know what had just been happening inside that poor home.

A Life Spared

Knocking at the door several times, she finally heard the door being unlocked and it opened just a bit. The woman recognized the Dorcas lady and invited her into the dimly lit room. Through her trembling she told what had just happened. Discouraged because of their miserable condition, the mother had brought out the last of the bread and a bottle of coke. She had put poison in the coke and was about to give it to her children and also drink the poison herself.

Then she heard the first knock and put down the coke. She didn't want to be discovered, so she was quiet. After several persistent knocks she had opened the door and now had found a friend.

The Dorcas lady quietly explained, "God knew you were in trouble, and He sent me."

Holding her children closely, the woman said, "If God sent you, He loves me. He has helped me through you."

"God positively enjoins upon all His followers a duty to bless

others with their influence and means. . . . In doing for others, a sweet satisfaction will be experienced, an inward peace which will be a sufficient reward. . . . This will bring more than an earthly reward; for every faithful, unselfish performance of duty is noticed by the angels and shines in the life record."⁵⁰

A man from the Hollywood Seventh-day Adventist church was driving through Montana one cold winter night. He was having difficulty in seeing the road as the windshield wipers swished away the falling snow. It was very cold. Then he noticed a broken guardrail alongside the road. No doubt he was tempted to go on. It was cold outside, so dangerous, too. Carefully he stopped and got out to look over the embankment. There he was able to rescue a man and his wife and child who were helplessly caught in their wrecked car.

As he drove them into the safety of a motel that night, don't you think he was happier than he would be at a baseball game?

And the Dorcas lady—don't you think she was glad she didn't snuggle down under her electric blanket and say, "Lord, tomorrow I will bake a nice cake to take to that lady and her two children."

As you read about Dr. Carver's life you'll see he was happier helping people grow abundant food and build industries that improved the lives of thousands of people than if he had continued only with his art courses.

If you had attended the baptism of Phil and Mark, you'd surely have seen Steve. And Steve was happier that day than if he had just been given two new Hondas.

You have a commission. It is a commission to share the good news of how to be saved. You have been entrusted with a commission that God has not given to any other person. It is unique—just as you are unique, different from anyone else. If you do not share yourself with others as you are called, someone will miss you and your help. "Commit to the Lord all that you do, and your plans will be fulfilled."⁵¹

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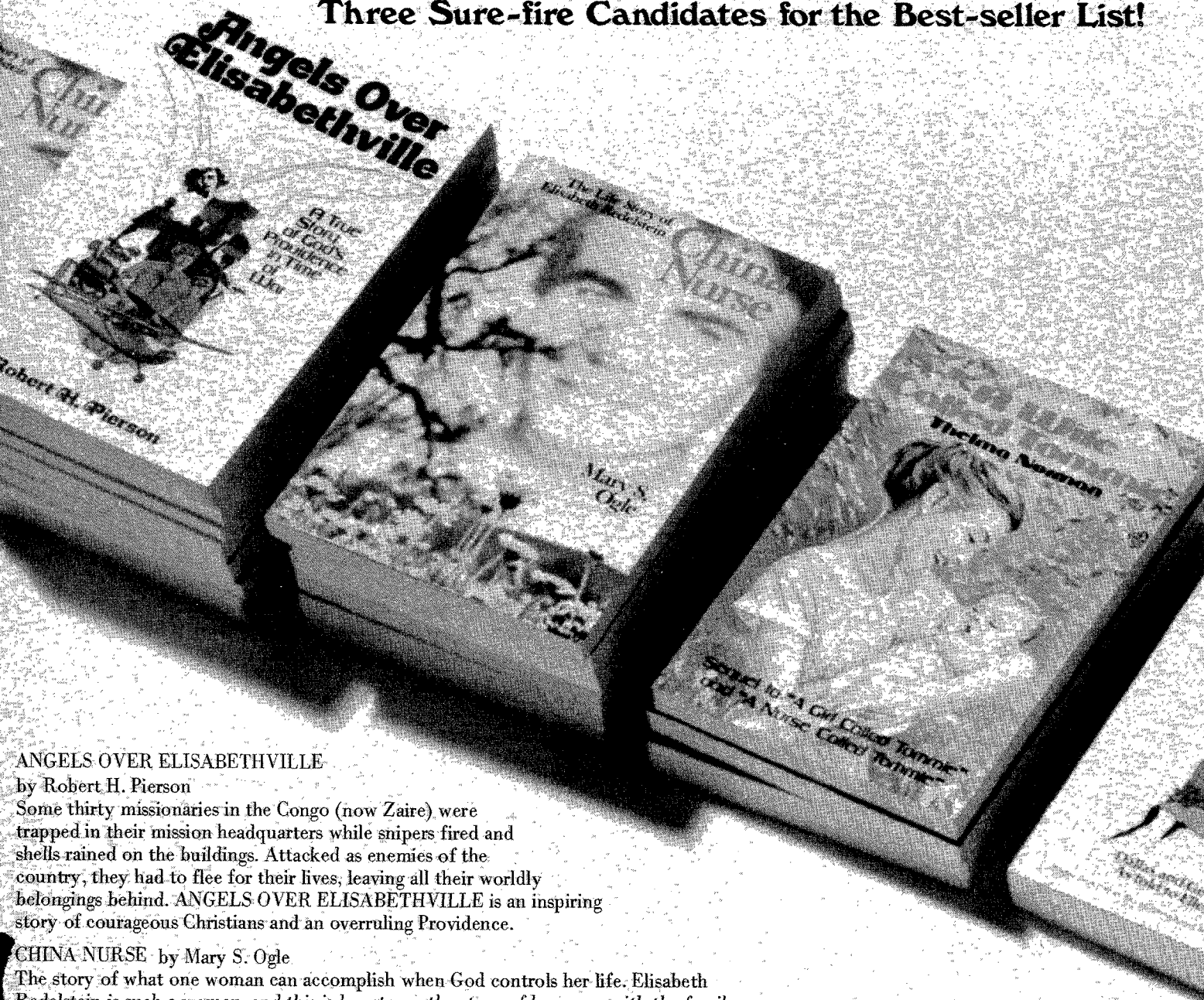
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Discussion

1. Why is it sometimes hard to talk to others about heaven?
2. How can we witness without offending others?
3. How can we know what to say?

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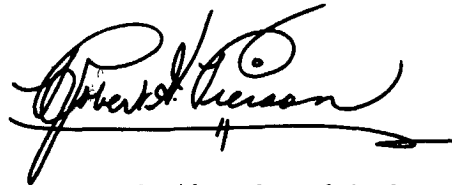
The times in which we live demand that we keep the lines of communication with our God constantly open. We dare not endeavor to live a day, an hour, without Him. The adversary is constantly at work to cause God's people to give in or give up or to compromise or apostatize.

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No Adventist family can afford to be without the REVIEW. We need it all the more as we see the end approaching. Ellen White counsels, "Those who consent to do without the REVIEW AND HERALD lose much. Through its pages Christ may speak to them in warnings, in reproofs and counsel, which would change the current of their thoughts and be to them as the bread of life."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 599.

May the Lord help us during this special Week of Prayer to remember both our covenant and our commitment to our heavenly Father and to His Son, Jesus Christ. Through the power of the Holy Spirit let us press forward in the last thrust to full victory—in our day.

God bless and keep each one of you.



President, General Conference