



GENERAL CHURCH PAPER OF THE SEVENTH DAY ADVENTIST REFORM MOVEMENT

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*Week of Prayer*

December 1-10, 2000

# In This Issue

The Triumph of the Remnant Church . . . . .	2
A View of the Conflict . . . . .	3
Internal and External Obstacles . . . . .	6
The Church and Its Mission . . . . .	9
The Outpouring of the Latter Rain . . . . .	12
The Earth Enlightened With God's Glory . . . . .	15
The Church Triumphant . . . . .	18
The Hope of Glory . . . . .	21

## *The Reformation Herald*

"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."  
—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

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## The Triumph of the Remnant Church

We are just about to close the year 2000, the end of the twentieth century. Many of those who were zealous members of our church a year ago are not with us today. Some have been called to rest in the grave and a few have left the ranks of God's remnant people. Yet by God's grace, others have taken their places and we should raise our voices in thanksgiving for the goodness of the Lord for preserving us in His truth and keeping us alive to see this *Week of Prayer*.

Looking back to our past history we can exclaim with Samuel, "Ebenezer." The Lord has helped us all the way up to our present position. The church faced troublous times in the past, she met "heresies and persecutions," she had to battle against "the infidel and the apostate," but by the grace of God she survived, made progress, and extended her influence to most parts of the world.

True, we have not yet come to the condition where we can say that we have reached the goal. The church is still in a militant phase. We did not yet reach the perfection set forth in Matthew 5:48 and Ephesians 5:25-27. However, we should not be discouraged, nor faint in our course. God's promise will be fulfilled.

The messages contained in this *Week of Prayer* deal with the triumph of God's remnant church. The Spirit of Prophecy describes the struggles of the church and assures us the final victory:

"One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the bloodstained banner of Prince Immanuel. . . . The battle raged. Victory alternated from side to side. . . . At last the victory was gained. The army following the banner with the inscription, 'The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus,' was gloriously triumphant." —*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 41.

Provision should be made that the members of the church who live in isolation and are not able to attend the meetings in churches or groups should also share the blessings in the reading of the messages. In churches or groups where the believers meet, such members should be chosen to read who are fluent, and can read aloud.

Sabbath, **December 9, 2000**, is suggested to be a day of fasting and earnest prayers. Although we are aware of the fact that not everyone is able to fast, those who are able and are willing to join God's people in this privilege are invited to do so.

On Sunday, December 10, the last day of the *Week of Prayer*, a special offering will be collected for the needs of the worldwide work. Please give generously, and the reward of the Lord will be certain. Make your plans in advance to help God's cause.

May the Lord richly bless everyone who takes part in this *Week of Prayer*.

*The brethren of the General Conference*

Friday, December 1, 2000

A compilation from the E. G. White's writings



# A View of the Conflict

**T**HE great controversy between the Prince of light and the prince of darkness has not abated one jot or tittle of its influence as time has gone on. The stern conflict between light and darkness, between truth and error, is deepening in its intensity. The synagogue of Satan is intensely active, and in this age the deceiving power of the enemy is working in the most subtle way. Every human mind that is not surrendered to God and is not under the control of the Spirit of God, will be perverted through satanic agencies. . . .

As soon as the Lord through Jesus Christ created our world, and placed Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, Satan announced his purpose to conform to his own nature the father and mother of all humanity, and to unite them with his own ranks of rebellion. He was determined to efface the image of God from the human posterity, and to trace his own image upon the soul in place of the divine image. He adopted methods of deception by which to accomplish his purpose. He is called the father of lies, an accuser of God and of those who maintain their allegiance to God, a murderer from the beginning. He put forth every power at his command

to win man to cooperate with him in apostasy, and succeeded in bringing rebellion into our world.

All the vast, complicated machinery of evil agencies is put into action in these last days. Through generation after generation, from age to age, Satan has gathered human agencies through whom to work out his diabolical purposes, and to bring about the enforcement of his plans and devices in the earth. The great putrid fountain of evil has been continually flowing through human society. Though unable to expel God from His throne, Satan has charged God with satanic attributes, and has claimed the attributes of God as his own. . . .

When Jesus was on earth, Satan led the people to reject the Son of God, and to choose Barabbas, who in character represented Satan, the god of this world. The Lord Jesus Christ came to dispute the usurpation of Satan in the kingdoms of the world. The conflict is not yet ended; and as we draw near the close of time, the battle waxes more intense. As the second appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ draws near, satanic agencies are moved from beneath. Satan will not only appear as a human being, but he will personate Jesus Christ; and the world

who has rejected the truth will receive him as the Lord of lords and King of kings. He will exercise his power, and work upon the human imagination. He will corrupt both the minds and the bodies of men, and will work through the children of disobedience, fascinating and charming, as does a serpent. . . .

John foresaw the conflict between the remnant church and the power of evil, and said, "The dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." The forces of darkness will unite with human agents who have given themselves into the control of Satan, and the same scenes that were exhibited at the trial, rejection, and crucifixion of Christ will be revived. <sup>1</sup>

In vision I saw two armies in terrible conflict. One army was led by banners bearing the world's insignia; the other was led by the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel. Standard after standard was left to trail in the dust as company after company from the Lord's army joined the foe; and tribe after tribe from the ranks of the enemy united with the commandment-keeping people of God. An angel



flying in the midst of heaven put the standards of Emmanuel into many hands, while a mighty general cried with a loud voice, "Come into line. Let those who are loyal to the commandments of God and the testimony of Christ, now take their position. 'Come out from among them, and be ye separate, . . . and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters.' Let all who will, come up to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty."

The battle raged. Victory alternated from side to side. Now the soldiers of the cross gave way, "as when a standard-bearer fainteth." But their apparent retreat was but an effort to gain a more advantageous position. Shouts of joy were heard. A song of praise to God went up, and angel voices united in the song, as Christ's soldiers planted His banner on the walls of fortresses till then held by the enemy. The Captain of our salvation was ordering the battle, and sending support to His soldiers. His power was mightily displayed, encouraging them to press the battle to the gates. He taught them terrible things in righteousness as He led them on step by step, conquering and to conquer.

At last the victory was gained. The army following the banner with the inscription, "The commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus," were gloriously triumphant. The soldiers of Christ were close beside the gates of the city of God, and with joy the city received her King. The kingdom of peace and joy and everlasting righteousness was established. God's will was done on earth, as it is done in heaven.

### Standing on guard

Now the church is militant. Now we are confronted with a world in midnight darkness, almost wholly given over to idolatry. But the day is coming when the battle will have been fought, the victory won. The will of God is to be done on earth as it is done in heaven. Then the

nations will own no other law than the law of heaven. All will be a happy, united family, clothed with the garments of praise and thanksgiving—the robe of Christ's righteousness. All nature, in its surpassing loveliness, will offer to God a constant tribute of praise and adoration. The world will be bathed in the light of heaven. The years will move on in gladness. The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun will be sevenfold greater than it is now. Over the scene the morning stars will sing together, and the sons of God will shout for joy, while God and Christ will unite in proclaiming, "There shall be no more sin, neither shall there be any more death."

This is the scene that is presented to me. But the church must still fight against seen and unseen foes. Satanic agencies in human form are on the ground. Men have confederated to oppose the Lord of hosts. These confederacies will continue until Christ shall leave His place of intercession before the mercy seat, and shall put on the garments of vengeance. Satanic agencies are in every city, busily organizing into parties those opposed to the law of God. Professed saints and avowed unbelievers take their stand with these parties. This is no time for the people of God to be the weaklings. We can not afford to be off our guard for one moment.

"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. 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. Wherefore take unto you the whole armor of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; and your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the

fiery darts of the enemy. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God."

"This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; that ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ; being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

"Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: . . . stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.

There are revealed in these last days visions of future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these should be dear to His church. What sustained the Son of God in His betrayal and trial? He saw of the travail of His soul, and was satisfied. He caught a view of the expanse of eternity, and saw the happiness of those who through His humiliation should receive pardon and everlasting life. He was wounded for their transgressions, bruised for their iniquities. The chastisement of their peace was upon Him, and with His stripes they were healed. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.

We must have a vision of the future and of the blessedness of heaven. Stand on the threshold of eternity, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life have cooperated with Christ, regarding it as a privilege and an honor to suffer for His sake. As they unite with the angels, they cast their crowns at the feet of the Redeemer, exclaiming: "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and

honor, and glory, and blessing. . . . Honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb forever and ever.”

There the redeemed ones greet those who directed them to the uplifted Saviour. They unite in praising Him who died that human beings might have the life that measures with the life of God. The conflict is over. All tribulation and strife are at an end. Songs of victory fill all heaven as the redeemed stand around the throne of God. All take up the joyful strain, “Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again, a triumphant conqueror.”

“I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands; and cried with a loud voice, saying, Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb.”

“These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple: and he that sitteth on the throne shall dwell among them. They shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more; neither shall the sun light on them, nor any heat. For the Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.” “And there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away.”

### Lift up the cross of Calvary

Will you catch the inspiration of the vision? Will you let your mind dwell upon the picture? Will you not be truly converted, and then go forth to labor in a spirit entirely different from the spirit in which you have labored in the past, displacing

the enemy, breaking down every barrier to the advancement of the gospel, filling hearts with the light and peace and joy of the Lord? Shall not this miserable spirit of fault-finding and murmuring be buried, never to have a resurrection? Shall not the incense of praise and thanksgiving ascend from hearts purified and sanctified and glorified by the presence of Christ? Shall we not in faith lay hold of sinners, and bring them to the cross?

Who will this day consecrate themselves to the service of the Lord? Who will now pledge themselves not to affiliate with the world, but to come out from the world, and be separate, refusing to pollute the soul with the worldly schemes and worldly practises under the enemy's influence?

We are in this world to lift the cross of Calvary. As we lift this cross we shall find that it lifts us. Let every Christian stand in his lot and place, catching the inspiration of the work that Christ did for souls while in this world. We need the ardor of the Christian hero, who can endure the seeing of Him that is invisible. Our faith is to have a resurrection. The soldiers of the cross are to exert a positive influence for good. Christ says, “He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.” Indifference in the Christian life is a manifest denial of Christ.

### The light of the world

Should we not see in the world today medical missionaries who in all the features of their work are worthy of the name they bear, who aspire to the doing of deeds worthy of valiant soldiers of Christ? We are living near the close of the great conflict, when many souls are to be rescued from the slavery of sin. We are living in a time when to Christ's followers the promise specially belongs, “Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.” He who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, He who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light, bids us let our light

shine brightly before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our Father who is in heaven. In such rich measure has light been given to God's people that Christ is justified in telling them that they are to be the light of the world.

To our physicians and ministers I send the message, Lay hold of the Lord's work as if you believed the truth for this time. Medical missionary workers and workers in the gospel ministry are to be bound together by indissoluble ties. Their work is to be done with freshness and power. Throughout our churches there is to be a reconversion, and a reconsecration to service. Shall we not, in our work in the future, and in the gatherings that we hold, be of one accord? Shall we not wrestle with God in prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to come into every heart? The presence of Christ, manifest among us, would cure the leprosy of unbelief that has made our service so weak and inefficient. We need the breath of the divine life breathed into us. We are to be channels through which the Lord can send light and grace to the world. Backsliders are to be reclaimed. We are to put away our sins, by confession and repentance, humbling our proud hearts before God. Floods of spiritual power are now to poured forth upon those prepared to receive it.

Let us now consecrate ourselves to the proclamation of the message, “Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.” Divine and human instrumentalities are to unite for the accomplishment of one great object. “The Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”

“They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars forever and ever.”<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *The Review and Herald*, April 14, 1896.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, November 26, 1903.

# Internal and External Obstacles

**F**OR 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” (Ephesians 6:12).

Why do obstacles exist? This is a good question which can be answered. In God’s universe there was perfect harmony, without one discordant note. But suddenly a strange new intruder came on the scene, mysterious and unexplainable. Sin was that intruder which proved to be a terrible obstacle. Lucifer, the most honored of the angels, the highest in power and glory among the created beings in heaven, became Satan, the “adversary” of God and of the holy beings. After his expulsion from heaven his residing place became this planet. Our first parents, Adam and Eve, did not endure the test, and the result was that disappointment, sorrow, pain, and finally death—a flood of disgrace—became the lot of our experience on earth.

## The testimony of history

We may recall some sad events which have taken place over the centuries: The flood which covered the earth with water when the world was still new; the tower of Babel—that memorial of the folly of human invention; the destruction of Sodom

and Gomorrah because of the immorality prevalent among their inhabitants. We clearly see here the failure of men because of the obstacle of sin.

When God proposed to deliver His people from Egyptian bondage, Moses perceived serious obstacles before him which appeared to be insurmountable. The proud kingdom of Pharaoh strongly opposed the divine plan. The great and terrible desert served as a graveyard to the greatest part of the unbelieving, rebellious majority of that people who were so greatly favored. The obstacles were not vanquished in spite of the miraculous daily leading of divine power. Very near the borders of Canaan the remnant of those who had crossed the Red Sea as in a dry land succumbed to obstacles in the wilderness.

The degrading and abominable idolatry existing among the surrounding nations bewitched the Israelites. It was like a deadly poison from which they were healed only after the seventy years of Babylonian captivity.

“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4). “Even before He took humanity upon Him, He saw the whole length of the path He must travel in order to save that which was lost. Every pang that rent His heart, every insult that was heaped upon His head, every privation that He was called to endure, was open to His view before He laid aside His crown and royal robe, and

stepped down from the throne, to clothe His divinity with humanity. The path from the manger to Calvary was all before His eyes. He knew the anguish that would come upon Him. He knew it all, and yet He said, ‘Lo, I come.’”<sup>1</sup>

“Not without hindrance was the Commander of heaven to win the souls of men to His kingdom. From the time when He was a babe in Bethlehem, He was continually assailed by the evil one. . . . The forces of the confederacy of evil were set upon His track to engage in warfare against Him, and if possible to prevail over Him. . . .

“Satan saw that he must either conquer or be conquered. The issues of the conflict involved too much to be entrusted to his confederate angels. He must personally conduct the warfare. All the energies of apostasy were rallied against the Son of God. Christ was made the mark of every weapon of hell.”<sup>2</sup>

As mentioned by Simeon when the baby Jesus was dedicated in the Temple, the Saviour of the world was not to tread a path free of obstacles. Herod tried to exterminate Him from existence by commanding that the innocent children of Bethlehem be killed.

He who did not have a place where to lay His head was dependent upon the kindness of strangers to supply His needs. He trod the winepress alone and traveled the bloody path, always misunderstood even by His own brethren. He was forsaken by many of His disciples,

observed and watched by many, persecuted, rejected, and finally condemned to die the most ignominious death. He says to us: "Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if they have kept my saying, they will keep yours also." "I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." "In the world ye shall have tribulation" (John 15:20; 17:14; 16:33).

"If we hope to wear the crown, we must expect to bear the cross. Our greatest trials will come from those who profess godliness. It was so with the world's Redeemer; it will be so with His followers. I should doubt whether I were a child of God, if the world, or even all professed Christians, spoke well of me. Those who are in earnest to win the crown of eternal life need not be surprised or disheartened because at every step toward the heavenly Canaan they meet with obstacles and encounter trials. The opposition which Christ received came from His own nation, who would have been greatly blessed had they accepted Him. In like manner the remnant church receive opposition from those who profess to be their brethren."<sup>3</sup>

All the apostles except John sealed their faith with their own blood, suffering martyrdom for Christ's sake. Paul mentions a few obstacles he met in his ministry: "In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:26–28). In his epistle to the Hebrews he presents a long list of champions of faith, heroes of the cross.

"From the first the church has had such obstacles to meet and ever will have till the close of time."<sup>4</sup>

### Internal obstacles

"Open opposition may be fierce and cruel, but it is fraught with far less peril to God's cause than is the secret enmity of those who, while professing to serve God, are at heart the servants of Satan. These have it in their power to place every advantage in the hands of those who will use their knowledge to hinder the work of God and injure His servants."<sup>5</sup>

Secular history records examples of great men who conquered and ruled the world, but collapsed before the obstacles they faced or that they themselves created. "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Proverbs 25:28). It has been said that "It is not what we possess or that which is around us that makes us happy, but that which is within us and what we are." Evidently, circumstances by themselves do not make us happy or unhappy. It is the way we react in the face of these circumstances that determines our feelings. Jesus assured us that the kingdom of heaven is within us. It is up to us to respond, to make a decision, or speak the last word. There either heaven or hell may be found. We are aware that the greatest enemy which should be feared is none other than self. The greatest challenge we face is to conquer it. That which takes place in the family occurs also in the church.

The Israelites camped at the banks of the Jordan River, just about to conquer Canaan, the promised land. But there in that pleasant valley a most cruel evil was awaiting them, worse than the wild beasts of the desert, and worse than the armies of the enemy. By the suggestion of Balaam an enticing idol feast was arranged by the Moabites. It was the traitor from within that overthrew the fortress of principle and betrayed Israel into the power of Satan.

### External obstacles

Even if the enemy puts into operation thousands of disguised temptations to barricade the way, the church should nonetheless proceed. There will be no lack of wonderful resources in the hand of Omnipotence for those who continue to love God.

Our precious Saviour, when He was educating and training His disciples to cooperate with Him in the great work of preaching the gospel of His kingdom, found obstacles on every hand. The teachings of the rabbis, their customs and traditions, were piled, like rubbish, above the precious jewels of truth, so that they could not be discerned. The world's Redeemer rescued these jewels from the covering of error, and reset them in the framework of truth.

"Often men pray and weep because of the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make their way clear. Success will come as they struggle against apparently insurmountable difficulties and with success will come the greatest joy."<sup>6</sup>

### Blessings in disguise

If obstacles are inevitable and we have no other alternative but to face them, why do we not take them as part of daily life? "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Many a man and woman overcame in the battles of life, specifically because the obstructions before them caused them to vigorously respond with double courage. Someone has said: "Our diseases help us in a way that we do not even expect." Very often this is so. How many would never come to the knowledge of God if they had not found themselves in the valley of humility and pain. The bright and inspired career of Helen Keller became a reality due to her blindness, deafness and inability to



speak. Beethoven composed what was perhaps some of his best music after he became deaf. How many beautiful sacred hymns are sung today coming from the authorship of Fanny J. Crosby, who was completely blind. Just like Job of old, she wrote: "And I shall see Him face to face, and tell the story—saved by grace."

The psalmist declares: "Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word. It is good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes" (Psalm 119:67, 71). "Trial is part of the education given in the school of Christ, to purify God's children from the dross of earthliness. . . . He who reads the hearts of men knows their weaknesses better than they themselves can know them. He sees that some have qualifications which, if rightly directed, could be used in the advancement of His work. In His providence He brings these souls into different positions and varied circumstances, that they may discover the defects that are concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunity to overcome these defects and to fit themselves for service. Often He permits the fires of affliction to burn, that they may be purified."<sup>7</sup>

"But we must meet all obstacles placed in our way, and overcome them one at a time. If we overcome the first difficulty, we shall be stronger to meet the next, and at every effort will become better able to make advancement."<sup>8</sup>

"It is obstacles that make men strong. It is not helps, but difficulties, conflicts, rebuffs, that make men of moral sinew. Too much ease and avoiding responsibility have made weaklings and dwarfs of those who ought to be responsible men of moral power and strong spiritual muscle."<sup>9</sup>

"Throughout the history of God's people great mountains of difficulty, apparently insurmountable, have loomed up before those who were trying to carry out the purposes of Heaven. Such obstacles are permitted by the Lord as a test of faith. When we are hedged about on every side, this is the time above all

others to trust in God and in the power of His Spirit. . . .

"Often men are tempted to falter before the perplexities and obstacles that confront them. But if they will hold the beginning of their confidence steadfast unto the end, God will make the way clear. Success will come to them as they struggle against difficulties. Before the intrepid spirit and unwavering faith of a Zerubbabel, great mountains of difficulty will become a plain."<sup>10</sup>

"All that has perplexed us in the providences of God will in the world to come be made plain. The things hard to be understood will then find explanation. The mysteries of grace will unfold before us. Where our finite minds discovered only confusion and broken promises, we shall see the most perfect and beautiful harmony. We shall know that infinite love ordered the experiences that seemed most trying. As we realize the tender care of Him who makes all things work together for our good, we shall rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory."<sup>11</sup>

## Forward!

Dear brethren and sisters, we are not short of words of comfort and encouragement. "The great lesson . . . taught [at the Red Sea] is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, 'Go forward.' We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, 'Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;' but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things."<sup>12</sup>

"Many are the hindrances that lie in the path of those who would walk in obedience to the commandments of God. There are strong and subtle influences that bind them to the ways of the world, but the power of the Lord can break these chains. He will remove every obstacle from before the feet of His faithful ones or give them strength and courage to conquer every difficulty, if they earnestly beseech His help. All hindrances will vanish before an earnest desire and persistent effort to do the will of God at any cost to self, even if life itself is sacrificed."<sup>13</sup>

Man's extremity is God's opportunity. That which is impossible for man it is quite possible for God. The greatest obstacles which confronted the people of God in the past have made it all the more evident that God has always intervened in their behalf, such as in the victory at the Red Sea, in the crossing of Jordan, and in the crumbling of the walls of Jericho.

On Calvary the heel of the Lion of the tribe of Judah was slightly wounded, but the head of the serpent was totally crushed. At the cry, "It is finished!" Christ displayed His eternal banner on the eternal heights. Love triumphed!

When these things will have been over, "there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:4). "Affliction shall not rise up the second time" (Nahum 1:9). Obstacles? Nevermore, for evermore. May the Lord sustain us in this blessed hope unto the end. Amen. ☩

<sup>1</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 410.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116.

<sup>3</sup> *The Review and Herald*, August, 28, 1883.

<sup>4</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 196, 197.

<sup>5</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, p. 658.

<sup>6</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 269.

<sup>7</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 524.

<sup>8</sup> *Messages to Young People*, p. 46.

<sup>9</sup> *Child Guidance*, pp. 156, 157.

<sup>10</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 594, 595.

<sup>11</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 286.

<sup>12</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

<sup>13</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 147.



# The Church and Its Mission

## The biblical meaning of “church”

The word “church” as found in the Bible is a translation of the Greek word *ekklesia*, which means “calling out.” This expression was commonly used by people when referring to a special gathering.

The Bible refers to the church as a divine agency, and it is called “the church of God” (Acts 20:28). Jesus entrusted the church with authority (Matthew 16:18, 19).

The Old Testament alludes to the church as the organized congregation of God’s people. From the earliest times the families who feared God—from the lineage of Adam right down to Seth, Noah, Shem, and Abraham—represented the preservers of the divine truth. These families, in which the father played the role of a priest, may be considered the church in miniature.

## Dear to the heart of God

“The church of Christ is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock.

“Christ ‘loved the church, and gave himself for it’ (Ephesians 5:25). It is the purchase of His blood. The divine Son of God is seen walking amid the seven golden candlesticks. Jesus Himself supplies the oil to these burning lamps. He it is that kindles the flame. ‘In him was life;

and the life was the light of men’ (John 1:4). No candlestick, no church, shines of itself. From Christ emanates all its light. . . . The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the light thereof.”<sup>1</sup>

## A city of refuge

“The church is God’s fortress, His city of refuge, which He holds in a revolted world. Any betrayal of the church is treachery to Him who has bought mankind with the blood of His only-begotten Son. . . .

“Through centuries of persecution, conflict, and darkness, God has sustained His church. Not one cloud has fallen upon it that He has not prepared for; not one opposing force has risen to counterwork His work, that He has not foreseen. All has taken place as He predicted. He has not left His church forsaken, but has traced in prophetic declarations what would occur, and that which His Spirit inspired the prophets to foretell has been brought about. All His purposes will be fulfilled. His law is linked with His throne, and no power of evil can destroy it. Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition.

“During ages of spiritual darkness the church of God has been as a city set on a hill. From age to age, through successive generations, the pure doctrines of heaven have been unfolding within its borders. Enfeebled and defective as it may appear, the church is the one

object upon which God bestows in a special sense His supreme regard. It is the theater of His grace, in which He delights to reveal His power to transform hearts.”<sup>2</sup>

## God cares for His church

“God has a church upon the earth, who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people.

“There is no need to doubt, to be fearful that the work will not succeed. God is at the head of the work, and He will set everything in order. If matters need adjusting at the head of the work, God will attend to that, and work to right every wrong. Let us have faith that God is going to carry the noble ship which bears the people of God safely into port.

“When I voyaged from Portland, Maine, to Boston, many years ago, a storm came upon us, and the great waves dashed us to and fro. The chandeliers fell, and the trunks were rolled from side to side, like balls. The passengers were frightened, and many were screaming, waiting in expectation of death.

“After awhile the pilot came on board. The captain stood near the pilot as he took the wheel, and expressed fear about the course in which the ship was directed. ‘Will you take the wheel?’ asked the pilot. The captain was not ready to do that, for he knew that he lacked experience. Then some of the pas-

sengers grew uneasy, and said they feared the pilot would dash them upon the rocks. 'Will you take the wheel?' asked the pilot; but they knew that they could not manage the wheel.

"When you think that the work is in danger, pray, 'Lord, stand at the wheel. Carry us through the perplexity. Bring us safely into port.' Have we not reason to believe that the Lord will bring us through triumphantly?"<sup>3</sup>

### The church of God is peculiar

"Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Exodus 19:5, 6).

"Seventh-day Adventists have been chosen by God as a peculiar people, separate from the world. By the great cleaver of truth He has cut them out from the quarry of the world and brought them into connection with Himself."<sup>4</sup>

"God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world. The three angels of Revelation 14 represent the people who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth."<sup>5</sup>

### The church should keep herself faithful

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for

the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein" (Jeremiah 6:16).

"There is to be no change in the general features of our work. It is to stand as clear and distinct as prophecy has made it. We are to enter into no confederacy with the world, supposing that by so doing we could accomplish more. If any stand in the way, to hinder the advancement of the work in the lines that God has appointed, they will displease God. No line of truth that has made the Seventh-day Adventist people what they are is to be weakened. We have the old landmarks of truth, experience, and duty, and we are to stand firmly in defense of our principles, in full view of the world."<sup>6</sup>

"Our only safety is to stand as God's peculiar people. We must not yield one inch to the customs and fashions of this degenerate age, but stand in moral independence, making no compromise with its corrupt and idolatrous practices."<sup>7</sup>

### The duty of the church toward her members

"Choose poverty, reproach, separation from friends, or any suffering rather than to defile the soul with sin. Death before dishonor or the transgression of God's law should be the motto of every Christian. As a people professing to be reformers, treasuring the most solemn, purifying truths of God's word, we must elevate the standard far higher than it is at the present time. Sin and sinners in the church must be promptly dealt with, that others may not be contaminated. Truth and purity require that we make more thorough work to cleanse the camp from Achans. Let those in responsible positions not suffer sin in a brother. Show him that he must either put away his sins or be separated from the church."<sup>8</sup>

"God has selected a people in these last days whom He has made the depositaries of His law, and this

people will ever have disagreeable tasks to perform. . . . It will require much diligence and a continual struggle to keep evil out of our churches. There must be rigid, impartial discipline exercised; for some who have a semblance of religion will seek to undermine the faith of others and will privily work to exalt themselves."<sup>9</sup>

### Sin must not be tolerated in the church

"Toward those who fall into sin, the church has a duty, to warn, to instruct, and if possible to restore. 'Reprove, rebuke, exhort,' the Lord says, 'with all long-suffering and doctrine' (2 Timothy 4:2). Deal faithfully with wrongdoing. Warn every soul that is in danger. Leave none to deceive themselves. Call sin by its right name. Declare what God has said in regard to lying, Sabbath-breaking, stealing, idolatry, and every other evil. 'They which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God' (Galatians 5:21). If they persist in sin, the judgment you have declared from God's word is pronounced upon them in heaven. In choosing to sin, they disown Christ; the church must show that she does not sanction their deeds, or she herself dishonors her Lord. She must say about sin what God says about it. She must deal with it as God directs, and her action is ratified in heaven. He who despises the authority of the church despises the authority of Christ Himself."<sup>10</sup>

"The world must not be introduced into the church, and married to the church, forming a bond of unity. Through this means the church will become indeed corrupt, and as stated in Revelation, 'a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.'<sup>11</sup>

"The names of those who sin and refuse to repent should not be retained on the church books, lest the saints be held accountable for their evil deeds. Those who pursue a course of transgression should be visited and labored with, and if they then refuse to repent, they should be separated from church fellow-

ship, in accordance with the rules laid down in the Word of God. . . .

“Those who refuse to hear the admonitions and warnings given by God’s faithful messengers are not to be retained in the church. They are to be disfellowshipped; for they will be as Achan in the camp of Israel—deceived and deceiving.

“Who, after reading the record of Achan’s sin and punishment, can think it according to the will of God that those who do wickedly, refusing to repent, are to be retained in the church? To retain them would be an insult to the God of heaven.”<sup>12</sup>

### The final mission of the church

“And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues” (Revelation 18:4).

“Until Christ shall appear in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory, men will become perverse in spirit and turn from the truth to fables. The church will yet see troublous times. She will prophesy in sackcloth. But although she must meet heresies and persecutions, although she must battle with the infidel and the apostate, yet by the help of God she is bruising the head of Satan. The Lord will have a people as true as steel, and with faith as firm as the granite rock. They are to be His witnesses in the world, His instrumentalities to do a special, a glorious work in the day of His preparation.”<sup>13</sup>

“The church is God’s appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God’s plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to ‘the prin-

cipalities and powers in heavenly places,’ the final and full display of the love of God (Ephesians 3:10).”<sup>14</sup>

### An appeal

We would like to take the opportunity during this week of prayer to appeal to the dear family of God:

a) Let us keep ourselves loyal to the truth and “contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 1:3).

b) Let us study the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy more. Isaiah 8:20; Revelation 12:17; 19:10.

c) Let us not neglect to hold morning and evening worship in our homes and in our institutions. 3TT 91.

d) Let us advance in the practice of health reform, depending less and less on animal products (for the diseases in the animals are increasing day by day) and let us use more fruits and wholesome food. “If we wish good health, we must take special care of the health that God has given us, deny the unhealthy appetite, eat less fine food, eat coarse food free from grease.”<sup>15</sup>

e) By the grace of God, let us eliminate from our homes everything which has brought upon us His displeasure—unsuitable dress, unsuitable music and videos, readings which will not edify us in our spiritual life, and let us maintain our stand against the wrong use of TV and similar devices. Isaiah 33:15; Ezekiel 20:7.

f) Let us keep our first love regarding tithes and offerings, especially the first-fruits (Proverbs 3:9). Let us not forsake our regular worship hours in the church, our active exercise in missionary work, and let us not exclude ourselves from the communion service as a part of God’s family. Let us maintain the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation so that the church may be always in unity as a true family. Ephesians 4:31, 32; 1 Corinthians 1:10.

g) Let us remember the appeal made during the General Confer-

ence sessions in 1967, 1971, and 1979, that we should appeal to our churches all over the world, calling the people to a deeper consecration and lifting up of our standards. 2 Chronicles 15:12–15.

- Lift up our principles (purity and integrity).

- Faithfulness and living up to the light which God has given us on health reform, Sabbath reform, and tithes and offerings.

- Regarding dress reform, so that our churches be not demoralized (4T 647, 648); separation from the world and its pleasures (such as TV, games, novels, amusements), vanities and festivities.

- Shunning improper friendship and association with those that lack true conversion.

- Exercising care in recommending candidates for baptism, and allowing only those to be baptized who thoroughly understand the doctrines and have given proof of their genuine conversion and new life in Christ Jesus.

### Conclusion

Dear brethren and sisters, may the Spirit of God illuminate our understanding so that during this week of prayer we may have a deeper understanding of the solemn and great mission of God’s church, and that by His grace we may have a part in the final work of the church and participate in the latter rain. Amen.

<sup>1</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 280.

<sup>2</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 11, 12.

<sup>3</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 282.

<sup>4</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 138.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 17.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 78.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 147.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 538.

<sup>10</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 805, 806.

<sup>11</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 265.

<sup>12</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1096.

<sup>13</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 594, 595.

<sup>14</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

<sup>15</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 274.





# The Outpouring of the Latter Rain

**A**SK ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field" (Zechariah 10:1).

## Our hope

One of the most dearly cherished hopes in connection with the finishing of God's work on earth has been the promised latter rain. For centuries, faithful believers have looked with anxious expectation for the fulfillment of the events associated with it. By the pen of inspiration, we know that the effects of the early and latter rain upon the seed represent the different phases of the work of the Holy Spirit. Every time we witness rain, it revives in us this anticipation. The apostle Peter speaking through inspiration applied the prophecies of Joel not only to the experience of the church during the early rain, but also to the time of the gospel's final triumph. "In the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh . . . that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Based on this expectation Peter also admonish us to: "Repent . . . and be converted, that" our "sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of

the Lord" (Acts 2:17–21; 3:19).

"But near the close of earth's harvest, a special bestowal of spiritual grace is promised to prepare the church for the coming of the Son of man. This outpouring of the Spirit is likened to the falling of the latter rain; and it is for this added power that Christians are to send their petitions to the Lord of the harvest 'in the time of the latter rain.' In response, 'the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain.' 'He will cause to come down . . . the rain, the former rain, and the latter rain' (Zechariah 10:1; Joel 2:23)."<sup>1</sup>

This hope of the promised refreshing helped to sustain the church through the centuries of persecution. This hope was revived during the early experience of the Advent movement through the manifestation of the prophetic gift. This hope was kept alive by the faithful remnant during the first and second world wars. This hope is still kept alive by the faithful not only in the countries where today we find religious freedom, but also by those faithful souls living under religious intolerance and persecution. Why is this hope still cherished? Has this hope been baseless?

## Not a baseless hope

No! Our hope is not baseless! Peter says, "For we have not followed cunningly devised fables,

when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of his majesty. . . . We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts." The apostle continues, emphatically saying, "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost" (2 Peter 1:16, 19–21).

Therefore our hope is based on God's promises as revealed by inspiration to His servants the prophets. What then is the biblical basis for this cherished hope, the outpouring of the latter rain?

First of all, God through the prophet Zechariah told us to ask: "Ask ye of the Lord rain in the time of the latter rain; so the Lord shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain" (Zechariah 10:1).

Christ Himself emphatically promised to His disciples that He would send them the Comforter. John 14:16–18; 15:26, 27; 16:12–14. Jesus also emphasized that our heavenly Father is more than willing to give the Holy Spirit to those that ask. "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts

unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?" (Luke 11:13).

"In describing to His disciples the office work of the Holy Spirit, Jesus sought to inspire them with the joy and hope that inspired His own heart. He rejoiced because of the abundant help He had provided for His church. The Holy Spirit was the highest of all gifts that He could solicit from His Father for the exaltation of His people. The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail."<sup>2</sup>

What a glorious fact, that God could give man no greater gift than One equal to Himself, His Son. "In giving His Son to die for the sins of the world, the Lord God made manifest what was the estimate He placed upon men; for in giving Jesus to the world, He gave heaven's best gift."<sup>3</sup> And equally glorious is the fact that the Father and the Son could give no greater gift to the church than One equal to Themselves, the Holy Spirit. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power."<sup>4</sup>

### Why expect the fulfillment of this promise now?

The Lord, through His Word, not only promised to send His Holy Spirit, but also foretold the events preceding the outpouring of the latter rain.

Through the prophet Joel God said, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: and also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit" (Joel 2:28, 29).

Christ said to His disciples: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;

and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken. And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:25-28).

"We are standing upon the threshold of great and solemn events. Prophecies are fulfilling. Strange, eventful history is being recorded in the books of heaven. Everything in our world is in agitation. There are wars and rumors of wars. The nations are angry, and the time of the dead has come, that they should be judged. Events are changing to bring about the day of God, which hasteth greatly. Only a moment of time, as it were, yet remains."<sup>5</sup> "Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us. At every meeting we attend our prayers should ascend, that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised."<sup>6</sup>

### Why is the latter rain needed?

a) For the individual, the latter rain is needed to ripen the grain.

"The latter rain, falling near the close of the season, ripens the grain and prepares it for the sickle. The Lord employs these operations of nature to represent the work of the Holy Spirit. . . . The ripening of the grain represents the completion of the work of God's grace in the soul. By the power of the Holy Spirit the moral image of God is to be perfected in the character. We are to be wholly transformed into the likeness of Christ."<sup>7</sup>

b) For the church, the latter rain is needed for several reasons.

"The latter rain, ripening earth's harvest, represents the spiritual grace that prepares the church for the coming of the Son of man. But unless the former rain has fallen, there will be no life; the green blade will not spring up. Unless the early showers have done their work, the latter rain can bring no seed to perfection."<sup>8</sup>

"At the commencement of the time of trouble, we were filled with the Holy Ghost as we went forth and proclaimed the Sabbath more fully. . . . 'The commencement of that time of trouble,' here mentioned, does not refer to the time when the plagues shall begin to be poured out, but to a short period just before they are poured out, while Christ is in the sanctuary. At that time, while the work of salvation is closing, trouble will be coming on the earth, and the nations will be angry, yet held in check so as not to prevent the work of the third angel. At that time the 'latter rain,' or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, will come, to give power to the loud voice of the third angel, and prepare the saints to stand in the period when the seven last plagues shall be poured out."<sup>9</sup>

c) The people of the world need the latter rain so that they can make their final decision.

"Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given. Miracles will be wrought, the sick will be healed, and signs and wonders will follow the believers. Satan also works with lying wonders, even bringing down fire from heaven in the sight of men (Revelation 13:13). Thus the inhabitants of the earth will be brought to take their stand.

"The message will be carried not so much by argument as by the deep conviction of the Spirit of God. The arguments have been presented. The seed has been sown, and now it will spring up and bear fruit.

The publications distributed by missionary workers have exerted their influence, yet many whose minds were impressed have been prevented from fully comprehending the truth or from yielding obedience. Now the rays of light penetrate everywhere, the truth is seen in its clearness, and the honest children of God sever the bands which have held them. Family connections, church relations, are powerless to stay them now. Truth is more precious than all besides. Notwithstanding the agencies combined against the truth, a large number take their stand upon the Lord's side."<sup>10</sup>

### The latter rain has not been poured out yet. Why not?

"Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. . . . We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people 'to will and to do of His good pleasure' (Philippians 2:13). But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given."<sup>11</sup>

"Christ declared that the divine influence of the Spirit was to be with His followers unto the end. But the promise is not appreciated as it should be; and therefore its fulfillment is not seen as it might be. The promise of the Spirit is a matter little thought of; and the result is only what might be expected—spiritual drought, spiritual darkness, spiritual declension and death. Minor matters occupy the attention, and the divine power which is necessary for the growth and prosperity of the church, and which would bring all other blessings in its train, is lacking, though offered in its infinite plenitude."<sup>12</sup>

Our trust is still in human plans and efforts. "Let me tell you that the

Lord will work in this last work in a manner very much out of the common order of things, and in a way that will be contrary to any human planning. There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness."<sup>13</sup>

"Under the showers of the latter rain the inventions of man, the human machinery, will at times be swept away, the boundary of man's authority will be as broken reeds, and the Holy Spirit will speak through the living, human agent with convincing power. No one then will watch to see if the sentences are well rounded off, if the grammar is faultless. The living water will flow in God's own channels. . . . I am sure that there is a heaven full of the richest, enduring treasures to be freely given to all who will appropriate them to themselves, and becoming enriched, thereby, will impart freely to others. I know this to be the truth."<sup>14</sup>

### What is needed?

What is needed today is to accept the work of the early rain.

"When one is fully emptied of self, when every false god is cast out of the soul, the vacuum is filled by the inflowing of the Spirit of Christ. Such a one has the faith that purifies the soul from defilement. He is conformed to the Spirit, and he minds the things of the Spirit. He has no confidence in self. Christ is all and in all. He receives with meekness the truth that is constantly being unfolded, and gives the Lord all the glory, saying, 'God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit.' 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is

of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God' (1 Corinthians 2:10, 12)."<sup>15</sup>

"He who loves Christ the most will do the greatest amount of good. There is no limit to the usefulness of one who, by putting self aside, makes room for the working of the Holy Spirit upon his heart, and lives a life wholly consecrated to God. If men will endure the necessary discipline, without complaining or fainting by the way, God will teach them hour by hour, and day by day. He longs to reveal His grace. If His people will remove the obstructions, He will pour forth the waters of salvation in abundant streams through the human channels."<sup>16</sup>

"We are to pray for the impartation of the Spirit as the remedy for sin-sick souls. The church needs to be converted, and why should we not prostrate ourselves at the throne of grace, as representatives of the church, and from a broken heart and contrite spirit make earnest supplication that the Holy Spirit shall be poured out upon us from on high? Let us pray that when it shall be graciously bestowed our cold hearts may be revived, and we may have discernment to understand that it is from God, and receive it with joy."<sup>17</sup>

Dear brethren and sisters, it is our privilege today to accept the counsel of the Lord as found in Zechariah 10:1, where we are urged to ask. Let us therefore ask by faith for this blessed gift of the Holy Spirit today!

<sup>1</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 55.

<sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

<sup>3</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, November 20, 1893.

<sup>4</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

<sup>5</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 14.

<sup>6</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 509.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 506

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 85, 86.

<sup>10</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

<sup>11</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

<sup>12</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 21.

<sup>13</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 300.

<sup>14</sup> *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 324.

<sup>15</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 287.

<sup>16</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 250.

<sup>17</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 64.



# The Earth Enlightened With God's Glory

**I**T is God's purpose to enlighten the earth with His glory, and this majestic glory represents His character.

When God brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He had a plan to be accomplished by them. They were to fill the whole earth with the glory that they had witnessed both in Egypt and at Sinai. But they did not fulfill the divine plan, and all but two died in the wilderness. Yet in spite of their failure, God still declared, "As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord" (Numbers 14:21).

The new generation that emerged to take possession of the promised land again did not fulfill their assignment, this time by failing to completely expel the Canaanites from the land. It was God's plan that His name should be glorified, exalted, and disseminated among the people. The idolatry so prominent in all the surrounding regions was to be eliminated, and the heathen were to be destroyed after their opportunities for repentance had been rejected. Thus their cup of iniquity was full. Why were God's people unable to fulfill the divine plan? It was because of their disobedience to His commandments.

Nevertheless, God still has a plan to fill the earth with His glory, and now He is looking to His faithful remnant people in these last days. The apostle Paul says: "Now all these things happened unto them

for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1 Corinthians 10:11).

"Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people" (Psalm 96:2, 3). In holy vision the prophet Isaiah beheld the Lord sitting on His glorious throne. The angels sang and glorified His name. "And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory" (Isaiah 6:3). The Lord will use His people for the fulfillment of this prophecy in the last days.

God will be wonderfully glorified in all the earth. It is His purpose to make known His works and character as portrayed in His law of Ten Commandments. Satan has been working hard to eclipse the divine glory through the man of sin, by making void God's holy precepts. But in the last days God will restore every divine institution. The breach made in the law will be repaired.

## God calls His people to carry out His plans

"God has called His church in this day, as He called ancient Israel, to stand as a light in the earth. By the mighty cleaver of truth, the messages of the first, second, and third angels, He has separated them from the churches and from the world to bring them into a sacred

nearness to Himself. He has made them the depositaries of His law and has committed to them the great truths of prophecy for this time. Like the holy oracles committed to ancient Israel, these are a sacred trust to be communicated to the world."<sup>1</sup>

The commission has been given to the church, as depositary of the truth, to proclaim the everlasting gospel to all the inhabitants of the earth. We have been chosen by God to represent Him in the world and to be light bearers. The first call to proclaim these combined messages occurred in 1844 when the sanctuary in heaven was opened. Since then the people of God have understood the truth on the Sabbath question. The prophet writes: "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in his temple the ark of his testament" (Revelation 11:19).

Less than a dozen faithful believers received the first rays of light of the third angel's message. They were able to understand that our great High Priest had entered the most holy place to accomplish the final work of atonement for His people. Another great truth which was also understood is the investigative judgment. This light shone upon God's remnant people. A great work was then before them. They went to enlighten the world.

When Satan saw that God had chosen a people to glorify His name by keeping His law, he was exceed-

ingly wroth. He met with his angels to make a plan to hold back this work, and prevent the people from advancing. One of his plans was to cause the church to conform to the practices of the world. As they turned their attention to material things, the sublime and sacred work for souls was forgotten. Selfishness, worshiping mammon, and idolatry in dress led the church which had received great light to turn away from her sacred mission.

### The second call

Again God has called His people to fulfill His designs. It was necessary for Him to extend a second call in 1888 because they had become paralyzed. Satan had once again involved them in the attractions of the world and the cares of this life. But the Lord in His mercy invited them again to their posts. The prophet says: "Arise, shine; for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee. For, behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall arise upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee. And the Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee" (Isaiah 60:1-5).

The church of God has received light, and this light must shine among the people in order to receive more light. When the prophet said "shine" it meant that we should arise and transmit to the world the light that we have received. Are we getting ready to receive more light which is arising upon us? The glory of the Lord which is risen upon us is the goodness of God, His mercy and power through justification and sanctification by faith. This was the great truth

presented to God's people in General Conference capacity in 1888. This message will enlighten the earth, for it is the glory of God, it is the third angel's message in verity, and this will enable God's people to finish His work on earth.

### Preparation to receive power

Since 1888 the faithful remnant have found themselves in the phase of preparation. The straight testimony presented is clear and positive truth. The work of reformation begins among those who accept the light of the angel of Revelation 18. Among them begins the work of preparation for the latter rain. We must overcome the defects in our characters and purify the soul temple of defilement. Therefore, this work of preparation requires perseverance, time and dedication. It is a reformatory work accomplished by accepting the message of righteousness by faith. This message invites us to keep all the commandments of God, while at the same time it reveals our own righteousness as unworthy, laying in the dust the glory of man. "If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character."<sup>2</sup>

"I know that a work must be done for the people, or many will not be prepared to receive the light of the angel sent down from heaven to lighten the whole earth with his glory."<sup>3</sup>

We must have knowledge of present truth and should not doubt the doctrines taught by God's servants through His word. We are to be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. Our feet should be swift and consecrated to go out from house to house to proclaim the gospel. Faith is our shield to shatter the cunningness of the enemy. Salvation granted by Jesus Christ should always be in our minds, and the word of God as a two-edged sword will enable us to fight against the powers of darkness. "For years the Lord has been calling the attention of His people to health reform. This is one

of the great branches of the work of preparation for the coming of the Son of man."<sup>4</sup>

"The remnant people of God must be a converted people. The presentation of this message is to result in the conversion and sanctification of souls. We are to feel the power of the Spirit of God in this movement. This is a wonderful, definite message; it means everything to the receiver, and it is to be proclaimed with a loud cry."<sup>5</sup>

Dear brethren and sisters, unless we fall at the feet of Jesus we are unable to receive the Holy Spirit. We should say as Paul did: "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (Romans 7:24). "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). If we go to Jesus with humility, all undone and penitent, acknowledging our sins and pleading for mercy, He will forgive us and will enable us to receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit to finish God's work.

### The earth enlightened

The church will then be clothed with the righteousness of Christ. No spot will be found in their garments. Sinful tendencies will have already been eliminated by the power of His blood. A great power will rest upon the church, and the people of God will take part in the great commission to enlighten the whole earth. The angel of Revelation 18 will present his message in a loud cry. The message of Christ's righteousness and the commandments of God must be proclaimed in all the world. The threefold message of Revelation 14 will be proclaimed with clarity. And the light of that other angel that will illuminate the whole earth with his glory will awaken the honest in heart.

The people of God will go forth in all the length and breadth of the earth, proclaiming the three angels' messages. Just as the early apostles went out with the power of the Holy Spirit as witnesses for Christ to all parts of the world then known, so

it shall be in our days. The remnant will finish the work entrusted to them with greater power.

## Who will take part in the event?

### 1) First of all, the Holy Spirit:

“The descent of the Holy Spirit upon the church is looked forward to as in the future; but it is the privilege of the church to have it now. . . .

“The outpouring of the Spirit in the days of the apostles was the former rain, and glorious was the result. But the latter rain will be more abundant.”<sup>6</sup>

The Holy Spirit is God's agency to equip the remnant people to go out to proclaim the three angels' messages.

### 2) Secondly, the remnant:

“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.”<sup>7</sup>

The people of God will be constrained by the Holy Spirit to go out to proclaim the truth. This movement is symbolized by that other angel enlightening the earth with his glory. Full of courage and determination, the remnant will be dispersed into all places and will give the final warning to the world. “Servants of God, with their faces lighted up and shining with holy consecration, will hasten from place to place to proclaim the message from heaven. By thousands of voices, all over the earth, the warning will be given.”<sup>8</sup>

What a great privilege is granted the children of God, those who surrender themselves to the power of the Holy Spirit! By His power they can overcome the world, the flesh and the devil in order to be elected and approved by Christ for the conclusion of His mighty work.

### 3) Thirdly, the publishing houses:

“Our publications should go everywhere. Let them be issued in many languages.”<sup>9</sup>

“And in a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power and who lightens the earth with his glory.”<sup>10</sup>

“In our erring judgment we may think it unwise to give literature to the very ones who would accept the truth most readily. We know not what may be the good results of giving away a leaflet containing present truth.”<sup>11</sup>

The colporteur work, the church and the Holy Spirit will enlighten the world with the glory of God. The Sabbath truth will be preached in all the world. It is our duty now to sow the seed, and the seed will spring up with the showers of Christ's grace. Thousands and thousands will be convinced about the truth.

## The sins of Babylon will be laid open

In Revelation 17, Babylon is represented as a woman sitting upon a beast and with a cup full of wine of abominations and uncleanness. This wine represents the false doctrines which Babylon has taught all around the world.

The doctrine of the immortality of the soul and the observance of the false sabbath (Sunday) are two of the great errors taught by Babylon everywhere. Almost all churches adhere to these false doctrines. And the people of God, filled with the Holy Spirit, are to expose the sins of Babylon.

These announcements penetrate everywhere and infuriate the leaders of the churches. They appeal to the strong arm of the civil power to halt the movement of the living God. They issue a decree forbidding the people of God to keep His true Sabbath day holy. And by economic pressures, imprisonment and death threats, they seek to compel the remnant to keep Sunday (Revelation 13:16, 17).

This procedure of the wicked fills up the cup of indignation, and the sins of Babylon reach unto heaven. On this sharp stage of events the call is heard: “Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities” (Revelation 18:4, 5).

The movement of the angel of Revelation 18 plays an important role then, because a large portion of God's children are still in Babylon. In the time of the final warning, the Lord will call them to come out of her. The Lord has a work to perform on earth.

The third angel's message will be closed by dividing the whole world into two classes: on one hand are the worshipers of the beast and his image; on the other side are those who keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus. The first party is sealed with the mark of the beast, while the faithful few are sealed with the seal of the living God. The church of God becomes the church triumphant; she has overcome the beast, his image, and his mark. The name of God has been glorified in His servants. And now, as a bride, the church awaits the coming of Christ for the marriage reception.

Dear brothers and sisters who take part in this week of prayer: Stop and think about the time in which we are living. Meditate on the task that is assigned to us, and the promises which we have received from our Master. We appeal to all—let us seek the Lord while He may be found, while He is still in the heavenly sanctuary making intercession for us.

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 455.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 186, 187.

<sup>3</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 468, 469.

<sup>4</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 154.

<sup>6</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 701.

<sup>7</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 126.

<sup>8</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 612.

<sup>9</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 62.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 140.

<sup>11</sup> *Christian Service*, p. 153.



# The Church Triumphant

**D**URING the long years of conflict against the power of evil, the Lord has given promises and revelation of His tender care for His people. In the eighth century before Christ, Isaiah the prophet wrote: "But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour: I gave Egypt for thy ransom, Ethiopia and Seba for thee" (Isaiah 43:1-3).

God opened the Red Sea before the children of Israel and delivered them from the hands of the Egyptians. The Lord led His people through the wilderness and fed them with manna—the bread of heaven—and refreshed them with the waters which flowed out of the rock.

Joshua witnessed the tender care of God for His people as they crossed the Jordan river and in the conquest of Canaan.

In the courts of Babylon, the Lord protected His dear children from being destroyed by the flaming fire and the mouths of lions.

In its early period, the Christian church was safeguarded in the time of severe persecution.

During the 1260 years of oppression the church prophesied in sackcloth, but she was sustained by God.

So it has been during the passing of the centuries. God's children have been despised by men, perse-

cuted, and forsaken, but they were upheld by His promises. They have looked by faith to the time when He would fulfill the promise of final triumph for His church.

We are living in the last moments of this world's history, and God's plan is to prepare His people to face the final events which will come upon the world, and thus have a glorious, triumphant church. "That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (Ephesians 5:27).

## The church militant is not now the church triumphant

The church of God has two distinct phases: The stage of militancy and the stage of triumph. In the stage when the church is still militant we see a weak, imperfect church, but in the triumphant phase she will be perfect, glorious, and without defect.

"The church militant is not now the church triumphant; but God loves His church, and describes through the prophet how He opposes and resists Satan, who is clothing the children of God in the blackest and most defiled garments, and pleading for the privilege of destroying them. The angels of God were protecting them from the assaults of the enemy. . . .

"While the Lord brings into the church those who are truly converted, Satan at the same time brings persons who are not converted into its fellowship. While Christ is sowing the good seed, Satan is sowing the tares. There are two opposing influences continually exerted on the members of the church. One influ-

ence is working for the purification of the church, and the other for the corrupting of the people of God." <sup>1</sup>

In its stage of militancy the church is defective, but God does not destroy her because of her imperfection.

"Some people seem to think that upon entering the church they will have their expectations fulfilled, and meet only with those who are pure and perfect. They are zealous in their faith, and when they see faults in church members, they say, 'We left the world in order to have no association with evil characters, but the evil is here also;' and they ask, as did the servants in the parable, 'From whence then hath it tares?' But we need not be thus disappointed, for the Lord has not warranted us in coming to the conclusion that the church is perfect; and all our zeal will not be successful in making the church militant as pure as the church triumphant. . . .

"God has a church upon the earth who are His chosen people, who keep His commandments. He is leading, not stray offshoots, not one here and one there, but a people. The truth is a sanctifying power; but the church militant is not the church triumphant." <sup>2</sup>

## Parallel between the apostolic church and the remnant of the last days

Soon after His baptism Jesus organized the apostolic church, and during three and a half years He prepared the disciples for the great work of the gospel, bidding them: "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I

have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" (Matthew 28:19, 20).

For a while the disciples had been in the company of Jesus, but they still possessed serious defects of character, such as the spirit of rivalry, pride, greed, envy, evil surmising, indifference, jealousy, hatred, and contention. These are some characteristics of a defective church. But the church overcame these problems, triumphed over their defects of character and received the power of the Holy Spirit in the early rain.

Clothed with the heavenly armor the church entered her triumphant phase.

The disciples received the Holy Spirit after diligent preparation.

"As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. . . .

"The disciples prayed with intense earnestness for a fitness to meet men and in their daily intercourse to speak words that would lead sinners to Christ. Putting away all differences, all desire for the supremacy, they came close together in Christian fellowship. They drew nearer and nearer to God, and as they did this they realized what a privilege had been theirs in being permitted to associate so closely with Christ."<sup>3</sup>

By the power of the Holy Spirit the church "went forth conquering, and to conquer." Without financial resources, possessing no temples, schools, or health institutions, a handful of people proclaimed the gospel. It spread, increased, and reached the souls all over the earth.

The triumphant church was a living epistle that revealed love, unity, and tireless labor for the salvation of souls.

The experience of the last church will be similar to that of the disciples. Defects of character and weaknesses are seen among God's people, but the church must go through the first phase of her experience—the phase of militancy. In order to reach the second phase—the church triumphant—the people of God need to prepare and seek for the promised blessing—the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. The

apostolic church overcame her imperfections and weaknesses, and prepared herself for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Once ready, she received the showers of the early rain and entered her victorious phase. Likewise, when the final church of God will overcome all defects of character and prepare for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, she will receive the showers of the latter rain, and will enter her triumphant phase.

### Characteristics of the church triumphant: Revelation 14:1–5, 12

#### a) Their minds reflect the character of God:

Those who reach the final phase of the church—the phase of triumph—are privileged to have the seal of the living God. They will have in their foreheads the marks of redemption: "It is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved."<sup>4</sup>

"All who proved their loyalty to God by observing His law, and refusing to accept a spurious sabbath, will rank under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and will receive the seal of the living God."<sup>5</sup>

"While John was shown the last great struggles of the church with earthly powers, he was also permitted to behold the final victory and deliverance of the faithful. . . . Looking beyond the smoke and din of the battle, he beheld a company upon Mount Zion with the Lamb, having, instead of the mark of the beast, the 'Father's name written in their foreheads.'"<sup>6</sup>

#### b) They sing of their victory:

In their conflict against evil they become overcomers and will take part in the choir that will sing the song of Moses and of the Lamb, both of them songs of victory. These songs express an experience such as never experienced by any other people besides the 144,000.

#### c) They possess a pure faith:

"These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins" (Revelation 14:4).

The word "women" here does not have a literal but rather a symbolic meaning. A chaste woman represents a pure church, and a corrupt woman represents an apostate church. The characteristic of this company at the time of their deliverance is that they do not have communion with fallen or apostate churches on earth.

#### d) They follow Christ wholeheartedly:

They are inseparable companions of the Lamb. A mutual link unites Jesus to them, and they to Jesus. Their greatest desire is to love Christ, to follow in His footsteps, and become one with Him as He is one with the Father.

#### e) Their speech is pure and true:

While they live in the world full of deceptions, before they are translated their lives are in all respects without flaw, without deceit. Honesty toward God and man is the endeavor of their lives. Their actions and words are a convincing testimony of their sincerity and truthfulness.

They grow in grace, in faith, in the fear and the knowledge of God.

They live in harmony with the light they have, and reach perfection of character. "When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own."<sup>7</sup>

#### g) They are obedient to God's law:

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God" (Revelation 14:12).

"For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:3).

#### h) They have the faith of Jesus:

The expression "the faith of Jesus" of Revelation 14:12 identifies a faith that works, a faith that takes man to live the life of Christ.

In a life of simplicity, humbleness, self-denial, resignation, consecration, submission to the will of God, and obedience to all His commandments, the servants of God show the faith of Jesus.

“‘The faith of Jesus.’ It is talked of, but not understood. What constitutes the faith of Jesus, that belongs to the third angel’s message? Jesus becoming our sin-bearer that He might become our sin-pardoning Saviour. He was treated as we deserve to be treated. He came to our world and took our sins that we might take His righteousness. And faith in the ability of Christ to save us amply and fully and entirely is the faith of Jesus.”<sup>8</sup>

#### **h) They will be persecuted:**

“The same masterful mind that plotted against the faithful in ages past is still seeking to rid the earth of those who fear God and obey His law. Satan will excite indignation against the humble minority who conscientiously refuse to accept popular customs and traditions.”<sup>9</sup>

#### **i) They resist Satan’s supremacy:**

“The church, soon to enter upon her most severe conflict, will be the object most dear to God upon earth. The confederacy of evil will be stirred with power from beneath, and Satan will cast all the reproach possible upon the chosen ones whom he cannot deceive and delude with his satanic inventions and falsehoods.”<sup>10</sup>

### **Steps in the final experience of the church**

“Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?” (Song of Solomon 6:10).

#### **a) They receive the latter rain and give the loud cry:**

Under the grace represented by the former rain, the faithful children of God are daily baptized with the Holy Spirit and are thus being prepared to receive the latter rain and proclaim the last warning to the world.

“The glory of God rested upon the patient, waiting saints, and they fearlessly gave the last solemn warning, proclaiming the fall of Babylon and calling upon God’s people to come out of her that they might escape her fearful doom.”<sup>11</sup>

“The darkest hour of the church’s struggle with the powers of evil is that which immediately precedes the day of her final deliverance.”<sup>12</sup>

#### **b) They are protected against the plagues:**

When the Lord will pour out the seven last plagues without mixture of mercy, the children of God scattered all over the earth will be kept, protected and preserved.

“Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast” (Isaiah 26: 20).

“What are the chambers in which they are to hide? They are the protection of Christ and holy angels.”<sup>13</sup> Though the people of God will have to face the delay of the Lord’s coming, plus fatigue and hunger, they will be cared for by the heavenly angels.

“He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of rocks: bread shall be given him; his waters shall be sure” (Isaiah 33:16).

#### **c) They receive the final touch of immortality at the coming of Jesus:**

The saints are glorified at the voice of God and when the everlasting covenant is made with His people before the appearing of the Lord. At the glorious manifestation of the second advent of Christ, they receive the touch of immortality. The apostle says: “Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality” (1 Corinthians 15:51–53).

#### **d) They are translated to the heavenly kingdom:**

As they see the Son of God sitting on the clouds of heaven, the saints will shout: “Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we

have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation” (Isaiah 25:9).

“Angels ‘gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.’ Little children are borne by holy angels to their mothers’ arms. Friends long separated by death are united, nevermore to part, and with songs of gladness ascend together to the City of God.”<sup>14</sup>

### **Conclusion**

“We may have a vision of the future, the blessedness of heaven. In the Bible are revealed visions of the future glory, scenes pictured by the hand of God, and these are dear to His church. By faith we may stand on the threshold of the eternal city, and hear the gracious welcome given to those who in this life cooperate with Christ, regarding it as an honor to suffer for His sake. . . .

“There the redeemed greet those who led them to the Saviour, and all unite in praising Him who died that human beings might have the life that measures with the life of God. The conflict is over. Tribulation and strife are at an end. Songs of victory fill all heaven as the ransomed ones take up the joyful strain, Worthy, worthy is the Lamb that was slain, and lives again, a triumphant conqueror.”<sup>15</sup>

What wonderful glory is extended to us! Let us rise and obtain it! May the Lord give us grace and power to be found among the faithful who will triumph in the dawn of that glorious morning. Amen. ✠

<sup>1</sup> *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 21, 22, 46.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 61.

<sup>3</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 36, 37.

<sup>4</sup> *The Faith I Live By*, p. 287.

<sup>5</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 976.

<sup>6</sup> *Maranatha*, p. 164.

<sup>7</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 69.

<sup>8</sup> *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 172.

<sup>9</sup> *Maranatha*, p. 198.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 203.

<sup>11</sup> *Early Writings*, pp. 277, 278.

<sup>12</sup> *Prophets and Kings*, p. 725.

<sup>13</sup> *Maranatha*, p. 270.

<sup>14</sup> *The Great Controversy*, p. 645.

<sup>15</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 601, 602.



# The Hope of Glory

**T**HE story is told about a man by the name of Thomas Bridges. When Thomas was born, his mother—being destitute and unable to care for him—wrapped him in a blanket, took him to the nearby hospital and left him there on the street. She did this at night, fearing that she might be seen by someone. Soon after, a passerby came and as he approached the little baby he could hear crying. Looking around he could not see anyone. As he continued walking, he came closer and closer to the sound of the baby's cry. Then he saw a little bundle on the sidewalk near the building. To his astonishment he realized that it was a newborn baby swaddled in blankets. Not knowing what to do, he took the baby into the nearby hospital.

Handing the baby to the nurses he left without identifying himself. The baby, who was a boy, now became the ward of that hospital. The nurses loved him almost instantly. Not knowing his mother, his father, or his name, the nurses decided to name him Thomas after the name of the hospital—The St. Thomas Hospital. And for a surname they called him Bridges, since there were a number of bridges in the vicinity of that hospital.

Thomas Bridges grew to be a fine young man. He received a good

education and, most importantly, he accepted Christ as his personal Saviour.

When Charles Darwin was giving his lectures on evolution, Thomas Bridges attended one of his London lectures. At that particular meeting Darwin spoke about a wild tribe he had visited at the southernmost tip of South America. These people lived very primitive lives in the jungle. Most significant about these people, as Darwin described, was that they were wild, animal-like creatures. Darwin went on to say that no power on earth could tame them, and that the wild dogs could be tamed more easily than those people could be.

When Thomas Bridges, being a Christian, heard Darwin's description of these people, he decided to visit them.

He found them exactly as Darwin had described. Gradually, Thomas preached Christ to them. He told them of the love of Jesus and the power of Christ to change lives. As time went on, the divine power of Jesus started changing those people. Finally, the whole tribe, that were once wild and brutal, became followers of Christ. A change took place in them that no human power or wisdom could do.

Some years later, Darwin decided to visit that tribe again. Upon his arrival he found kind, orderly people, living in humble but clean hous-

es with happy children, and kind and loving parents. Thinking that he was in the wrong place he enquired about the wild tribe. To his surprise he was told that yes, he was in the right place, and that he was indeed among the once wild tribe. It was Thomas Bridges who spoke to him about his decision to take the message of the power of Christ to them. He told Darwin that he had been right in saying in his lectures that no human power could change these people, for the power that had now changed them was the power of Christ.

## All are sinners by nature

Through sin we are all sinners by nature. Says David: "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). The apostle Paul confirms this in his epistle to the Romans: "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God" (Romans 3:23).

In the Spirit of Prophecy we read: "Man was originally endowed with noble powers and a well-balanced mind. He was perfect in his being, and in harmony with God. His thoughts were pure, his aims holy. But through disobedience, his powers were perverted, and selfishness took the place of love. His nature became so weakened through transgression that it was impossible for him, in his own



strength, to resist the power of evil. He was made captive by Satan.”<sup>1</sup>

“God declares, ‘there is none righteous, no, not one’ (Romans 3:10). All have the same sinful nature. All are liable to make mistakes. No one is perfect.”<sup>2</sup>

### Change comes only through Christ

Although we live in a world of sin, and by nature we are sinners, we need not remain under the power of sin. The world in which we live is full of evil, but it is not God’s will that evil should rule in our lives. God has made provision to give us victory over sin. He has given us the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is “the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Romans 1:16). Without Jesus there is no hope, for “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). This is good news for every one of us. In Jesus there is hope for every sinner. Through Him we have forgiveness, reconciliation with God and peace. Through Christ we become “sons and daughters of God” (2 Corinthians 6:18). Through Him we have new life, which begins with the death of the old life. The apostle Paul describes the entire provision of God for the salvation of humanity. He says that we are “justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.” This justification has brought us “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” Not only that, but also “we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God” (Romans 5:1, 2).

Christian living begins by dying. There must be a death to the world and sin. We, as sinners, must believe and accept that Jesus died for our sins on the cross. We must be crucified with Christ. We must give up the deeds of the flesh. “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions,

heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God” (Galatians 5:19–21).

How do we die to sin? The inspiration gives us the answer: “Many are inquiring, ‘How am I to make the surrender of myself to God?’ You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him.”<sup>3</sup>

If we allow the Holy Spirit to work in our hearts, He will bring conviction of our sins. He leads us to the forgiveness and empowering available through Christ.

### Christ in you, the hope of glory

“To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27).

We need to understand that we are called to be a people who think, feel and act in harmony with the

principles and life of Christ. The apostle Paul admonishes us to have the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5).

The Spirit of Prophecy enlightens our minds as to what it means to have Christ in us.

“The followers of Christ are to shed light into the darkness of the world. Through the Holy Spirit, God’s word is a light as it becomes a transforming power in the life of the receiver. By implanting in their hearts the principles of His word, the Holy Spirit develops in men the attributes of God. The light of His glory—His character—is to shine forth in His followers. Thus they are to glorify God, to lighten the path to the Bridegroom’s home, to the city of God, to the marriage supper of the Lamb.”<sup>4</sup>

It is important for us to understand that in order for the Holy Spirit to recreate in us the character of our Lord, we are to involve ourselves only in those things which will produce Christlike purity, Christlike habits, and Christlike thoughts. To have the mind of Christ means to have His principles in our daily living. This means that we live to please Him, not ourselves. Our lifestyle and behavior will testify to what Christ has done in us. We will demonstrate the work of Christ in us by our appearance. Our Lord loves beauty and purity. We are to attract attention to Christ, not to ourselves. Dress is symbolic language, an outward display of personal priorities. When Jesus was on earth He shunned all outward display so that people would be attracted to His goodness, His love and His character.

### The blessed hope

The second coming of Christ is the blessed hope of every true child of God. It is the blessed hope of His church. It is the grand climax of the gospel. The apostle Paul admonishes us that we should be “looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ” (Titus 2:13).

Jesus Himself has given us His firm assurance of His coming. We should at all times hear the words “I

will come again." I find some of the most beautiful statements in the Spirit of Prophecy which fill my heart with joy and the hope of future glory:

"One of the most solemn and yet most glorious truths revealed in the Bible is that of Christ's second coming to complete the great work of redemption. To God's pilgrim people, so long left to sojourn in 'the region and shadow of death,' a precious, joy-inspiring hope is given in the promise of His appearing, who is 'the resurrection and the life,' to 'bring home again His banished.' The doctrine of the second advent is the very keynote of the Sacred Scriptures. From the day when the first pair turned their sorrowing steps from Eden, the children of faith have waited the coming of the Promised One to break the destroyer's power and bring them again to the lost Paradise. Holy men of old looked forward to the advent of the Messiah in glory, as the consummation of their hope. Enoch, only the seventh in descent from them that dwelt in Eden, he who for three centuries on earth walked with his God, was permitted to behold from afar the coming of the Deliverer. 'Behold,' he declared, 'the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all' (Jude 14, 15). The patriarch Job in the night of his affliction exclaimed with unshaken trust: 'I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: . . . in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another' (Job 19:25-27).

"The coming of Christ to usher in the reign of righteousness has inspired the most sublime and impassioned utterances of the sacred writers. The poets and prophets of the Bible have dwelt upon it in words glowing with celestial fire. The psalmist sang of the power and majesty of Israel's King: 'Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined. Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence.' . . .

"Said the prophet Isaiah: 'Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.'

'Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise.' 'He will swallow up death in victory; and the Lord God will wipe away tears from off all faces; and the rebuke of His people shall He take away from off all the earth: for the Lord hath spoken it. And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for Him, and He will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for Him, we will be glad and rejoice in His salvation' (Isaiah 26:19; 25:8, 9).

"And Habakkuk, rapt in holy vision, beheld His appearing. 'God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of His praise. And His brightness was as the light.' 'He stood, and measured the earth: He beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hill did bow: His ways are everlasting.' 'Thou didst ride upon Thine horses and Thy chariots of salvation.' 'The mountains saw Thee, and they trembled: . . . the deep uttered his voice, and lifted up his hands on high. The sun and moon stood still in their habitation: at the light of Thine arrows they went, and at the shining of Thy glittering spear.' 'Thou wentest forth for the salvation of Thy people, even for salvation with Thine anointed' (Habakkuk 3:3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 11, 13).

"When the Saviour was about to be separated from His disciples, He comforted them in their sorrow with the assurance that He would come again: 'Let not your heart be troubled. . . . In My Father's house are many mansions. . . . I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself' (John 14:1-3). 'The Son of man shall come in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him.' 'Then shall He sit upon the throne of His glory: and before Him shall be gathered all nations' (Matthew 25:31, 32).

"The angels who lingered upon Olivet after Christ's ascension repeated to the disciples the promise of His return: 'This *same* Jesus, which is taken up from you

into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven' (Acts 1:11). And the apostle Paul, speaking by the Spirit of Inspiration, testified: 'The Lord *Himself* shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God' (1 Thessalonians 4:16). Says the prophet of Patmos: 'Behold, He cometh with clouds; and every eye shall see Him' (Revelation 1:7).

"About His coming cluster the glories of that 'restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began' (Acts 3:21). Then the long-continued rule of evil shall be broken; 'the kingdoms of this world' will become 'the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign for ever and ever' (Revelation 11:15). 'The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.' 'The Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations.' He shall be 'for a crown of glory, and for a diadem of beauty, unto the residue of His people' (Isaiah 40:5; 61:11; 28:5). . . .

"The coming of the Lord has been in all ages the hope of His true followers. The Saviour's parting promise upon Olivet, that He would come again, lighted up the future for His disciples, filling their hearts with joy and hope that sorrow could not quench nor trials dim. Amid suffering and persecution, the 'appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ' was the 'blessed hope.' When the Thessalonian Christians were filled with grief as they buried their loved ones, who had hoped to live to witness the coming of the Lord, Paul, their teacher, pointed them to the resurrection, to take place at the Saviour's advent. Then the dead in Christ should rise, and together with the living be caught up to meet the Lord in the air. 'And so,' he said, 'shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words' (1 Thessalonians 4:16-18).

"On rocky Patmos the beloved disciple hears the promise, 'Surely I come quickly,' and his longing re-

sponse voices the prayer of the church in all her pilgrimage, 'Even so, come, Lord Jesus' (Revelation 22:20).

"From the dungeon, the stake, the scaffold, where saints and martyrs witnessed for the truth, comes down the centuries the utterance of their faith and hope. Being 'assured of His personal resurrection, and consequently of their own at His coming, for this cause,' says one of these Christians, 'they despised death, and were found to be above it.'—Daniel T. Taylor, *The Reign of Christ on Earth: or, The Voice of the Church in All Ages*, page 33. They were willing to go down to the grave, that they might 'rise free.'—*Ibid.*, page 54. They looked for the 'Lord to come from heaven in the clouds with the glory of His Father,' 'bringing to the just the times of the kingdom.' The Waldenses cherished the same faith.—*Ibid.*, pages 129–132. Wycliffe looked forward to the Redeemer's appearing as the hope of the church.—*Ibid.*, pages 132–134. . . .

"The thoughts of the coming of the Lord,' said Baxter, 'are most sweet and joyful to me.'—Richard Baxter, *Works*, vol. 17, p. 555. 'It is the work of faith and the character of His saints to love His appearing and to look for that blessed hope.' 'If death be the last enemy to be destroyed at the resurrection, we may learn how earnestly believers should long and pray for the second coming of Christ, when this full and final conquest shall be made.'—*Ibid.*, vol. 17, p. 500. 'This

is the day that all believers should long, and hope, and wait for, as being the accomplishment of all the work of their redemption, and all the desires and endeavors of their souls.' 'Hasten, O Lord, this blessed day!' — *Ibid.*, vol. 17, pp. 182, 183. Such was the hope of the apostolic church, of the 'church in the wilderness,' and of the Reformers."<sup>5</sup>

### When He comes

Often we wonder or are asked why God has not revealed the time of Christ's return. No prophecy gives us the date. But we can be certain that when the right time arrives, Jesus will come. It is His solemn promise. What will happen to God's people when He comes? Jesus Himself tells us that He will take us to His Father's house, to His Father's mansions.

He will prepare a new earth for us. On this new earth in which righteousness will dwell He will provide an eternal home for the redeemed and a perfect environment for everlasting life. Christ Himself will dwell with His people, and suffering and death will have passed away. The great controversy will be ended, and sin will be no more.


"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for

her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Revelation 21:1–4).

On this newly re-created planet Christ will establish His eternal kingdom. The glorious city, the New Jerusalem, is in the midst of this grand new world.

Can you imagine, my dear brethren and sisters, a world where there will be no death, no funerals, no pain, no crying, no prisons, no locked doors, no hospitals, no drugs, no hatred, no fear, no broken homes, no hunger, no thirst, no sin, no temptation, nor anything that will cause unhappiness? All that will pass away.

I wish to close with the words that the Holy Spirit inspired John to write, the words that gave him, and for us today the hope of eternal glory:

"He which testifieth these things saith, Surely I come quickly. Amen. Even so, come, Lord Jesus" (Revelation 22:20). 

<sup>1</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *In Heavenly Places*, p. 292.

<sup>3</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 47 (author's italics).

<sup>4</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 414.

<sup>5</sup> *The Great Controversy*, pp. 299–304 (author's italics).

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