



the
REFORMATION
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Vol. 49, No. 1

What Does Baptism
Signify?

The Restoration of Reverence \ Christian Unity \ Awake Ye That Slumber!

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Volume 49, Number 1

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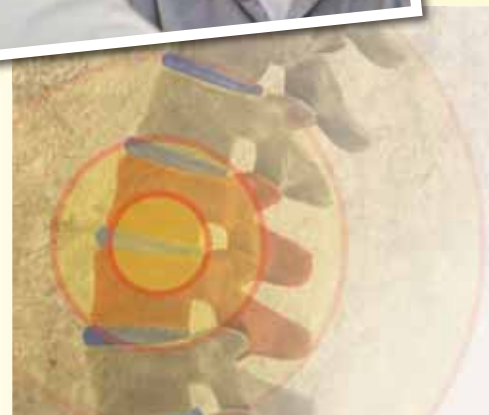
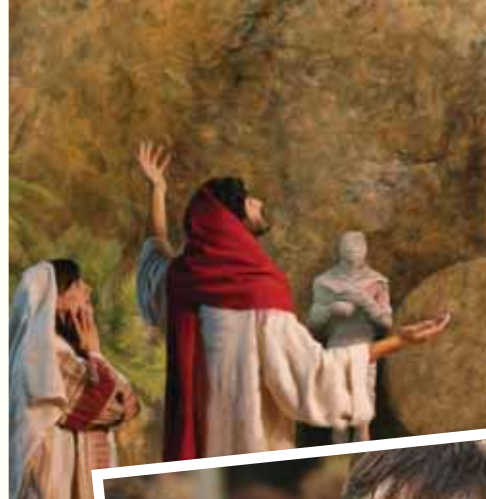
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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
—Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 488.

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A Wake-up Call From God

By D. Sureshkumar

Several years ago, a news item was released about a young man who had been involved in a serious automobile accident. He sustained severe head injuries, and, after remaining in a coma for three weeks, he continued in a state of unconsciousness for eight years. Daily his parents would prop him up in bed, and then transfer him to a chair braced with pillows in order to feed him.

Suddenly one day, to the amazement and joy of everyone, the young man woke up! Eight years had passed, the world was already a different place, but at least he had the chance to live again.

Can you imagine sleeping for eight years? I believe God, with His mercy, has given us Romans 13:11 to awaken us. It says, "And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep." And then it goes on to say that we need to clothe ourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, not in our pajamas.

"The work is fast closing up, and on every side wickedness is increasing. We have but a short time in which to work. Let us awake from spiritual slumber, and consecrate all that we have and are to the Lord. His Spirit will abide with true missionaries, furnishing them with power for service."¹

"God calls for a spiritual revival and a spiritual reformation. Unless this takes place, those who are lukewarm will continue to grow more abhorrent to the Lord, until He will refuse to acknowledge them as His children."²

Joel preached to God's people in Judah just before the Babylonian armies

destroyed Jerusalem and took God's people into exile. He cried out for them to repent, so that God could spare the land from the coming invasion. His words of warning are applicable to us even today.

The Lord says: "Turn ye even to me with all your heart. . . . And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God. . . . Blow the trumpet in Zion." (Joel 2:12-15).

God calls for a spiritual awakening. He is sounding an alarm. He is crying out to His people saying, It is time to get out of bed! God was not counseling Judah, He was telling them. God did not suggest them to wake up; He told them to wake up. He was very specific. It was not an option, but an obligation. The church has to rediscover the majesty and the holiness of God, and the sinfulness of sin.

"Wake up, brethren and sisters, wake up. Sleep no longer. . . . Whoever has received the Holy Spirit will make it manifest; for all his powers will be employed in the most active service. All who actually receive Christ by faith, work. They feel the burden of souls. God now calls upon everyone who has a knowledge of the truth, who is a depository of sacred truth, to arise and impart the light of heaven to others."³

"Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar" (Verse 17). Revival must start with the leadership. Revival will come only when the ministers and the leaders get right before God. Now the Lord addresses the people also: Verse 16 says, "Sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children," and even the nursing infants. In other words, get

everybody together—it is going to take pulpit and pew, leaders and laity. We all need a revival and a reformation. "Rend your heart, and not your garments."

"Weep between the porch and the altar." Surrender your heart and say to God, "Spare Thy people, O Lord. Do not make us a reproach among the nations."

"God requires of His people according to the grace and truth given them. All His righteous demands must be fully met. . . . If they fail to do this, their light becomes darkness, and their darkness is great in the same degree as their light was abundant. . . .

"Light, precious light, shines upon God's people; but it will not save them unless they consent to be saved by it, fully live up to it, and transmit it to others in darkness. God calls upon His people to act. It is an individual work of confessing and forsaking sins and returning unto the Lord that is needed. One cannot do this work for another. . . .

"Let the work be thorough, the consecration to God entire. He calls for a full surrender of all that we have and are."⁴

The headline on the front cover of *Newsweek* says, "Be Worried. Be VERY worried."⁵ Time is almost extinct. We are in the last movements of a dying clock of time.

"Wake up, brethren; for your own soul's sake, wake up. Without the grace of Christ you can do nothing. Work while you can."⁶ *R*

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- ² *The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1902.
- ³ *Ibid.*, December 6, 1893.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 123, 124.
- ⁵ *Newsweek*, August 28, 2006.
- ⁶ *The Southern Watchman*, July 17, 1906.

What Does Baptism

Signify?



The First of Two Articles

Excerpts from the writings of Ellen G. White with annotations by Davi Paes Silva

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

At the end of His mission on earth, Christ gave His commission to over 500 believers present at His farewell. He said to them: "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. 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 always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18–20).

In the commission given to His disciples there are some essential instructions: "Go ye therefore," "teach all nations," and "baptizing them." All are very important, but here we will focus on just one of these very important points mentioned: "baptizing them."

In Mark 16:16, Christ said: "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved." In these words, Christ is very specific about the basic conditions of our salvation: 1. "He that believeth"; 2.

"and is baptized." The number 1 condition to be saved is to believe. Number 2 is to be baptized. Since these two conditions are indispensable for our salvation, we should have a very clear understanding of their significance.

We should understand also that **believing precedes baptism**. If we are baptized without believing in Christ as our Saviour and Lord, there is no salvation. Baptism, then, is to be offered only to those who really believe in Christ. Otherwise there is no conversion or salvation.

Before baptizing people, John preached to them: "**Repent ye:** for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matthew 3:2). Thus, repentance is the first fruit of believing and a basic condition for baptism.

When some of the Pharisees and Sadducees came to him to be baptized just to take political advantage from the influence of John, he openly rebuked them, saying: "O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? **Bring forth**

Baptism means repentance for sin, and the entrance upon a new life in Christ Jesus.

fruits meet for repentance: and think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father" (Verses 7–9).

Here John stated some very important truths: First he preached the message of repentance. To the Pharisees and Sadducees he explained that, before baptism, they should repent of their sins. How can we know that a person has repented? **"Bring forth fruits meet for repentance."** And John added something else: **It is not enough being natural children of Abraham.** Our race, our nationality, our profession to be God's people cannot grant salvation to us. If we do not believe in Christ as our Saviour, and if our life doesn't show forth fruits of genuine repentance, we are not prepared for baptism. If we are baptized without true repentance, our baptism is in vain and our salvation is in question.

"Many of the scribes and Pharisees came confessing their sins, and asking for baptism. They had exalted themselves as better than other men, and had led the people to entertain a high opinion of their piety; now the guilty secrets of their lives were unveiled. But John was impressed by the Holy Spirit that many of these men had no real conviction of sin. They were timeservers. As friends of the prophet, they hoped to find favor with the coming Prince. And by receiving baptism at the hands of this popular young teacher, they thought to strengthen their influence with the people."¹

The evangelist Mark says that "John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mark 1:4). He calls the baptismal ceremony "baptism of repentance for the remission of sins." In other words, there is no remission of sins simply because we are baptized. We need to understand that "without shedding of blood is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22). Our forgiveness and acceptance is based on the sacrifice Christ made on Calvary. As we accept His perfect righteousness and His perfect sacrifice in our behalf, we are accepted and forgiven. We become new creatures in Christ. Our life is changed.

Luke, the beloved Physician, makes a very important remark: "And all the

people that heard [John the Baptist], and the publicans, **justified God, being baptized** with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptized of him" (Luke 7:29, 30). He says that the people, who heard John the Baptist, **justified God, being baptized.** In other words, those who recognized the righteousness of God, accepting His gospel, received baptism from John. On the other hand, **"the Pharisees and lawyers"** rejected the counsels of God, and did not receive baptism. They were not baptized not because they were "Pharisees and lawyers," but because they rejected the counsels of God "against themselves." They rejected the gospel of Christ. Even though they had a high profession of piety, and were natural descendants of Abraham, nothing could save them without accepting God's provision for their salvation in Christ.

Addressing the multitude on the day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter said: "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38).

Peter mentioned the same condition as did John: "Repent," then "be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins." Then he added something very important: "Ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." It is important to consider the sequence: 1. Repentance; 2. baptism of water, and 3. baptism of the Holy Ghost.

Since repentance is so essential for our justification and baptism, we should have a clear understanding of what repentance is.

James Hastings in his *Dictionary of the Bible*, article *Repentance* writes:

"Repentance for sin is commonly expressed by 'turn' or 'return' (e.g. Dt 4:30, Is 55:7, Ezk 3:2, Hos 14:2). Repentance has a prominent place in the NT, alone (Mt 4:17, Lk 15:7, Ac 2:38 etc.) or in conjunction with

faith (Mk 1:15, Ac 20:21 etc.), as an indispensable condition of salvation. The word ordinarily used (*metanoia*) means literally 'change of mind.' The change, however, is one in which not the intellect only, but the whole nature (understanding, affections, will), is involved. It is such an altered view of God and sin as carries with it heartfelt sorrow for sin, confession of it, and decisive turning from it to God and righteousness (Lk 15:17, 18, Ro 6:17, 18, 2 Co 7:10, 11 etc.). Its reality is tested by its fruits (Mt 3:8, Lk 6:43-46). From this 'godly sorrow', which works 'repentance unto salvation' (2 Co 7:10, 11), is distinguished a 'sorrow of the world' which worketh death' (v. 10), *i.e.* a sorrow which has no relation to God, or to the intrinsic evil of sin, but only to sin's harmful consequences. There may be keen remorse, and blaming of one's self for one's folly, yet no real repentance. . . . Repentance is the turning *from* sin; Gospel faith is the turning *to* Christ for salvation."

Ellen G. White presents some true gems about repentance in the following quotations:

"True repentance is more than sorrow for sin. It is a resolute turning away from evil."²

"Repentance is turning from self to Christ."³

"Repentance is an intense hatred of sin in all its forms."⁴

"In order to obtain the righteousness of Christ, it is necessary for the sinner to know what that repentance is which works a radical change of mind and spirit and action. The work of transformation must begin in the heart, and manifest its power through every faculty of the being."⁵

Baptism

We now need to understand what baptism is.

According to the *Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible*, by Merrill C.

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world.” “It represents true conversion by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”

Tenney, baptism is: “immersion or dipping as a Christian sacrament of incorporation in the church.”

The New Webster Encyclopedia: “Baptism, n. [Gr. *baptisma*, from *baptizo*, to baptize, from *bapto*, to dip in water.”

The spiritual meaning of baptism

“Baptism does not make children Christians; neither does it convert them; **it is but an outward sign**, showing that they are sensible that they should be children of God by acknowledging that they believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour and will henceforth live for Christ. . . .

“Baptism is a most sacred and important ordinance, and there should be a thorough understanding as to its meaning. It means repentance for sin, and the entrance upon a new life in Christ Jesus. There should be no undue haste to receive the ordinance.”⁶

“Baptism may be repeated over and over again, but of itself it has no power to change the human heart.”⁷

“Apart from Christ, baptism, like any other service, is a worthless form. ‘He that believeth not the Son shall not see life’ (John 3:36).”⁸

“Baptism is a most solemn renunciation of the world. Those who are baptized in the threefold name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, at the very entrance of their Christian life declare publicly that they have forsaken the service of Satan and have become members of the royal family, children of the heavenly King. They have obeyed the command: ‘Come out from among them, and be ye separate . . . and touch not the unclean thing.’ And to them is fulfilled the promise: ‘I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty’ (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).”⁹

“Salvation is not to be baptized, not to have our names upon the church

books, not to preach the truth. But it is a living union with Jesus Christ to be renewed in heart, doing the works of Christ in faith and labor of love, in patience, meekness, and hope.”¹⁰

“Baptism represents true conversion by the renewing of the Holy Spirit.”¹¹

“The Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, powers infinite and omniscient, receive those who truly enter into covenant relation with God. They are present at every baptism, to receive the candidates who have renounced the world and have received Christ into the soul temple. These candidates have entered into the family of God, and their names are inscribed in the Lamb’s book of life.”¹²

“Repentance, faith, and baptism are the requisite steps in conversion.”¹³

Mark the order: 1. Repentance; 2. faith; and 3. baptism.

“The souls under conviction of the truth need to be visited and labored for. **Sinners need a special work done for them, that they may be converted and baptized.** . . .


“Christ has made baptism the sign of entrance to His spiritual kingdom. He has made this a positive condition with which all must comply who wish to be acknowledged as under the authority of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Before man can find a home in the church, before passing the threshold of God’s spiritual kingdom, he is to receive the impress of the divine name, ‘The Lord our righteousness’ (Jeremiah 23:6). . . .

“As Christians submit to the solemn rite of baptism, He registers the vow that they make to be true to Him. This vow is their oath of allegiance. They are baptized in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus they are united with the three great powers of heaven. They pledge themselves to renounce the world and to observe the laws of the kingdom of God. Henceforth they are to walk in newness of

life. No longer are they to follow the traditions of men. No longer are they to follow dishonest methods. They are to obey the statutes of the kingdom of heaven. They are to seek God’s honor. If they will be true to their vow, they will be furnished with grace and power that will enable them to fulfill all righteousness. ‘As many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name’ (John 1:12).”¹⁴

When should people be baptized into the body of Christ?

“Only when the Church is composed of pure, unselfish members, can it fulfill God’s purpose. Too much hasty work is done in adding names to the church roll. Serious defects are seen in the characters of some who join the church. Those who admit them say, We will first get them into the church, and then reform them. But this is a mistake. The very first work to be done is the work of reform. Pray with them, talk with them, but do not allow them to unite with God’s people in church relationship until they give decided evidence that the Spirit of God is working on their hearts.”¹⁵

“In this our age of the world, we claim to be, in a special sense, the Lord’s chosen people, as did Israel of old. And we are, indeed, the Lord’s covenant-keeping people, pledged by our baptismal vows to walk in newness of life, and in obedience to all the commandments of Holy Writ.”¹⁶ 

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- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 105.
- ² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 557.
- ³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 87.
- ⁴ *The Bible Echo*, November 5, 1894.
- ⁵ *Notebook Leaflets*, p. 23.
- ⁶ *Child Guidance*, p. 499.
- ⁷ *In Heavenly Places*, p. 56.
- ⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 181.
- ⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 91.
- ¹⁰ *Evangelism*, p. 319.
- ¹¹ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 143.
- ¹² *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 143.
- ¹³ *Evangelism*, p. 306.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 306–308.
- ¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, May 21, 1901.
- ¹⁶ *Loma Linda Messages*, p. 487.

The Restoration of Reverence

*A reformation is needed
in the behavior of the worshippers of God.*

The time was ripe. God had blessed king David with prosperity, giving him “rest round about from all his enemies” (2 Samuel 7:1). While enjoying a time of peace, he contemplated his richly decorated palace and thought about the ark of the covenant. So he spoke with Nathan the prophet, saying: “See now, I dwell in an house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains” (verse 2).

Since David, as a man of war, had shed much blood (1 Chronicles 22:8), the Lord did not permit him to build the magnificent temple that he was planning to construct for Him. But he was given the privilege of drawing the architectural design for the building under the guidance of the Spirit of Christ. And the plan was to be carried out by Solomon, his son, who was the heir to the throne of Israel (1 Chronicles 22:6, 9–11; 28:6).

Mount Moriah, the hill where Abraham’s faith had been tested when he was called to offer up his son Isaac (2 Chronicles 3:1), was chosen for the erection of the Temple. As soon as there was a decision about the plan and the site of the prospective building, David started making the needed preparations

(1 Chronicles 22:5) which were completed by Solomon (1 Kings 5:2–9).

This great work began 480 years after the children of Israel had been delivered from Egypt (1 Kings 6:1) and was completed in seven years (1 Kings 6:38). Over 150,000 men were employed in that huge enterprise (1 Kings 5:15, 16), which stood as one of the most impressive wonders of the ancient world.

An interesting point which should be borne in mind: The Temple was built with stones prepared at the quarry, so that no noise of hammer, or ax, or any iron tool was heard at the building site (1 Kings 6:7). There is a great lesson for us in this fact.

What should we learn from this in our day?

“Humility and reverence should characterize the deportment of all who come into the presence of God. . . . There are those who address the great and all-powerful and holy God, who dwelleth in light unapproachable,

as they would address an equal, or even an inferior. There are those who conduct themselves in His house as they would not presume to do in the audience chamber of an earthly ruler. These should remember that they are in His sight whom seraphim adore, before whom angels veil their faces.”¹

Those who realize what it means to come into the presence of the great I AM will, like Jacob, have a feeling of awe for God, for His Word, for His house, and for all sacred things. When Jacob awoke from his dream in which he had seen a vision of God, he said:

“Surely the Lord is in this place. . . . How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven” (Genesis 28:16, 17).





Jacob's experience teaches us that, no matter how humble the meeting place may be, where two or three are gathered together in the name of Christ, they are in the presence of the Creator of the universe (Matthew 18:20).

"Happy are those who have a sanctuary, be it high or low, in the city or among the rugged mountain caves, in the lowly cabin or in the wilderness. If it is the best they can secure for the Master, He will hallow the place with His presence, and it will be holy unto the Lord of hosts."²

Educate, educate, educate!

"The house of God is often desecrated, and the Sabbath violated by Sabbath-believers' children. In some cases they are even allowed to run about the house, play, talk, and manifest their evil tempers in the very meetings where the saints should worship God in the beauty of holiness. And the place that should be holy, and where a holy stillness should reign, and where there should be perfect order, neatness, and humility, is made to be a perfect Babylon, 'confusion.' This is enough to bring God's displeasure and shut His presence from our assemblies."³

"Common talking, whispering, and laughing should not be permitted in the house of worship, either before or after the service. Ardent, active piety should characterize the worshippers.

"If some have to wait a few minutes before the meeting begins, let them maintain a true spirit of devotion by silent meditation, keeping the heart uplifted to God in prayer that the service may be of special benefit to their own hearts and lead to the conviction and conversion of other souls. They should remember that heavenly messengers are in the house. We all lose much sweet communion with God by our restlessness, by not encouraging moments of reflection and prayer. The spiritual condition needs to be often reviewed and the mind and heart drawn toward the Sun of Righteousness. If when the people come into the house of worship, they have genuine reverence for the Lord and bear in mind that they are in His presence, there will be a sweet eloquence in silence. The whispering and laughing and talking which might be without sin in a common business place should

find no sanction in the house where God is worshiped. The mind should be prepared to hear the word of God, that it may have due weight and suitably impress the heart.

"When the minister enters, it should be with dignified, solemn mien. He should bow down in silent prayer as soon as he steps into the pulpit, and earnestly ask help of God. What an impression this will make! There will be solemnity and awe upon the people. Their minister is communing with God; he is committing himself to God before he dares to stand before the people. Solemnity rests upon all, and angels of God are brought very near. Every one of the congregation, also, who fears God should with bowed head unite in silent prayer with him that God may grace the meeting with His presence and give power to His truth proclaimed from human lips. When the meeting is opened by prayer, every knee should bow in the presence of the Holy One, and every heart should ascend to God in silent devotion. The prayers of faithful worshippers will be heard, and the ministry of the word will prove effectual. The lifeless attitude of the worshippers in the house of God is one great reason why the ministry is not more productive of good. The melody of song, poured forth from many hearts in clear, distinct utterance, is one of God's instrumentalities in the work of saving souls. All the service should be conducted with solemnity and awe, as if in the visible presence of the Master of assemblies.

"When the word is spoken, you should remember, brethren, that you are listening to the voice of God through His delegated servant. Listen attentively. Sleep not for one instant, because by this slumber you may lose the very words that you need most—the very words which, if heeded, would save your feet from straying into wrong paths. Satan and his angels are busy creating a paralyzed condition of the senses so that cautions, warnings, and reproofs shall not be heard; or if heard, that they shall not take effect upon the heart and reform the life. Sometimes a little child may so attract the attention of the hearers that the precious seed does not fall into good ground and bring forth fruit. Sometimes young men and women have so little reverence for the house and worship of God that they keep up a continual communication with each other during the sermon. Could these see the angels of God looking upon them

and marking their doings, they would be filled with shame, with abhorrence of themselves. God wants attentive hearers. It was while men slept that Satan sowed his tares.

“When the benediction is pronounced, all should still be quiet, as if fearful of losing the peace of Christ. Let all pass out without jostling or loud talking, feeling that they are in the presence of God, that His eye is resting upon them, and that they must act as in His visible presence. Let there be no stopping in the aisles to visit or gossip, thus blocking them up so that others cannot pass out. The precincts of the church should be invested with a sacred reverence. It should not be made a place to meet old friends and visit and introduce common thoughts and worldly business transactions. These should be left outside the church. God and angels have been dishonored by the careless, noisy laughing and shuffling of feet heard in some places.

“Parents, elevate the standard of Christianity in the minds of your children; help them to weave Jesus into their experience; teach them to have the highest reverence for the house of God and to understand that when they enter the Lord’s house it should be with hearts that are softened and subdued by such thoughts as these: ‘God is here; this is His house. I must have pure thoughts and the holiest motives. I must have no pride, envy, jealousy, evil surmising, hatred, or deception in my heart, for I am coming into the presence of the holy God. This is the place where God meets with and blesses His people. The high and holy One who inhabiteth eternity looks upon me, searches my heart, and reads the most secret thoughts and acts of my life.’

“Brethren, will you not devote a little thought to this subject and notice how you conduct yourselves in the house of God and what efforts you are making by precept and example to cultivate reverence in your children? You roll vast responsibilities upon the preacher and hold him accountable for the souls of your children; but you do not sense your own responsibility as parents and as instructors and, like Abraham, command your household

after you, that they may keep the statutes of the Lord.”⁴

Learning from the pattern

The original Temple was built with windows that were broad within and narrow without (1 Kings 6:4, margin). The Temple had two doors, each of which consisted of two leaves ornamented with carvings on them—cherubims, palm trees, and open flowers (Verses 33–35).

Behind the holy place was the most holy place also called “the holy of holies,” or “the inner house,” or “the oracle” (Verses 20, 23, 27). The cedar walls of the most holy place were decorated with carved knobs (gourds) and open flowers (Verse 18), and the floor was overlaid with gold (Verse 30).

The Temple had two courts—the inner court (or the upper court of the priests) and the great court (2 Kings 23:12; 2 Chronicles 4:9; Jeremiah 36:10). In the court of the priests were a brazen altar for sacrifice (1 Kings 8:64; 2 Kings 16:14), plus a brazen sea and ten brazen lavers (1 Kings 7:23–29). The brazen sea was for the priests to wash themselves, and the lavers contained water for washing the things that belonged to the burnt offerings (2 Chronicles 4:6). The great court (or outer court) was for the people of Israel to assemble for worship (Jeremiah 26:2).

When the Temple was ready, Solomon’s dedicatory prayer was inspired by a sense of God’s greatness and a realization of His holy presence—a sense with which we should all be impressed.

“Angels, when they speak [God’s holy and reverend] name, veil their faces. With what reverence, then, should we, who are fallen and sinful, take [that name] upon our lips!”⁵

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- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 252.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 491, 492.
- ³ *Child Guidance*, p. 540.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 492–494.
- ⁵ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 49.

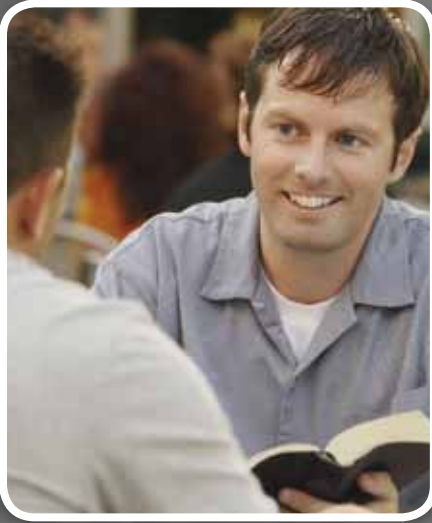
Nothing that is sacred, nothing that pertains to the worship of God should be treated with carelessness or indifference.



Christian

Unity

By Tony Maraizu



The proclamation of the gospel was to be world-wide in its extent, and the messengers of the cross could not hope to fulfill their important mission unless they should remain united in the bonds of **Christian unity**, and thus reveal to the world that they were one with Christ in God.”¹

Unity is very important—that is why Jesus Christ our Lord prayed for it. He earnestly prayed that His people would be in unity.

What is unity?

Unity is a state of being joined together as one. In John 17:21, Jesus besought His Father, “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Despite our Master’s heartfelt prayer for unity, many still fail in this point. Therefore, it becomes necessary or obligatory to make serious efforts to achieve this unity.

Yet we cannot proceed with speaking about how unity can be achieved without first discovering the causes of disunity among God’s people. We all can agree that the easiest way to treat a sick person is first to find out the cause of the sickness. Thereafter, we can go ahead and apply the proper remedy.

Similarly, we can achieve perfect unity only when we unveil the causes of disunity among God’s people.

There are six major causes of disunity:

1. **Grudge.**
2. **Pride.**
3. **Backbiting.**
4. **Envy.**
5. **Strife for supremacy.**
6. **Unforgiveness.**

Let us consider these one by one:

1. Grudge

What is grudge? A grudge is a strong feeling of anger and dislike for a person who you feel has treated you badly. This often lasts for a long time.

What does God’s Word say about this? “Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him. Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the Lord” (Leviticus 19:17, 18). “These things I command you, that ye love one another” (John 15:17). “Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the door” (James 5:9).

2. Pride

Pride is a feeling or a belief that you are better or more important than another person.

Pride is the oldest sin in heaven and on earth. It was because of pride that Lucifer was cast from heaven to the earth. Pride is a trap of the enemy. It has destroyed the high destiny of many. Matthew 23:12 tells us that "whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

The experience of Nebuchadnezzar provides a powerful lesson for anyone who is proud. As a result of his pride, this Babylonian king was abased. In fact, God humbled him completely. (See Daniel 4:30-34.)

In 1 John 1:7 we read: "If we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another." What does this "fellowship" mean? Equality of believers. If truly we have love for one another, we cannot treat anyone as a "second class" person or think of him or her as being less important than ourselves.

Some are proud because of their attainments, family background, color, race, position, wealth, birth, or nationality. But what everyone must have in the back of his or her mind is that only God Himself has given us all these things. "Thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth" (Deuteronomy 8:18).

We can say that the major cause of pride is a lack of love for our fellow humans. The apostle Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 13:4 that love "vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

Our Lord Jesus commanded us thus: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another" (John 13:34).

"The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ. The reason of all division, discord, and difference is found in separation from Christ."²

"If pride and selfishness were laid aside, five minutes would remove most difficulties. Angels have been grieved and God displeased by the

We can achieve perfect unity only when we unveil the causes of disunity among God's people.

hours which have been spent in justifying self."³

"To be great in God's kingdom is to be as a little child in humility, in simplicity of faith, and in purity of love."⁴

"[Christ] prays that His disciples may be one, even as He and the Father are one; and this unity of believers is to be as testimony to the world that He has sent us, and that we bear the evidence of His grace."⁵

3. Backbiting

Backbiting refers to unpleasant and unkind words spoken against someone who is not present. This is a serious problem among God's people.

The pen of Inspiration writes, "Let us guard against speaking words that discourage. Let us resolve never to engage in evilspeaking and backbiting. Let us refuse to serve Satan by implanting seeds of doubt. Let us guard against cherishing unbelief, or expressing it to others. Many, many times I have wished that there might be circulated a pledge containing a solemn promise to speak only those words that are pleasing to God. There is a great need for such a pledge as there is for one against the use of intoxicating liquor. Let us begin to discipline the tongue, remembering always that we can do this only by disciplining the mind, for 'out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh' (Matthew 12:34)."⁶

In Matthew 18:15, Jesus tells us the proper way to do this. "Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone." Here Jesus made it clear: "Between thee and him alone." This is a very important statement. It is sad that many do not follow this instruction

of our Lord Jesus Christ. They speak unkind words against their fellow brethren or sisters. Some even go to the extent of telling unbelievers the fault of their brethren and/or sisters in the church, thus closing the door for the salvation of many. This manner of operating makes it impossible for unity to be accomplished.

Ephesians 4:29, 31 tells us, "Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers. . . . Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice." No sincere child of God who is conscious of heaven can speak unbecoming words against a brother or sister who is not personally there to defend himself or herself.

4. Envy

Envy is an evil or selfish desire that you wish you had a quality or possession that another person has. This is another serious problem among God's people. But many forget that God has nothing, absolutely nothing to do with any envious persons.

The Spirit of Prophecy says, "If you have not laid aside your envy, your jealousies, your hatred one against another, you cannot enter into the kingdom of God. You would only carry the same disposition with you; but there will be nothing of this character in the world to come. Nothing will exist there but love and joy and harmony. Some will have brighter crowns than others, but there will be no jealous thoughts in any heart among the redeemed. Each one will be perfectly satisfied, for all will be rewarded according to their work."⁷

"If ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth" (James 3:14). This



passage says that it is even useless or needless for anyone who has the spirit of envy to come to church, let alone to sing praises to our God. The Lord does not accept such praises. Therefore the Spirit of Prophecy writes, "Let your spirit be cleansed from all earthliness, all unholy, uncharitable thoughts. Let your words be clean, sanctified, vivifying and refreshing all with whom you associate. Be not easily provoked. Let the praise of God be in your hearts and upon your lips, that no evil thing may truthfully be said of you."⁸

5. Strife for supremacy

This is another major cause of disunity among God's people. It often results in evil speaking and bitterness of spirit. Our Lord Jesus made a very important statement about this problem. "Jesus called [the ten disciples] unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matthew 20:25-28).

"There is in man a disposition to esteem himself more highly than his brother, to work for self, to seek the highest place; and often this results in evil surmisings and bitterness of spirit."⁹

"'Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister' (Matthew 20:26).

In My kingdom the principle of preference and supremacy has no place. The only greatness is the greatness of humility. The only distinction is found in devotion to the service of others."¹⁰

Well, the truth is that anyone who genuinely works for God is not ambitious for titles and supremacy.

Let us look at Judges 9:8-13. It reads as follows, "The trees went forth on a time to anoint a king over them; and they said unto the olive tree, Reign thou over us. But the olive tree said unto them, Should I leave my fatness, wherewith by me they honour God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees? And the trees said to the fig tree, Come thou, and reign over us. But the fig tree said unto them, Should I forsake my sweetness, and my good fruit, and go to be promoted over the trees? Then said the trees unto the Vine, Come thou, and reign over us. And the vine said unto them, Should I leave my wine, which cheereth God and man, and go to be promoted over the trees?"

These trees refused to be kings over others, because they were very busy working for God and humanity. How does this apply to us today? Whenever we are busy preaching the gospel of our Lord Jesus, we are working for God and humanity.

In essence, it is good for God to choose us for His service rather than for us to be striving for any position. People who always have the desire to rule over others are frequently the worst people in society.

In Judges 9:14 and 15, this allegory is concluded: "Then said all the trees unto the bramble, Come thou, and reign over us. And the bramble said unto the trees, If in truth ye anoint me king over you, then come and put your trust in my shadow: and if not, let fire come out from the bramble, and devour the cedars of Lebanon."

The answer of the bramble bush shows that it never had the people at heart. It was only after a high position.

Many think that they can work for God only by holding an office. They are mistaken. A Christian hymn says, "If you cannot cross the ocean and the heathen lands explore, you can find the heathen nearer, you can help them at your door."

God hates the strife for supremacy!

6. Unforgiveness

In essence, unforgiveness is the opposite of forgiveness. Forgiveness is the act of forgiving or the willingness to forgive. We can say then that unforgiveness is the inability or unwillingness to forgive or excuse a wrongdoer.

In Matthew 18:21, 22, "Then came Peter to [Jesus], and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

The answer of Jesus to Peter means **always**. As long as we are living here on planet Earth, offense is almost inevitable. If you have made up your mind that you will never offend others, someone may offend you. Offense will come, people will offend you, no matter where you are, or where you go. Even in the house of God, you cannot avoid it. Sometimes the very person you love so much may be the one to work against you.

The psalmist described, "It was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: but it was thou,

a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company" (Psalm 55:12–14). Yes, painful offenses can occur even in God's house.

"It is not the opposition of the world that most endangers the church of Christ. It is the evil cherished in the hearts of believers that works their most grievous disaster and most surely retards the progress of God's cause. There is no surer way of weakening spirituality than by cherishing envy, suspicion, faultfinding, and evil surmising. On the other hand, the strongest witness that God has sent His Son into the world is the existence of harmony and union among men of varied dispositions who form His church. This witness it is the privilege of the followers of Christ to bear. But in order to do this, they must place themselves under Christ's command. Their characters must be conformed to His character and their wills to His will."¹¹

Whatsoever may be the case, God is very clear in His command, that we must forgive others if we want our own sins to be forgiven. Our Lord Jesus also taught us to pray in this manner: "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors" (Matthew 6:12).

And again He stated: "Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them. And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:24–26).

Someone may ask, "Do you know what he or she did to me"? God's command is very clear, forgive if you want your sins to be forgiven. However, experience has shown that there are people who are willing to forgive only if the offender comes back to them and asks for forgiveness.

Question: What if the offender refuses to come to you to seek forgiveness?

God's command is very clear, forgive if you want your sins to be forgiven.

"Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. It is the love of God that draws us unto Him, and that love cannot touch our hearts without creating love for our brethren. . . .

"He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession; but we are to have a spirit of compassion toward those who have trespassed against us, whether or not they confess their faults. However sorely they may have wounded us, we are not to cherish our grievances and sympathize with ourselves over our injuries; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God we are to pardon all who have done evil to us."¹²

In Matthew 5:8 the Word of God says that only the pure in heart shall see the Lord. And as we said earlier, unforgiveness pushes one to harbor grudges. With such a mind a person cannot be pure. The Bible says, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice: and be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

"Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath aught against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matthew 5:23, 24).


Question: What are the gifts we offer? There are many things we can offer to God, such as worship, sacrifice of praises, first fruits, thank offerings,

tithes, time, and money. God has no pleasure in anyone who refuses to forgive others their trespasses. In fact, the Word of God makes it clear that it is unacceptable to come and sing praises with bitterness in our heart.

Jesus says, "So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses" (Matthew 18:35).

Forgiving from your heart means for the offense not to be remembered any more. No more grudges. We are safe if we form a united front to face the coming crisis. Very soon the whole world will be against us, even those we may call our friends—including our relatives.

To have a united front we must make it a habit to forgive others.

In conclusion, "The success of our work depends upon our love to God and our love to our fellowmen. When there is harmonious action among the individual members of the church, when there is love and confidence manifested by brother to brother, there will be proportionate force and power in our work for the salvation of men. Oh, how greatly we need a moral renovation! Without the faith that works by love, you can do nothing. May the Lord give you hearts to receive this testimony."¹³ 

References

- ¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 90.
- ² *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 259.
- ³ *Early Writings*, p. 119.
- ⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 478.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, July 2, 1889.
- ⁶ *Our High Calling*, p. 291.
- ⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, February 10, 1888.
- ⁸ *Our High Calling*, p. 174.
- ⁹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 650.
- ¹⁰ *The Faith I Live By*, p. 297.
- ¹¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 549.
- ¹² *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 113, 114.
- ¹³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 188.



Love Put to the Test!

By M. Barbu

sisters sent to the Saviour, saying, 'Lord, behold, he whom Thou lovest is sick' (John 11:3). They saw the violence of the disease that had seized their brother, but they knew that Christ had shown Himself able to heal all manner of diseases. They believed that He would sympathize with them in their distress; therefore they made no urgent demand for His immediate presence, but sent only the confiding message, 'He whom Thou lovest is sick.' They thought that He would immediately respond to their message, and be with them as soon as He could reach Bethany.

"Anxiously they waited for a word from Jesus. As long as the spark of life was yet alive in their brother, they prayed and watched for Jesus to come. But the messenger returned without Him. Yet he brought the message, 'This sickness is not unto death,' and they clung to the hope that Lazarus would live (Verse 4). Tenderly they tried to speak words of hope and encouragement to the almost unconscious sufferer. When Lazarus died, they were bitterly disappointed; but they felt the sustaining grace of Christ, and this kept them from reflecting any blame on the Saviour.'

Now a certain man was sick, named Lazarus, of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. (It was that Mary which anointed the Lord with ointment, and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.) Therefore his sisters sent unto him, saying, Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick" (John 11:1-3).

"Among the most steadfast of Christ's disciples was Lazarus of Bethany. From their first meeting his faith

in Christ had been strong; his love for Him was deep, and he was greatly beloved by the Saviour. It was for Lazarus that the greatest of Christ's miracles was performed. The Saviour blessed all who sought His help; He loves all the human family, but to some He is bound by peculiarly tender associations. His heart was knit by a strong bond of affection to the family at Bethany, and for one of them His most wonderful work was wrought. . . .

"Sorrow entered the peaceful home where Jesus had rested. Lazarus was stricken with sudden illness, and his



When Job prayed for his friends, his life was changed to the glory of the One whom he loved.

“Behold, he whom thou lovest is sick” . . . and it was he whom the Lord let die, without going to him to heal him. The sisters would have had serious reasons to doubt had they not already loved Jesus with all their heart and if they had not have full confidence and trust in Him. Jesus could not allow such a trial come upon persons who had not have such a close connection with Him.

“I abhor myself”

The righteous Job, who was declared by the Lord Himself as such, was brought through suffering to a higher step of self-knowledge. He stated: “Who is he that hideth counsel without knowledge? therefore have I uttered that I understood not; things too wonderful for me, which I knew not. Hear, I beseech thee, and I will speak: I will demand of thee, and declare thou unto me. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:3–6).

Healed of the “disease” of self-esteem through much suffering, Job came to understand God better and to know himself. And when he prayed for his friends who had greatly annoyed him, his life was changed to the glory of the One whom he loved.

You sold me that I might rescue your life

Through the brutal, inhuman treatment received from his envious brothers, Joseph became a despised slave. This “school” was necessary for

him. Behold what the pen of Inspiration declared: “[Joseph] had learned in a few hours that which years might not otherwise have taught him. . . .

“He then and there gave himself fully to the Lord, and he prayed that the Keeper of Israel would be with him in the land of his exile.

“His soul thrilled with the high resolve to prove himself true to God—under all circumstances to act as became a subject of the King of heaven.”²

Many years later, looking back at his experience, Joseph could say: “Now therefore be not grieved, nor angry with yourselves, that ye sold me hither: for God did send me before you to preserve life” (Genesis 45:5). He accepted with obedience the work of Providence in his suffering.

“Call me Mara (Bitter)”

Naomi, David’s great grandmother, not understanding well enough what was hidden behind her suffering and what was the divine plan amidst her troubles, declared full of bitterness in her soul: “Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me. I went out full, and the Lord hath brought me home again empty: why then call ye me Naomi, seeing the Lord hath testified against me, and the Almighty hath afflicted me?” (Ruth 1:20, 21).

But after Naomi saw the hand of God in all her trials, she could declare in full trust: “Blessed be he of the Lord, who hath not left off his kindness to the living and to the dead. And Naomi said unto her, The man is near of kin unto us, one of our next kinsmen” (Ruth 2:20).

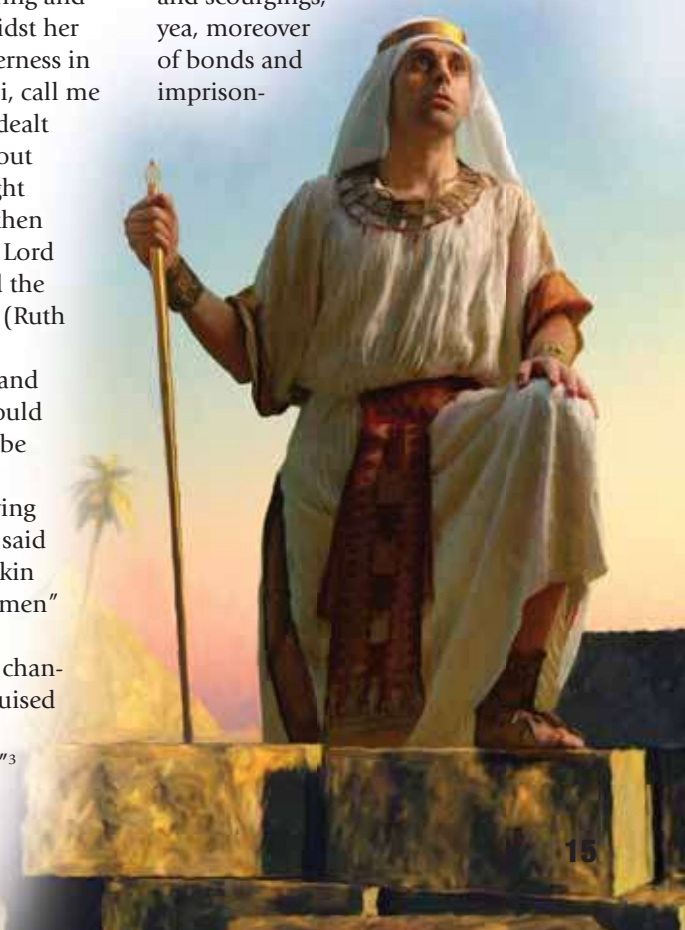
“[The Lord’s] love opens a channel into the wounded and bruised soul, and becomes a healing balsam to those who sorrow.”³

“A dead dog, . . . a flea”

David’s throne will be occupied by One about whom we read: “He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end” (Luke 1:32, 33).

Yes, this man—a man after God’s own heart—was hunted like a beast by the forsaken king of Israel. David shouted: “After whom is the king of Israel come out? after whom dost thou pursue? after a dead dog, after a flea” (1 Samuel 24:14). In that time of anguish he composed the most beautiful songs, which have brought hope and courage to millions of souls throughout the centuries.

Of course, we cannot forget Moses, Elijah, Paul, the other apostles, and ultimately the martyrs who perished at the stake or in the Roman arenas. “And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprison-



“[The Lord’s] love opens a channel into the wounded and bruised soul.”

ment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:36–40).

“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4).

“They sang a new song”

The last great trial stands just before God’s children who will pass through the greatest sufferings ever to be recorded in history. During that dreadful time they will learn to sing a new song, which no one else will know. These overcomers will bear on their forehead the name of Christ and of the Father. Their white garments will express the purity of character developed through the grace of Christ. John the apostle wrote:

“And I saw as it were a sea of glass mingled with fire: and them that had gotten the victory over the beast, and over his image, and over his mark, and over the number of his name, stand on the sea of glass, having the harps of God. And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints” (Revelation 15:2, 3).

“Through trials and persecution, the glory—character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The church of God, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory. In holy vision the prophet saw the triumph of the people of God. He says, [Revelation 15:2, 3 quoted]. “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’ (Revelation 7:14, 15).”⁴

Conclusion

Dear brethren and sisters, let us take to heart the advice of the apostle who says: “Ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had

fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby” (Hebrews 12:5–11).

An old Christian used to say, “If people knew how much suffering is worth, they would make it an object of robbery.”

“God’s providence is the school in which we are to learn the meekness and lowliness of Jesus. The Lord is ever setting before us, not the way we would choose, which seems easier and pleasanter to us, but the true aims of life. It rests with us to cooperate with the agencies which Heaven employs in the work of conforming our characters to the divine model. None can neglect or defer this work but at the most fearful peril to their souls.”⁵

We, the weakest of the weak, have been called to be tools in the hands of the Lord to the close of this earth’s history. We will have to fight the last, decisive battle. Therefore, let us surrender our heart into the sure hands of our Lord Jesus. Thirsting for His love, clothed with the robe of humility and self sacrifice, “filled with all the fulness of God” (Ephesians 3:19), let us give to the world the message of salvation. May this be our aim as we consider the great sacrifice of our wonderful Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen! ❧

References

¹ *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 524–526.

² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 213, 214.

³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁵ *The Great Controversy*, p. 623.

Lessons From the Preparation of

Sail

Part 5

By Les Gibson

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

“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).

Let us think for a moment of how a cement mixer works. You put in the right ingredients in the right proportion, mix them all together, and let the mixture set in the sun.

All the ingredients are unstable by themselves: water pours out everywhere. Sand, cement powder, and gravel all shift around easily. But if you put them all together in the right proportion, mix them together, apply the sun (Son of God) and let it all set, you will have a stable platform.

Once we become fellow workers with God, cooperating with Him, setting ourselves in the sun (the Son of Righteousness), we become stationary (unmovable) and stable.

How does this relate to receiving the Holy Spirit?

In this series of articles on the preparation of the soil, we have studied much about how the soil of our heart is reminiscent of the gardening soil found in nature. Just as soil is softened and fertilizing nutrients are blended in to help make it more fruitful, so are we to receive humbly the components of God’s word that will enable us to bear more spiritual fruit.

One helpful chapter in this regard is Acts chapter 2:

In verses 1–47 we learn to read, receive, and share the present truth with others.

In chapter 2:16–21 we find Joel’s prophecy about the last day events.

Joel 2:23 speaks about the early and latter rains. Verse 28 says that the latter rain will take place “afterward.” After what? After the experience described in verses 16 and 17:

“Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders. . . . Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord. . . . wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God?”

Complexity made plain

As mentioned in earlier articles, Jesus taught that we need to know first the parable of the sower before we can understand many of His other lessons. He said: “Know ye not this parable? and how then will ye know all parables?” (Mark 4:13). The parable of the sower provides a foundation—a solid platform for the study of the Holy Spirit.

By means of further illustration, the prophet Ezekiel was shown in vision a lot of things joined together—apparent-

ly complicated at first, but ultimately in perfect order: “Now as I beheld the living creatures, behold one wheel upon the earth by the living creatures, with his four faces. The appearance of the wheels and their work was like unto the colour of a beryl: and they four had one likeness: and their appearance and their work was as it were a wheel in the middle of a wheel” (Ezekiel 1:15, 16).

“God is acquainted with every man. Could our eyes be opened we would see that eternal justice is at work in our world. . . . The servants of God know that He is working to counteract Satan’s plans. Those who know not God cannot comprehend His movements. There is at work a wheel within a wheel. Apparently the complication of machinery is so intricate that man can only see a complete entanglement. But the divine hand, as seen by the prophet Ezekiel, is placed upon the wheels, and every part moves in complete harmony, each doing its specified work, yet with individual freedom of action.”¹

God is in control, not us. Not even the great king Nebuchadnezzar was in control. (See Daniel 4:29–33.)

Wheels don’t have a starting point, they just go around and around.

“To the prophet the wheel within a wheel, the appearance of living creatures connected with them, all seemed

“Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest.”

intricate and unexplainable. But the hand of Infinite Wisdom is seen among the wheels, and perfect order is the result of its work. **Every wheel, directed by the hand of God, works in perfect harmony with every other wheel.** I have been shown that human instrumentalities are liable to seek after too much power and try to control the work themselves. . . . God in His providence is preparing a way so that the work may be done by human agents. **Then let every man stand at his post of duty, to act his part for this time and know that God is his instructor.**²

Every wheel directed by God’s hand works in perfect harmony with every other wheel. Everyone is to stand at his or her own place of duty to do his or her part.

Sowing the specific seed given to us by God

“A sower went out to sow his seed” (Luke 8:5). What does that mean? The seed is the Word of God, and the Lord is more than willing to give it to us.

“The teacher of sacred truth can impart only that which he himself knows by experience. ‘The sower sowed his seed.’ Christ taught the truth because He was the truth. His own thought, His character, His life-experience, were embodied in His teaching. So with His servants: those who would teach the word are to make it their own by a personal experience. They must know what it is to have Christ made unto them wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. In presenting the word of God to others, they are not to make it a suppose-so or a may-be. They should declare with the apostle Peter, ‘We have not followed cunningly devised fables when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eye-witnesses of His majesty’ (2 Peter 1:16). Every minister of Christ and every teacher should be able to say with the beloved John, ‘The

life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us’ (1 John 1:2).³

All things work together for good among God’s faithful people doing His will. The apostle Paul explained, “I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that planteth any thing, neither he that watereth; but God that giveth the increase. Now he that planteth and he that watereth are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labour” (1 Corinthians 3:6–8).

“The disciples were to begin their work where they were. The hardest and most unpromising field was not to be passed by. So every one of Christ’s workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. **Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest.** Then let our efforts be extended as far as God’s hand may lead the way. . . . Christ’s work when upon earth appeared to be confined to a narrow field, but multitudes from all lands heard His message. God often uses the simplest means to accomplish the greatest results. **It is His plan that every part of His work shall depend on every other part, as a wheel within a wheel, all acting in harmony. The humblest worker, moved by the Holy Spirit, will touch invisible chords, whose vibrations will ring to the ends of the earth, and make melody through eternal ages.**”⁴

Let us work in cooperation with the Lord as long as the door of probation is open. ❧

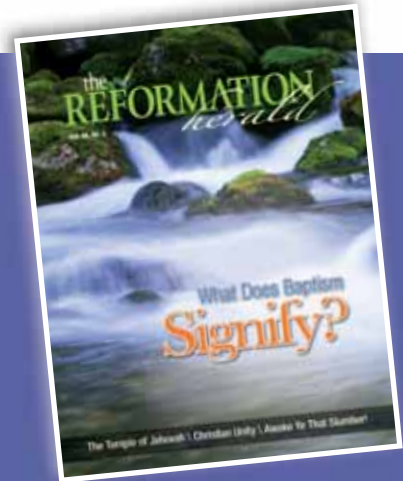
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Why Suffer When You Don't Have to?

By Janet P. Sureshkumar

*D*o you suffer from back pain? Have you ever groaned, "Oh, my aching back!" You are not alone! Back pain is one of the most common medical problems of modern society and the second leading cause of all doctor visits today. Pain relief is big business. An estimated \$50 billion a year is spent on the treatment of low back pain alone.

Back pain affects 70 to 80 percent of the population at some point in life and is the most common cause of limited activity.¹

Backache, medically known as "dorsalgia," generally refers to pain below the cervical level that may originate from the muscles, nerves, bones, joints or other structures in the spine. Low back pain is a common musculoskeletal disorder which affects the lumbar segment of the spine.

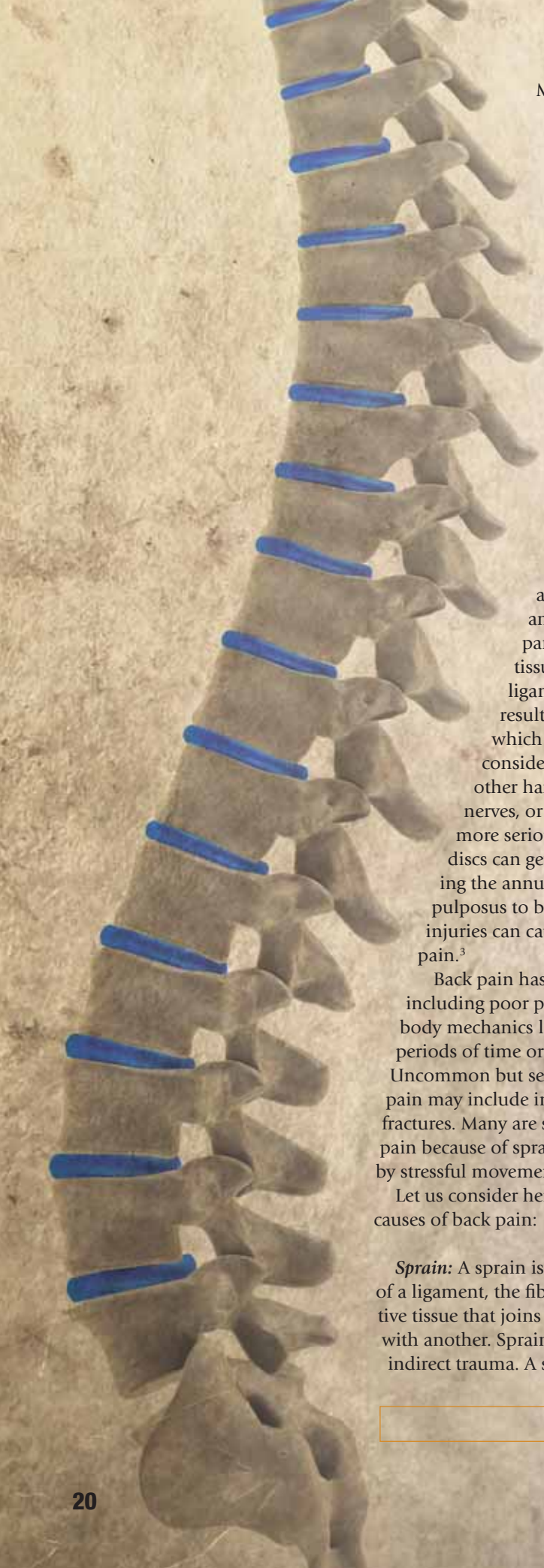
If unattended, back pain can last for a long period of time, and can become disabling. Back pain comes in many

forms. It may be a sudden and sharp pain or it could be dull. Pain may occur with movement, and it may even occur with coughing and sneezing.

Have you ever wondered about your back while looking at the anatomy chart in the doctor's office? Have you ever tried to sit or stand in the posture printed on the chart? It is worth trying. We need to know our body structure in order to understand back pain.

Our backbone, which is also called the spinal or vertebral column, provides support and protection. It consists of 33 bones called vertebrae. The discs between each of the vertebrae act like pads or shock absorbers. Each disc is made up of an outer band called the annulus fibrosus, and there is a gel-like inner substance called the nucleus pulposus. The vertebrae and the discs provide a protective tunnel known as the spinal canal which house the spinal cord. The spinal nerves emerge from the spinal cord and go out to different parts of the body.

Our back also consists of muscles, ligaments, tendons, and blood vessels.



Muscles are strands of tissues that support movement.

Ligaments are the strong, flexible bands of fibrous tissue that link the bones together, and tendons connect muscles to bones and discs. Blood vessels provide nourishment. These parts all work together to help us move about.²

Why back pain?

Back pain may be as a result of injury to any or all of these body parts. Injury to the soft tissues, such as muscles, ligaments, and tendons, results in sprains or strains, which are generally not considered serious. On the other hand, injury to bones, nerves, or blood vessels may be more serious. The outer layers of discs can get tears or cracks, allowing the annulus fibrosus or nucleus pulposus to bulge out. Any of these injuries can cause inflammation and pain.³

Back pain has a variety of causes, including poor posture and poor body mechanics like standing for long periods of time or sitting incorrectly. Uncommon but serious causes of back pain may include infections, tumors, and fractures. Many are suffering from back pain because of sprains and strains caused by stressful movements.

Let us consider here some common causes of back pain:

Sprain: A sprain is a stretch and/or tear of a ligament, the fibrous band of connective tissue that joins the end of one bone with another. Sprain is caused by direct or indirect trauma. A sudden fall, a blow, a

crash, or sports injury can cause a sprain or strain—or even just lifting something too heavy. All sports and exercises, even walking, carry a risk of sprains.

Strain: A strain is a twist, pull and/or tear of a muscle and/or tendon. Tendons are fibrous cords of tissue that attach muscles to bone. When a back injury occurs, muscles, ligaments, and tendons can become over-stretched, overused, or torn. Tissues can swell, causing pain, tenderness, and stiffness. Quick start sports, contact sports, and the sports that require extensive gripping have a high incidence of strains.

Obesity: The spine carries a large portion of our weight. Overweight puts pressure and stress on the back, in particular the lower back. In addition to that, carrying excess weight aggravates other health conditions like osteoporosis (weak bones), osteoarthritis (joint pain), rheumatoid arthritis (an autoimmune disease), spinal stenosis, and spondylolisthesis (degenerative disc disease).

Aging: With aging, ligaments thicken and discs dry out. These age-related changes in the spine may lead to disorders that create pressure on your spinal nerves causing pain, numbness, or weakness. Degenerative disc disease is an age-related spinal disorder. Sometimes the discs can lose their structure and function because of normal wear and tear, but it can result in a herniated disc (bulging out) and pain. At times when there's a tear, chemicals are released, and they can irritate the spinal nerves, causing a specific type of nerve pain (radiculopathy).

Stress: Stress is a feeling that is created when we react to particular events. It's the body's way of rising to a challenge and preparing to meet a tough situation with focus, strength, stamina, and heightened alertness. "Stress appears to be the leading risk factor for back pain and injuries," said Michael R. Bracko, Ed.D., FACSM, during an address at the American College of Sports Medicine (ACSM) 10th-annual Health & Fitness Summit & Exposition in Orlando, Florida.

We need to know our body structure to understand back pain.

Heavy physical work: Some heavy physical works that cause back pain are:

- Static posture—sitting and standing.
- Repetitive work (bending, twisting, pushing, pulling, and lifting).
- Slipping, tripping or falling.
- Twisting while the spine is loaded (carrying something).
- Vibration while driving.
- Fatigue or poor muscle endurance (excessive overtime, work-to-rest ratio).
- "Attitude" at work leading to accidents (poor or high-risk attitude). Lack of work satisfaction and lack of motivation.
- Mental fatigue (forgetting to lift properly).
- Lack of sleep or fatigue.
- Emotional instability.
- Lack of physical activity/too much physical activity.
- Poor muscle endurance, and poor trunk muscle stabilization.
- Excessive weight.

How can we prevent back pain?

We all know that prevention is better than cure.

Action can be taken to prevent back pain or postpone the degeneration of the spine and disks. The best way to prevent back pain is to exercise regularly. Regular exercise reduces pain, strengthens the weak muscle, decreases mechanical stress on your back, improves your mobility, stabilizes your back, and decreases the rate of severe and/or recurring back pain, allowing quicker recovery from a future flare of back pain.

Back strengthening and stretching exercises are recommended at least 2 or 3 times a week.

The following are some examples of back exercises:

- **Partial sit-up:** Lie down on your back. With bent knees, slowly raise

your head and shoulders off the floor, and hold for 10 seconds.

- **Knee-to-Chest Raise:** Lie down on your back. Slowly pull knees to chest, relaxing your neck and back, hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 10 times.
- **Press-up:** Lie down on your back with hands at your sides. Raise up your pelvis painlessly, hold for 10 seconds, and repeat 10 times.
- **Sitting Flexion:** Sit on a firm stool or chair with your legs apart (forming a V) and your hands resting on your knees. Bend forward slowly at the waist, touching the floor with your hands. Hold this position for three to five seconds and then slowly return to the sitting position.

These exercises strengthen the back muscles, allowing them to withstand the rigors of everyday activities. If you have had previous back pain or medical problems, make sure to check with your doctor before starting these exercises. Preventive measures include strengthening of the back and adopting good body techniques.

Good back techniques:

Another way of preventing back pain is by using good back techniques at home and at work.

Adopt a straight posture, sitting or standing. You should try not to bend the back. Bend instead at the knees or at the hips. This is true as when lifting objects, tying shoes, putting socks or pants on, and the like.

Avoid high heels, because they cause the curve at the base of the spine to increase. This not only compresses the vertebrae but stretches the abdominal muscles and throws the contents of the abdomen forward. The effect is to reduce the intra-abdominal pressure with

the result that the spine has less support at the front of the body.⁴

What can you do in case of a sudden onset of pain?

Use ice: If your back pain has suddenly arrived, then the first tip you need is to use ice in the first 48 hours. Most back pain will ease and disappear within that time, and sometimes within the day.

See your doctor: Now please remember, if you have had a fall or major injury, use ice, but use it on the way to seeing your doctor or hospital. It is still essential to be checked over, if you have had an injury that has led to back pain.

Get moving! Most back pain appreciates movement. So try to keep active, go for a walk (even if it is just around your living room). Pain should ease with movement. If it gets worse, then stop. Get a phone and call someone for help.

Finally:

We need to show the people that "it is not God who causes pain and suffering, but that man through his own ignorance and sin has brought this condition upon himself."⁵

In order that we may have pain free life we ought to:

Evaluate the condition of our body and its pain.

Educate in exercising proper posture.

Engage in proper physical exercise and body movements.

Experience the great feeling of smartness without strain.

Enjoy life without pain. *✍*

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What Does Marriage Mean to

You?

By A. Baumann

As an important reality in the life of a man and a woman, marriage derives its meaning from what the two put into it, realizing that it will be as good or as bad as they make it.

Creating and sharing happiness

The minister who performs the wedding ceremony can give advice and guidance, but love, which is to ensure unity, must be cultivated by the spouses. Love has not only inspired music, art, and literature—it has also been the source of vitality and contentment in the married life of many.

The marriage relationship will be a success if husband and wife take the attitude of learners, if they find out gradually how to live together at their best, if they experience together the anticipated joys and responsibilities of home life.

A successful marriage has a healthy influence on one's personality. In an atmosphere of love the mates see each other at their best, each appreciating the good things revealed by the other. In the strength of such a relationship, husband and wife find their highest happiness together. Success in marriage is a real success in life.

Working on sound principles, many have found that the greatest scientific discoveries in the world are less important to them than their discovery of ways to answer the questions that arise in their new relationship and to make their love bear fruit in domestic harmony.

“Am I giving in marriage the best that it is possible for me to give?”

In a venture such as marriage—which requires delicate adjustments—mutual understanding is necessary for a common purpose. Is there anything that deserves more careful attention than the harmony and success of the home? Other plans may fail without wrecking happiness; but if marriage fails, happiness is wrecked.

Mutual understanding is needed to keep things at their best. “Do I understand how to make good in this relationship?” is a question which marriage partners should frequently put to themselves.

Success comes when mutual understanding, devotion, and respect reinforce one another in a blending of personalities. As musical notes in a right combination produce harmony, while the same notes inharmoniously arranged give nothing but discord, so it is with the elements of human nature in the family. Unless these elements are adjusted in a correct relationship, even those persons who might appear to be happy may become miserable. Marriage is a duet in this respect. The two performers will have just what they create—harmony or discord. If, therefore, two persons find some discord in the duet of matrimony, this indicates that they need to learn to be better players.

The self-centered person tests all things by the question: “Am I getting in marriage the happiness which I deserve?” But those who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ raise another question: “Am I giving in marriage the best that it is possible for me to give?” Husband and wife, each thinking in terms of the other, share a generous store of durable satisfactions. The mature person finds satisfaction in knowing that others receive joy through and because of him or her, while the underdeveloped person, thinking mainly of self, is handicapped in marriage.

Two persons who love each other become richer through the accumulation of a mass of pleasant associations. Enjoying good times together, they cultivate delicate forms of endearment, little courtesies in the home, tasks accomplished together, mutual help in difficulty, and a hundred daily experi-

ences of love and mutual confidence. Out of such material each can create a pleasant and trustworthy world of happiness for the other; for the reality that we seek in marriage, as in life, is not merely something that we find, but rather something which we create.

Growing together

A Christian writer says: “The moral character of those united in marriage is either elevated or degraded by their association; and the work of deterioration accomplished by a low, deceptive, selfish, uncontrollable nature is begun soon after the marriage ceremony. If the young man makes a wise choice, he may have one to stand by his side who will bear to the utmost of her ability her share of the burdens of life, who will ennoble and refine him, and make him happy in her love. But if the wife is fitful in character, self-admiring, exacting, accusing, charging her husband with motives and feelings that originate only in her own perverted temperament; if she has not discernment and nice discrimination to recognize his love and appreciate it, but talks of neglect and lack of love because he does not gratify every whim, she will almost inevitably bring about the very state of things she seems to deplore; she will make all these accusations realities.”¹

Marriage partners should endeavor to improve their adjustments, both in the home and in the world outside, according to Christian principles. They should realize that their characters need development.

“Finally, brethren [and sisters], whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

The new homemakers certainly have abilities that are worth developing. Their talents should be used. Their

artistic skills and intellectual aspirations should be cultivated. In this way their family life will be enriched.

An important part of our growth takes place through our interests. When two persons share their enthusiasms they make life more interesting for each other. Such sharing is the very stuff of which marriage is made on the mental side. Even if the two don't have the same education, and even if their interests are not identical, they should live in a world of common thought and understanding. Each can enrich the thinking and add to the insight of the other by being an interesting person with whom to live. In other words, each ought to be growing intellectually that there may be a real marriage of minds.

Maturity

In marriage, a person seeks not only his or her own happiness, but also the happiness of another, and the one who most truly brings joy into the life of the other will most surely have it as well. It is easy to think of one's own pleasure. A child can do that. But only a mature personality will share happiness.

The finest marriages are those in which love is constantly developing. In part, love comes without our planning. It is something into which we are drawn, and it is much more than that. It is a life undertaking of two persons who not only feel that their life will be happier if they are together, but who set out to make life more satisfactory for each other in every way.

Toward this end each will consider the needs, wishes, and ambitions of the other, and will learn how best to provide friendship, help, appreciation, encouragement, and whatever else the mate happens to need. Mature and happy partners will help each other to achieve success in marriage. Some things please and others annoy, and the strategy of harmony will be for each to increase pleasures and avoid annoyances in the home.

Only a mature personality will share happiness.

Marriage should include many attractions that two people can have for each other. As they develop their mental friendship, exchanging thoughts and learning how best to stimulate and supplement each other, they will experience a richer sharing of life, and each will grow into a deeper understanding of the mind of the other. This close friendship becomes one of the greatest things in life. Its reward will be seen in the avoidance of unnecessary tensions and in the securing of a sense of harmony.

Mature marriage fellowship is an affair of two people unified through love in the midst of all the relationships in which they move. Sharing their friendships will add to the unity of their life, and will help them to a deeper appreciation of one another.

The spiritual growth of love gives husband and wife an urge to struggle toward yet unattained heights, for love has an essential kinship with all that is excellent. Religion teaches that love is of God, and the love of true hearts in wedlock is also of God, making the individual want to be his or her best for the other and for the home.

Two persons coming together in marriage will also have differences in their thinking and feeling about spiritual matters. Each should learn to appreciate thoroughly the ideals of the other, and if either realizes that the other has taken a higher ground, he or she should take the attitude that life is a constant growth, and that there are greater heights above those to which they have attained.

The continued sharing of love in words, in actions, and in the life program is the best means to ensure success. Love is deeper than speech, but it needs to be spoken. Even when it is taken for granted, it should be revealed joyously in one's behavior. Then it lifts the daily experiences in marriage on a tide that floods the whole being.

Relationships with family, friends, and community

Not only are two persons united in marriage, but each becomes in a sense a member of the other's family also. Some of their old associations stemming from a God-fearing home may have woven sweet memories into the very fiber of their being. Therefore, each should cultivate the best relationship with the family of the other. Husband and wife should not try to draw each other too far away from his or her's original group, as long as Christian principles are not compromised. While undue emotional dependence on parents has been pointed out as dangerous, ignoring earlier ties too much may impair the joys of life. Fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, and other dear ones still mean much to the marriage partners.

Although friends and family connections have a proper place, it is desirable for a young married couple to set up a home by themselves. A relative is better as an occasional visitor than as a regular member of the household. No one should feel free to interfere in the life of the new home, "edging in" between husband and wife. While old loyalties may be important, the new loyalty must be supreme.

Partnership in daily work

The family has its part to perform in the business of the community and should perform this part well, both outside the home and within.

In a good home, members help each other to perform their duties more effectively, as each shows an interest in the work of the other. A home-minded person does not think of his or her work as drudgery. Though work is a necessity, it is also an expression of personality. Every person who does a common task well improves the world so far as his or her part is concerned.

Because a woman's work in the home can now be done by fewer hands than in earlier times and because of special

interests, many women work outside. In this case the wife must not put so much of herself on the altar of her job that she sacrifices her duties at home.

To some extent, the same principle applies to a man also. A husband may be tempted to become so engrossed in his work that he will have very little time for his home. Success suggests that we keep all things in proportion and dedicate balanced attention to the various departments of life in a harmonious plan.

Making much of home life

Many changes have taken place since the time of our forefathers when a greater part of the necessary work was done in the home. In the twentieth century, the home lost some of the functions it used to have before. Therefore, some people suppose that marriage has lost some of the meaning which it once used to have. This is a mistaken idea. The essential things in marriage—such as the response of heart to heart, the thrill of mutual understanding, sharing joys and sorrows, mutual support in difficulty, planning together for children and for all the precious values of the home, and finding the deeper meaning of life in the heart of another person—are even more important now that the family grows in significance as a means of gaining deeper satisfaction and intangible securities.

In the Christian marriage relationship the narrower "I" feeling is to grow into a broader "we" feeling. While there is a losing of the smaller self, there is a gaining toward a more complete family unit. This process involves a new awareness of marriage as a spiritual unity having much to do with the inner meaning of life. For homemakers, the essence of the art of living is that they make as much as possible of their life together. By giving high regard to their common interests and to the things they do and enjoy in common, they will experience, in the very heart of their being, a blending of personalities. *R*

Reference

¹ *The Adventist Home*, pp. 109, 110.



Hot Soups for Cold Days



By Marline Balbach

1

Creamy Potato Soup

1 cup diced potatoes
 ½ cup chopped onion
 ½ teaspoon salt or to taste
 1 cup chopped celery
 1 cup water
 Cook all the above in pot till tender. Do not drain, mash.

Blend:

¼ cup raw cashew pieces
 ½ cup water

When creamy add:

1 more cup of water
 1 tablespoon flour
 1 tablespoon olive oil
 1 tablespoon vegetarian, (no monosodium glutamate [MSG]), chicken-flavor seasoning, dash of cayenne, some fresh parsley

2



3

Add this seasoned cream to the cooked, hot mashed vegetables in the pot. Simmer together 5 minutes, stirring constantly so it does not stick to the pot and burn. Enjoy!

1

Delicious Creamy Mushroom Soup

Sauté 15 minutes in a little water or oil:

1 cup chopped onion
 2 cups sliced fresh mushrooms

In blender whiz till creamy the following:

1 cup raw cashews
 2–3 cups water
 1 tablespoon vegetarian chicken-flavor (no MSG)
 Sautéed vegetables from above

3



Add the blended mixture to the cooked potatoes in the pot. Bring to simmer. Do not boil. Serve. This soup burns easily and changes consistency if brought to a rolling boil. So be careful at the end. Enjoy!

2

In a pot cook the following till the potatoes are soft:

3 cups raw potato, diced
 3 cups water
 3 cups fresh mushroom, sliced
 1 tablespoon vegetarian, chicken-flavor seasoning
 1 cup diced celery and some chopped parsley, salt to taste, dash of cayenne



It was still quite early in the morning when I was suddenly awakened by the words impressing my mind, "Jesus is coming, Jesus is coming." At this urgent-sounding message I was quickly startled with the realization that I have a duty to go out and let others know that Jesus is coming soon.

Awake Ye Who **Slumber!**

By Kay Clark

I jumped out of bed and felt an energy all over—such as I had never felt before. I felt the urgency to go out right then to begin my work for the day in visitation and evangelism, but found by looking outside that it was much too early in the morning to do this. I began to wonder . . . what did this occurrence mean?

The message I derived from this wonderful experience is that the Lord says to me, as well as to each of us, that there is no time for sleep. . . . The coming of Jesus is nearer than we can possibly imagine, and we must be more diligent in proclaiming the Gospel and giving the warning of His coming to all who will listen.

The signs are increasing

Throughout the Scriptures may be found the signs listed by which God has forewarned His people of the things which would be seen just prior to the second coming of Jesus. If we will give heed to the things which are happening upon the earth today, we will be able to discern those very things of which the prophecies

have spoken. Not only can we see the increasing signs in nature itself but also in political and religious issues. Many freedoms which the people of this and other nations have enjoyed are being removed one by one. This is done in such a way that many do not fully understand the reason behind those actions.

Jesus Himself told His disciples of many of these things prior to His crucifixion so that they and those of future generations would be enlightened and made aware of the nearness of His return when they would see these things being fulfilled. We are to be aware today of what these warnings are and take heed as to how they are being fulfilled. We should not be in ignorance concerning them nor be hesitant about revealing them to others who may not be knowledgeable concerning them.

What must we do?

Our duty is twofold. We are living in a difficult yet exciting time of this earth's history—difficult because of the things through which we know we must pass and exciting because we are beholding the fulfillment of that which has been spoken of throughout

As we are awakened to the nearness of Jesus' appearing we will truly feel the urgency of preparation.

the ages—those things which, when the fullness of time comes, will culminate in the appearing of our Lord and Saviour the second time. So, what is our duty as we dwell upon these things?

First, we must search our own heart and life to be sure that we ourselves are ready for the coming of the great day of the Lord; second, we also have the duty to fulfill the great commission given to us by Jesus Himself as found in Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

How urgent is the matter?

As we are awakened to the nearness of Jesus' appearing we will truly feel the urgency of preparation within ourselves and within the church; then we will be fortified with help from above to enter more fully into our mission field, the people in the areas around us who sit in darkness.

We have to realize that, due to our



sinful nature, we have fallen far short of that perfection to which we must attain in order to enter heaven when Jesus comes. We must realize the urgency of committing ourselves completely to Him and knowing, as stated by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 2:8: "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God." We must pray daily with the psalmist, "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Psalm 51:10); then we can claim the promise and security found in Psalm 91:10, 11, "There shall no evil be-

fall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways."

When we, as children of God, will invest our God-given talents in His service, we will work with Him as instrumentalities through whom souls will be saved for His kingdom. There will be within us a desire to see the salvation of those around us. We must ever keep that vital link strong between ourselves and Christ, for if we become separated from Him we will find that we have no strength.

Our great need

We are to show forth a transformed life by allowing a reformation to be wrought within us. We need to have a deep conviction of our sinful state followed by a renewal of our spiritual life. This can be accomplished through the convincing work of the Holy Spirit. "A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit. Revival and reformation are two different things. Revival signifies a renewal of spiritual life, a quickening of the powers of

mind and heart, a resurrection from the spiritual death. Reformation signifies a reorganization, a change in ideas and theories, habits and practices. Reformation will not bring forth the good fruit of righteousness unless it is connected with the revival of the Spirit. Revival and reformation are to do their appointed work, and in doing this work they must blend."¹

It is when we have obtained a knowledge of God through the study of the life and works of Christ that we will experience the transformation of character which will recreate the soul

into His image. "Looking unto Jesus we obtain brighter and more distinct views of God, and by beholding we become changed."²

Yes, by beholding Christ we become changed and through Him we obtain righteousness, the freedom from sin; we will be justified by faith. Then our life will be lived in harmony with God's law which is holy and just. When His life is lived within us we become righteous. It is when we take His faith upon us and allow it to work within us by love, upon which principle hang all the commandments, that our heart will be purified. All our trying will be in vain; we must take that which He so freely offers, then the revival and reformation will happen within us. It is then that the transformation of character will be seen outwardly.

The fulfilling of the Great Commission

Our Master has declared, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). Jesus gave this great commission shortly after He had arisen from the death which had no power to hold Him. The "ye" to whom He was speaking were His disciples, the witnesses of all these things. He commanded "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." Yes, all people are to have the opportunity of hearing the way of salvation; it matters not what nationality, color or race. God is no respecter of persons; Christ died to save all who would believe. As the early disciples did, we, too, will have various conflicts to endure as we seek to teach the truth for the present day. The enemy of that truth will cast many obstacles into our pathway but we must stay united with Christ, our Commander, and march forward under His banner. As we go faithfully onward, the Holy Spirit will traverse the way before us and prepare the heart of the ones to whom we will witness, sowing the seed of truth. Thus we will have done that which we

“A revival and a reformation must take place under the ministration of the Holy Spirit.”

have been commissioned to do, and the seed which falls into good ground will be watered by the Holy Spirit and spring forth to be ready for the harvest.

A multifold work

The work of God in which we are to be engaged is a manifold work; that is, it consists of many aspects. We have

ing of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.”

As we go about visiting in the homes of people we often find those who are indeed broken in spirit, not knowing which way to turn. We find those who have physical ills because they have not known how to properly care for their physical bodies. We find those who are

cross of Calvary, there to meet the One who wants to heal all ills, to restore the broken to strength and health again.

To be blessed so as to bless others

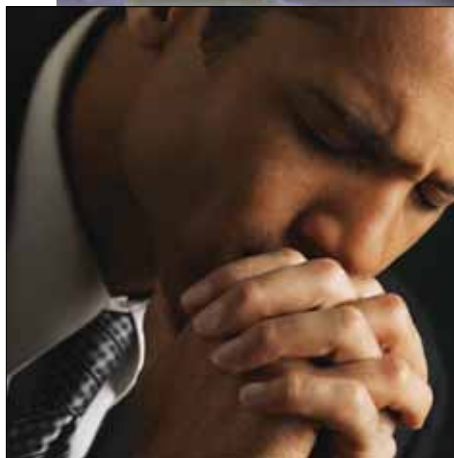
We have been richly blessed by God in that He has given us the very special message which is to be borne to the world in these last days of earth’s history. Jesus said in Matthew 24:14, “And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.” Here we have the missionary program to be carried before the “end can come.” He desires that His people be willing to be those faithful witnesses of Him and for the truth of His word.

We must receive from Him the promised blessings before we can give it to others. “Do not feel at all ashamed of the heart softening under the movings of the Holy Spirit. Let Jesus come in as He knocks for entrance and then appreciate Him, rejoice in heart, encourage a constant gratitude that while you felt that there was no arm to save, His arm brought salvation, His love was made apparent to you. Then when in the full joy of that love you presented Jesus to others, the Holy Spirit was working through you . . . to bless others. . . . It is the privilege of everyone who receives the Spirit of truth to represent the truth in its simplicity, to reach the hearts of the perplexed, trembling souls who are really bewildered. . . . He knows how to apply the balm.”³

So it is that we throw ourselves wholly upon Him that we may be totally immersed in what He is trying to do for us and through us . . . that His name may be glorified and that through Him others may find salvation.

Unto all nations . . .

In giving this commission Jesus did not leave anyone out. All peoples were to receive; and each of us to whom the truth has been given are to give. This includes those in our families, those



each been endowed with various talents which are to be used to the glory and honor of Him by whom we received them. Jesus, while on earth, spent much of His time healing the sick bodies and spirits of those with whom He came in contact. This was done along with preaching the good news of the gospel so that the spiritual wounds of the soul might be healed. Jesus said in Luke 4:18, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recover-

poor, perhaps not for the lack of money, but for the lack of the saving grace of Christ. They have never accepted Him and do not know how to do so. To all these, whatever their station in life, we are called on to minister. When one is in the bondage of sin, he or she is a captive as much as though he or she were held in the stocks. His or her very soul is oppressed and cries out to be released. What a blessing it is when that soul receives the good news that he or she can be free by accepting Jesus as Saviour. It was Jesus Himself who said, “Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light” (Matthew 11: 28–30).

May we be faithful in leading these lonely, troubled ones to the foot of the

who are acquaintances, those who are strangers, those who we meet but may never see again. Thus, if all our church members are faithful to their duty, wherever they are located in the world, the good news and the power of the gospel will reach all who know it not. And, don't forget the influence of the literature which can be given and even sent into places where perhaps missionaries cannot go.

Let us not forget also the professed ones who may be among our number but who may have become discouraged, or may have been assaulted severely by the enemy of souls and have fallen away. Let us go to them and show them the Christian love and concern through which Christ can work to lift them back fully into the fold.

We need to plead with these, reminding them of the Saviour's love for them, telling them that He is coming again very soon and that they need to heed

His call to return to Him and receive the healing that He can give.

We are the lighthouse from which the beam of God's mercy is to flow. Just as the lighthouse keepers in times past have manned their stations faithfully and have sounded the horns, or in some instances bells, with which to give warning to passing ships engulfed in fog, so we are to sound the good news and the warning by whatever means we can to those souls who are nearing eternity without the Captain who can save them. Yes, this is our commission!

Conclusion

We today have the same commission from the same Jesus which His first disciples had. This is not the time in history to lower our standards or to let go of the Rock of our salvation. It is the time to raise higher the standard of truth so that others may see it more

clearly and may hear our voices giving forth the message more boldly than ever before. May our faith increase as we draw nearer to Him; may we be that faithful people whom He is coming to save.

Appeal

Fellow believers, let us each one daily partake of the saving grace of Christ our Righteousness, studying diligently His Word so that it becomes so interwoven within us that when others see us and hear us they will see His character shining forth from within us. It is through this that His name will be glorified and His return be hastened. Amen. *✠*

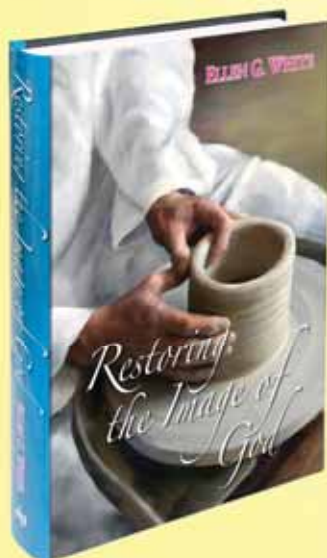
References

¹ *Christian Service*, p. 42.

² *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 355.

³ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 119.

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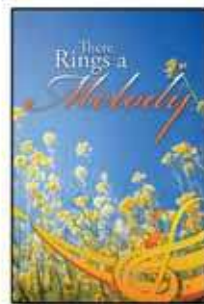
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Big, Big *Love*

By B. Monteiro



*A*nnie was a delightful, stray mutt who showed up at my doorstep many years ago. Fun as she was to have around, she was invited to stay and be my companion. It was not long before Annie had puppies—six beautiful little ones.

Annie was quite fast at running. Every evening she would recognize the distinct sound of my car approaching in the distance. Then she would dash out onto the normally quiet, country road for about 25 meters or more, eager to greet me coming home. But late one night another car was also there, and it hit her as she ran onto the road. What a shock! At first I thought she was dead. Then it looked as if she would only be paralyzed. After lying still for a moment, she hobbled onto the grass, pulling herself forward with only her two front legs, dragging her two lifeless back legs flat along the ground.

Annie was in a big hurry, rushing to the backyard this way, struggling as fast as she could. "Where is she going?" I wondered.

Then I saw the answer as she made her way straight into her little wooden doghouse. The puppies! They were her main concern. She wanted to make sure to give them their milk. There was nothing more important to her at that moment. It was an object lesson I never forgot.

There is nothing more important to God than to take care of us—His children. Jesus

suffered great pain on the cross, but His main concern was that we be saved through His love.

A glimmer of this great love can be seen in the love of parents for their children. Some children respond to that love by saying they love them back "as big as the ocean" or "all the numbers in the world."

The greatest love is found in sacrifice—caring for someone else when we ourselves are hurting. It is also shown when we obey our parents even at times when it's not easy.

Jesus says to us: "If ye love me, keep my commandments. . . . He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me" (John 14:15, 21). Jesus reveals Himself to us more fully as we love and obey Him, being willing to suffer anything for His sake. "The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:16–18).

Jesus suffered much for our sakes, and He asks us to share in that love by suffering for His sake as well. His story has a happy ending, because many, many souls will be saved in glory as a result of His suffering. When we ask how much He loves us, He stretches out His arms on the cross and says, "This much!"

By the way, Annie's story had a happy ending, too. After she slept that night, by the next morning, amazingly enough, she was fine. *✍*

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