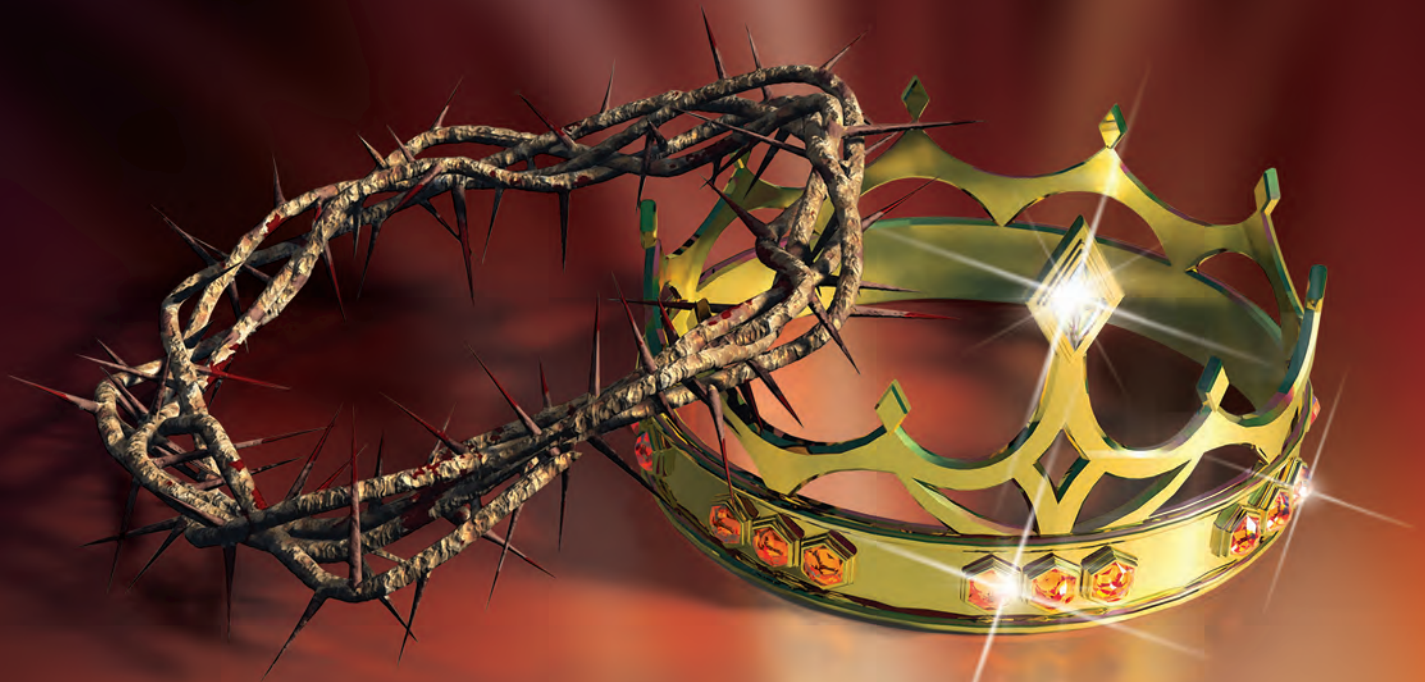


the
REFORMATION
herald

Vol. 57, No. 6



VICTORIOUS
LIVES

Week of Prayer, December 2–11, 2016

IN THIS ISSUE

Enoch—The Man Who Walked With God 4
Friday, December 2, 2016

Abraham—The Father of the Faithful 8
Sabbath, December 3, 2016

Joseph—The Faithful Young Man 12
Sunday, December 4, 2016

Moses—The Kind and Humble Leader 16
Wednesday, December 7, 2016

Elijah—The Prophet of Restoration 20
Friday, December 9, 2016

Daniel—The Moral and Intellectual Giant 24
Sabbath, December 10, 2016

Living a Victorious Life 28
Sunday, December 11, 2016

Victorious Lives 32
Poem

VICTORIOUS LIVES

Another year is about to close. Considering this, shall we not pause to echo the words of the inspired man after God's own heart: "Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty." "O sing unto the Lord a new song; for he hath done marvellous things: his right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory" (1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 98:1).

We may have had some ups and downs this year—nobody likes to experience failure or disappointment. So, what is the key to victory? Jesus Christ in the life, working through the Holy Spirit as we totally surrender to Him and thus gain strength to obey His teachings, following His revealed will.

The end of the year is a great time to thank God for His tender, merciful watch care over every one of us. It also provides an ideal opportunity for a spiritual self-assessment. Are we trusting in Jesus, looking to Him consistently, overcoming our defects of character through the power of His shed blood in preparation for the close of probation?

These readings for this year's Week of Prayer are designed to give us a boost in the right direction. Let us prayerfully consider the topic of victorious living through Christ and share the readings also with others who may be isolated or homebound, keeping in mind the following dates:

Prayer with fasting:
Sabbath, December 10

Offering for missions:
Sunday, December 11

It is our prayer that the Lord may enable us to rejoice not merely in theory—but rather to be able to declare with full, honest assurance, "Thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," "and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith" (1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4).

Official Church Publication of the
Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement

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

Editor D. P. Silva
Assistant to the Editor B. Montrose
Layout and Design H. Melnychuk

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>
E-mail: info@sdarm.org

THE REFORMATION HERALD® (ISSN 0482-0843)
features articles on Bible doctrine that will enrich the spiritual life of those who seek to know more about God. It is published bimonthly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019-0240, U.S.A.

Printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscriptions, payments, and donations should be mailed to the address below. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Subscription rates:
United States U.S. \$16.95
Foreign (air mail) U.S. \$30.00
Single issue U.S. \$ 4.50

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to *The Reformation Herald*, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.

Vol. 57, No. 6; Copyright © 2016 November-December issue.

Illustrations: Sermon View on the front cover and on pp. 3, 4, 7, 8, 12, 15, 16, 20, 24, 28, 31, 32; Adventist Digital Media on pp. 11, 19; picture by Giovanni Francesco Barbieri on p. 22; picture by Briton Reviere on p. 27.

OVERCOMERS

In Revelation chapters 2 and 3, we find seven promises to the overcomers during the seven different periods of God's church:

1. Access to the tree of life.
2. Freedom from the second death.
3. Hidden manna to eat and a white stone with Jesus' new name.
4. Power over the nations; the Morning Star, which is Christ Himself (the redeemed will enjoy the privilege of the eternal presence of Christ).
5. A white garment, which is the righteousness of Christ, and having their names permanently written in the Lamb's book of life.
6. To be pillars in the temple of God—the saved will reflect God's character for eternity.
7. They will be seated with Christ on His throne.

Do you enjoy these promises? For sure you do; I do, too. Let us keep in mind that God is faithful in fulfilling His promises, as long as we, by His grace, fulfill the condition—that of being overcomers.

Ever since our first parents first fell into sin, humanity has been weak in moral power and unable to overcome the evil one in their own strength. However, on the same day Adam and Eve sinned, the Lord presented to them a star of hope when He

promised that He would overcome Satan and bruise the head of the archenemy.

We enjoy the blessing of knowing the victorious lives of men of God from the very beginning of Bible history: Adam, Abel, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Jochebed, Hannah, Ruth, Abigail, Deborah, Rahab, Gideon, Barak, Samson, and a big list of other heroes found in the Holy Book.

As we study carefully the lives of these men and women, we often find serious defects of character over which they were victorious by faith. As a matter of fact, on the list appearing in the book of Hebrews, the expression "By faith" precedes every name. It would be good if we would take time to study the life of all these heroes.

We can overcome our defects of character the same way—by faith in the Lamb of God who takes away

the sins of the world. We have the same merciful God, the same grace, the same divine agencies at hand. They are more than willing to succor us any time we appeal to our powerful Saviour and Lord.

Are we suffering some defeat in our struggles to overcome? Those heroes were also defeated. Yet their final victory is a warranty that we, too, can overcome.

During this Week of Prayer we will consider carefully the lives of some heroes mentioned in the Bible. It will be a very profitable study, but, more than that, we can enjoy the same victory as they enjoyed, as we receive the same grace they received. Yes, we can overcome with our Lord Jesus Christ. Be sure of that. God bless! *R*



The Man Who Walked With God

Friday, December 2, 2016

*Excerpts from the writings
of E. G. White*

The condition of our world

The world over, cities are becoming hotbeds of vice. On every hand are the sights and sounds of evil. Everywhere are enticements to sensuality and dissipation. The tide of corruption and crime is continually swelling. Every day brings the record of violence—robberies, murders, suicides, and crimes unnamable.

Life in the cities is false and artificial. The intense passion for money getting, the whirl of excitement and pleasure seeking, the thirst for display, the luxury and extravagance, all are forces that, with the great masses of mankind, are turning the mind from life's true purpose. They are opening the door to a thousand

evils. Upon the youth they have almost irresistible power.

One of the most subtle and dangerous temptations that assail the children and youth in the cities is the love of pleasure. Holidays are numerous; games . . . draw thousands, and the whirl of excitement and pleasure attracts them away from the sober duties of life. Money that should have been saved for better uses is frittered away for amusements.

Through the working of trusts, and the results of labor unions and strikes, the conditions of life in the

city are constantly becoming more and more difficult. Serious troubles are before us.¹

Today, crime of every kind is practiced in order to obtain money. Selfishness, deceit, robbery, and bloodshed are making this world a veritable Sodom, and its inhabitants as the inhabitants of the antediluvian world. In the greed for possession, God's law is transgressed.²

Already the doctrine that men are released from obedience to God's requirements has weakened the force of moral obligation, and opened



the floodgates of iniquity upon the world. Lawlessness, dissipation, and corruption are sweeping in upon us like an overwhelming tide. In the family, Satan is at work. His banner waves, even in professedly Christian households. There is envy, evil surmising, hypocrisy; estrangement, emulation, strife, betrayal of sacred trusts, indulgence of lust. The whole system of religious principles and doctrines, which should form the foundation and framework of social life, seems to be a tottering mass, ready to fall to ruin. The vilest of criminals, when thrown into prison for their offenses, are often made the recipients of gifts and attentions, as if they had attained an enviable distinction. The greatest publicity is given to their character and crimes. The papers publish the revolting details of vice, thus initiating others into the practice of fraud, robbery, and murder; and Satan exults in the success of his hellish schemes. The infatuation of vice, the wanton taking of life, the terrible increase of intemperance and iniquity of every order and degree, should arouse all who fear God to inquire what can be done to stay the tide of evil.”³

The men of the world are ambitious for fame. They desire houses and lands and plenty of money, that they may be great according to the measure of the world. It is the height of their ambition to reach a place where they can look down with a sense of superiority upon those who are poor. These souls are building on the sand, and their house will fall suddenly. Superiority of position is not true greatness. That which does not increase the value of the soul is of no real value in itself.⁴

How is this manifested even in the churches?

By spiritual pride, a desire to dictate, an ambitious longing for honor or position, a lack of self-control, by the indulgence of passion or prejudice, by instability or lack of judgment, the church may be disturbed and her peace sacrificed.

Difficulties are often caused by the vendors of gossip, whose whispered hints and suggestions poison unsuspecting minds and separate the closest friends. Mischief-makers are seconded in their evil work by the many who stand with open ears and evil heart, saying: “Report, . . . and we will report it.”⁵

The enemy will come in and try to draw our minds away from the important work to be done for this time. He will seek to keep us engaged on trivial matters, make us think that it is our province to criticize and condemn others; but our work is to deal faithfully with our own souls. We must search our hearts and see if we are right in the sight of God. Peter said to Christ in regard to John, “Lord, what shall this man do?” But the Lord answered him, “What is that to thee? follow thou me.” We each have a work to do for ourselves, and while we are criticizing others, we are neglecting the most important work of all.⁶

For years I have felt deep anguish of soul as the Lord has presented before me the want in our churches of Jesus and His love. There has been a spirit of self-sufficiency and a disposition to strive for position and supremacy. I have seen that self-glorification was becoming common among Seventh-day Adventists and that unless the pride of man should be abased and Christ exalted we should, as a people, be in no better condition to receive Christ at His second advent than were the Jewish people to receive Him at His first advent.⁷

How can we escape the prevailing mentality?

Among the peculiarities which should distinguish God’s people from the world is their humility. That man is nearest God and is the most honored of him, who has the least self-importance and self-righteousness, the least trust and confidence in self, who waits on God in humble trusting faith. Instead of being ambitious to be equal with each other in honor and position, or

perhaps even higher, we should seek to be the humble, faithful servants of Christ. . . .

In self-love, self-exaltation, and pride, there is great weakness; but in humility there is great strength. Pride and self-importance, when compared with humility and lowliness, are indeed weakness. It was our Saviour’s gentleness, His plain, unassuming manners, that made Him a conqueror of hearts. But in our separation from God, in our pride and darkness, we are constantly seeking to elevate ourselves, forgetting that lowliness of mind is power.⁸

Enoch—an example for us today

Enoch was the first prophet among mankind. He foretold by prophecy the second coming of Christ to our world, and his work at that time. His life was a specimen of Christian consistency. Holy lips alone should speak forth the words of God in denunciation and judgments. His prophecy is not found in the writings of the Old Testament. We may never find any books which relate to the works of Enoch, but Jude, a prophet of God, mentions the work of Enoch.⁹

Those who feared the Lord sought out this holy man, to share his instruction and his prayers. Enoch labored publicly also, bearing God’s messages to all who would hear the words of warning. His labors were not restricted to the Sethites. In the land where Cain had sought to flee from the divine Presence, the prophet of God made known the wonderful scenes that had passed before his vision. “Behold,” he declared, “the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds” (Jude 14, 15).

He was a fearless reprover of sin. While he preached the love of God in Christ to the people of his time and pleaded with them to forsake their evil ways, he rebuked the prevailing iniquity and warned the men of his generation that judgment would surely be visited upon the

transgressor. It was the Spirit of Christ that spoke through Enoch; that Spirit is manifested, not alone in utterances of love, compassion, and entreaty; it is not smooth things only that are spoken by holy men. God puts into the heart and lips of His messengers truths to utter that are keen and cutting as a two-edged sword.

The power of God that wrought with His servant was felt by those who heard. Some gave heed to the warning and renounced their sins; but the multitudes mocked at the solemn message and went on more boldly in their evil ways. The servants of God are to bear a similar message to the world in the last days, and it will also be received with unbelief and mockery. The antediluvian world rejected the warning words of him who walked with God. So will the last generation make light of the warnings of the Lord's messengers.¹⁰

[Enoch] also saw the corrupt state of the world at the time when Christ should appear the second time—that there would be a boastful, presumptuous, self-willed generation arrayed in rebellion against the law of God, denying the only Lord God and our Lord Jesus Christ, trampling upon His blood, and despising His atonement. He saw the righteous crowned with glory and honor, while the wicked were separated from the presence of the Lord, and consumed with fire.¹¹

In the case of Enoch, the desponding faithful were taught that, while living among a corrupt and sinful people, who were in open and daring rebellion against their Creator, if they would obey Him and have faith in the promised Redeemer, they would work righteousness like the faithful Enoch, be accepted of God, and finally exalted to His heavenly throne.

Enoch, separating himself from the world, and spending much of his time in prayer and in communion with God, represents God's loyal people in the last days who will be separate from the world. Unrighteousness will prevail to a

dreadful extent upon the earth. Men will give themselves up to follow every imagination of their corrupt hearts, and carry out their deceptive philosophy, and rebel against the authority of high Heaven.

God's people will separate themselves from the unrighteous practices of those around them, and will seek for purity of thought, and holy conformity to His will, until His divine image will be reflected in them. Like Enoch, they will be fitting for translation to Heaven. While they endeavor to instruct and warn the world, they will not conform to the spirit and customs of unbelievers, but will condemn them by their holy conversation and godly example. Enoch's translation to Heaven just before the destruction of the world by a flood, represents the translation of all the living righteous from the earth previous to its destruction by fire. The saints will be glorified in the presence of those who have hated them for their loyal obedience to God's righteous commandments.¹²

Enoch was a holy man. He served God with singleness of heart. He realized the corruptions of the human family and separated himself from the descendants of Cain and reproofed them for their great wickedness. There were those upon the earth who acknowledged God, who feared and worshiped Him. Yet righteous Enoch was so distressed with the increasing wickedness of the ungodly, that he would not daily associate with them, fearing that he should be affected by their infidelity and that his thoughts might not ever regard God with that holy reverence which was due His exalted character. His soul was vexed as he daily witnessed their trampling upon the authority of God. He chose to be separate from them, and spent much of his time in solitude, which he devoted to reflection and prayer. He waited before God and prayed to know His will more perfectly, that he might perform it.¹³

Telling others of Christ's return

Everywhere there is a tendency to substitute the work of organizations

for individual effort. Human wisdom tends to consolidation, to centralization, to the building up of great churches and institutions. Multitudes leave to institutions and organizations the work of benevolence; they excuse themselves from contact with the world, and their hearts grow cold. They become self-absorbed and unimpressible. Love for God and man dies out of the soul.

Christ commits to His followers an individual work—a work that cannot be done by proxy. Ministry to the sick and the poor, the giving of the gospel to the lost, is not to be left to committees or organized charities. Individual responsibility, individual effort, personal sacrifice, is the requirement of the gospel.¹⁴

Day by day we are to fight the good fight of faith. Day by day God will give us our work; and though we cannot see the end from the beginning, we are to examine ourselves daily to see if we are in the path of righteousness. We must strive to overcome, looking unto Jesus; for in every temptation He will be at our side to give us the victory. Every day should come to us as the last day in which we may be privileged to work for God, and much of it must be given to prayer that we may work in the strength of Christ. This is the way in which Enoch walked with God, warning and condemning the world by manifesting before them a righteous character.

We profess to believe that Christ is soon coming to the earth, and a solemn responsibility rests upon us; for a lost world is to be warned of the hastening judgment. We must not lay off our responsibility; we must carry the burden of the work. Self must be out of sight, and Christ must appear; as faithful, obedient children, we must follow the light, and reflect its precious rays to others. . . . O, could we realize how all heaven is interested in the salvation of the world, we should rouse up with holy zeal to be followers of Jesus. . . .

The professed followers of Christ are held responsible for the warning of the world. How are we doing this solemn work committed to us? We



must humble ourselves before God and not follow the ideas of men. We must come before the world, speaking the words of God, that the world may know that God has sent us.¹⁵

Learning from Enoch

Enoch faithfully rehearsed to the people all that had been revealed to him by the spirit of prophecy. Some believed his words and turned from their wickedness to fear and worship God. Such often sought Enoch in his places of retreat, and he instructed them and prayed for them that God would give them a knowledge of His will. He finally chose certain periods for retirement and would not suffer the people to find him, for they interrupted his holy meditations and communion with God. He did not exclude himself at all times from the society of those who loved him and listened to his words of wisdom; neither did he separate himself wholly from the corrupt. He met with the righteous and the wicked at stated times, and labored to turn the ungodly from their evil course and instruct them in the fear of God, while he taught those who had the knowledge of God to serve Him more perfectly. He would remain with them

as long as he could benefit them by his godly conversation and holy example, and then would withdraw himself for a season from all society—from the just, the scoffing and idolatrous, to remain in solitude, hungering and thirsting for communion with God, and that divine knowledge which He alone could give him.¹⁶

The Lord loved Enoch because he steadfastly followed Him and abhorred iniquity and earnestly sought heavenly knowledge, that he might do His will perfectly. He yearned to unite himself still more closely to God, whom he feared, revered, and adored. God would not permit Enoch to die as other men, but sent his angels to take him to Heaven without seeing death.¹⁷

Amazing results

The message preached by Enoch and his translation to heaven were a convincing argument to all who lived in his time. These things were an argument that Methuselah and Noah could use with power to show that the righteous could be translated.

That God who walked with Enoch was our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. He was the light of the world

then just as He is now. Those who lived then were not without teachers to instruct them in the path of life; for Noah and Enoch were Christians. The gospel is given in precept in Leviticus. Implicit obedience is required now, as then. How essential it is that we understand the importance of this word!

The question is asked: What is the cause of the dearth in the church? The answer is: We allow our minds to be drawn away from the word. If the word of God were eaten as the food for the soul, if it were treated with respect and deference, there would be no necessity for the many and repeated testimonies that are borne. The simple declarations of Scripture would be received and acted upon.

Its living principles are as the leaves of the tree of life for the healing of the nations. . . .

When Satan presses his suggestions upon our minds, we may, if we cherish a “Thus saith the Lord,” be drawn into the secret pavilion of the Most High.

Many fail of imitating our holy Pattern because they study so little the definite features of that character. So many are full of busy plans, always active; and there is no time or place for the precious Jesus to be a close, dear companion. They do not refer every thought and action to Him, inquiring: “Is this the way of the Lord?” If they did they would walk with God, as did Enoch.¹⁸ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 363, 364.
- ² *The Signs of the Times*, June 21, 1899.
- ³ *Ibid.*, July 4, 1899.
- ⁴ *The Youth's Instructor*, November 2, 1899.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 241, 242.
- ⁶ *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1891.
- ⁷ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 727, 728.
- ⁸ *The Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1897.
- ⁹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1088.
- ¹⁰ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 86.
- ¹¹ *The Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1879.
- ¹² *Ibid.*
- ¹³ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 54.
- ¹⁴ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 147.
- ¹⁵ *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1891.
- ¹⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, February 20, 1879.
- ¹⁷ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 57.
- ¹⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 392, 393.

The Father of the Faithful

Sabbath, December 3, 2016

*A Bible and Spirit of Prophecy
compilation, with comments by
R. C. Dumaquit*

One night a house caught on fire and a young boy was forced to flee to the roof. The father stood on the ground below with outstretched arms, calling to his son, “Jump! I’ll catch you.” He knew the boy had to jump to save his life. All the boy could see, however, were flames, smoke, and blackness. As we can imagine, he was afraid to leave the roof. His father kept yelling: “Jump! I will catch you.” But the boy protested, “Daddy, I can’t see you.” The father replied, “But I can see you! Jump!” The boy jumped, because he trusted his father. So the Christian faith enables us to face life or meet death, not because we can see, but with the certainty that we are seen; not that we know all the answers, but that we are known. This is the meaning of true faith. Faith has

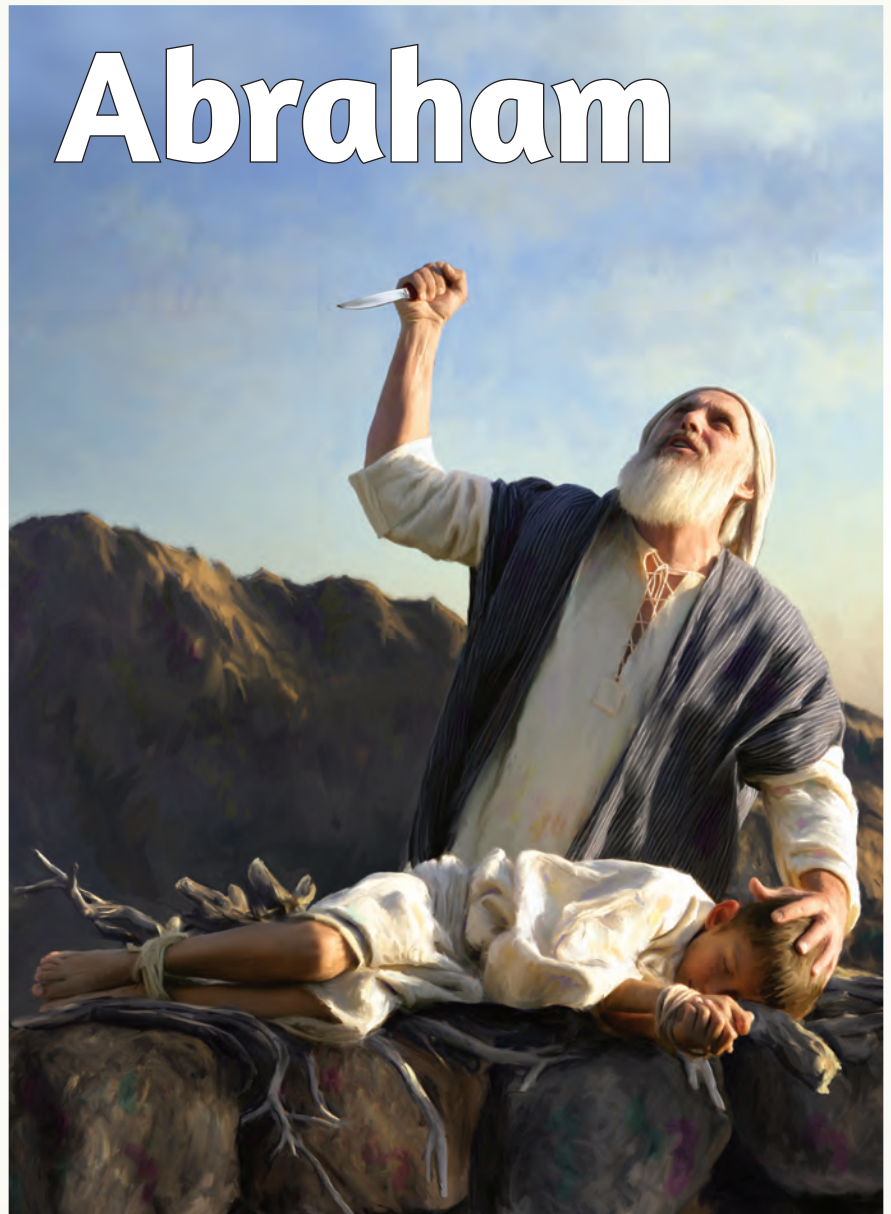
to do with things that are not seen and with hope for the things that are not at hand. Faith must not only be learned theoretically; it should be experienced practically in our lives. The apostle Paul explained, “For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith” (Romans 1:17).

Why is it so important to live by faith? What is the role of faith in overcoming? The apostle John declares that “whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith” (1 John 5:4).

“Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.”¹

“The work of conquering evil is to be done through faith. Those who go into the battlefield will find that they must put on the whole armor of God. The shield of faith will be their defense and will enable them to be more than conqueror.”²

This faith that gives us the victory over the world was demonstrated by our father Abraham. Why was Abraham called the father of the faithful? When we think of the father



of something, we think of one who is an inventor of something or who has contributed some major advancement towards it. Hippocrates is considered the father of medicine, Edison the father of electricity, and Karl Benz the father of the automobile. What about Abraham? How did he become the father of the faithful? We need to know his life's experience in order to understand faith. If we want to have the faith that produces victory over the world, we must have Abraham's faith.

The call of Abraham

We read in Genesis 12:1–3 about the call of Abraham to go out from his father's house. "Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed."

Ur of the Chaldees was a center for heathen worship; the land was fertile, and the place had great advantages for easy wealth. And God told Abraham, in essence: "Get out of here. And as you start moving, I will show you where the land is that I will give you." What was the reaction of Abraham? Abraham began packing his belongings. You can imagine the reaction of his immediate family. His kinsmen might have asked, "Why are you packing?" "I'm leaving!" "Where are you going?" "God will tell me!" "Is the land fertile?" "I don't know!" "Tell me about the land where you are going." "I don't know! All I know is that God wants me to go there, and He will be with me!" What would be the thoughts of his kinsmen of his straightforward replies? Of course, they would think of him as a great fool. But what moved Abraham to take such extraordinary action? The apostle Paul said, "By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went

out, not knowing whither he went" (Hebrews 11:8).

"Abraham's unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible. To him, faith was 'the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen' (Hebrews 11:1). Relying upon the divine promise, without the least outward assurance of its fulfillment, he abandoned home and kindred and native land, and went forth, he knew not whither, to follow where God should lead. 'By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise' (verse 9, RV).

"It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call. He had no question to ask concerning the land of promise—whether the soil was fertile and the climate healthful; whether the country afforded agreeable surroundings and would afford opportunities for amassing wealth. God had spoken, and His servant must obey; the happiest place on earth for him was the place where God would have him to be."³

Why did the Lord command Abraham to come out from his kinsmen to go to a land unknown to him? The Spirit of Prophecy explains, "In order that God might qualify him for his great work as the keeper of the sacred oracles, Abraham must be separated from the associations of his early life. The influence of kindred and friends would interfere with the training which the Lord purposed to give His servant. Now that Abraham was, in a special sense, connected with heaven, he must dwell among strangers. His character must be peculiar, differing from all the world. He could not even explain his course of action so as to be understood by his friends. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned, and his motives

and actions were not comprehended by his idolatrous kindred."⁴

The journey of faith

In obedience to God's call, Abraham moved from Ur to Haran until the death of his father, Terah. Then the divine Voice bade him continue forward and he and his household took with them "their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran" (Genesis 12:5)—souls won through missionary labor.

Everywhere Abraham built an altar unto the Lord—including at his next stop, Bethel. As he continued to journey southward, he encountered a drought, but he did not question the leadings of Providence. He would not allow circumstances to shake his faith in God's word. To escape the ensuing famine, he sought temporary refuge in Egypt but did not forget the goal where God was placing him.

Establishing altars

As he moved, the altars Abraham left were a standing testimony to his faith in the living God.

The life of prayer must be seen also in God's remnant church today. "Like the patriarchs of old, those who profess to love God should erect an altar to the Lord wherever they pitch their tent. If ever there was a time when every house should be a house of prayer, it is now. Fathers and mothers should often lift up their hearts to God in humble supplication for themselves and their children. Let the father, as priest of the household, lay upon the altar of God the morning and evening sacrifice, while the wife and children unite in prayer and praise. In such a household Jesus will love to tarry."⁵

"In every family there should be a fixed time for morning and evening worship. How appropriate it is for parents to gather their children about them before the fast is broken, to thank the heavenly Father for His protection during the night, and to ask Him for His help and guidance and watch care during the day! How fitting, also, when evening comes, for

parents and children to gather once more before Him and thank Him for the blessings of the day that is past!

“Family worship should not be governed by circumstances. You are not to pray occasionally and, when you have a large day’s work to do, neglect it. In thus doing you lead your children to look upon prayer as of no special consequence. Prayer means very much to the children of God, and thank offerings should come up before God morning and evening. . . .

“Fathers and mothers, however pressing your business, do not fail to gather your family around God’s altar. Ask for the guardianship of holy angels in your home. Remember that your dear ones are exposed to temptations.”⁶

A legacy of unselfishness

As soon as possible, Abraham left Egypt and returned to Canaan “very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Genesis 13:2). Lot was still with him, and they realized the pasturage was no longer enough for their animals; separation was essential. Although Abraham was senior in years and the one actually called by God, he gave Lot the first choice of where he wanted to live.

“‘Let there be no strife,’ [Abraham] said, ‘between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left’ (Genesis 13:8, 9).

“Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed. How many under similar circumstances would, at all hazards, cling to their individual rights and preferences! How many households have thus been rent asunder! How many churches have been divided, making the cause of truth a byword and a reproach among the wicked! . . . The cultivation of a uniform courtesy, a willingness to do to others as we would wish them to do to us, would annihilate half the ills of

life. The spirit of self-aggrandizement is the spirit of Satan; but the heart in which the love of Christ is cherished will possess that charity which seeketh not her own.”⁷

This unselfish spirit was manifested also in Abraham’s intercessory appeal in behalf of the inhabitants of Sodom.

Abraham’s biggest mistake

Before he became the father of the faithful, Abraham committed a grievous mistake by running ahead of God. He thought that he and his wife could “help” God to fulfill the promise that his descendants would become a great nation. Since they were old already, they agreed that Abraham should go ahead and take Hagar, Sarah’s servant, to bear his son. That mistake created so much trouble in his household!

God’s promise fulfilled

Finally, even though Sarah was past the age of childbearing and Abraham was well advanced in years, the miracle of a son was born to them, as God had promised. The most important legacy of salvation bequeathed by Abraham to his descendants was the act of faith in his willingness to offer up to God the miracle child, Isaac. “By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son. Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure” (Hebrews 11:17–19).

“The command was expressed in words that must have wrung with anguish that father’s heart: ‘Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, . . . and offer him there for a burnt-offering,’ (Genesis 22:2). Isaac was the light of his home, the solace of his old age, above all else the inheritor of the promised blessing. The loss of such a son by accident or disease would have been heart rending to the fond father; it would

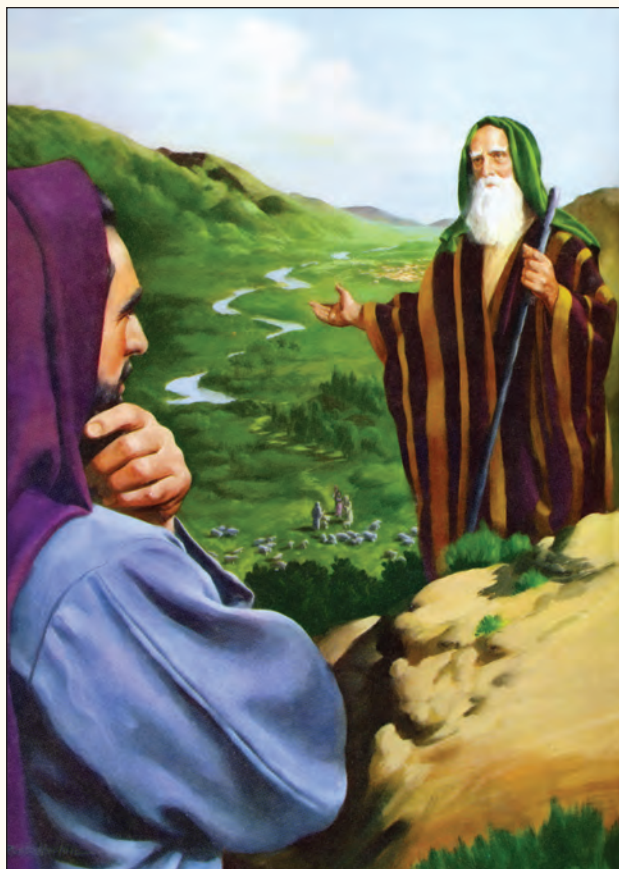
have bowed down his whitened head with grief; but he was commanded to shed the blood of that son with his own hand. It seemed to him a fearful impossibility.”⁸

Yet after much agonizing prayer, Abraham began the three-day journey up the mountain with his beloved son, to carry out the call.

As they neared the summit, Isaac inquired: “‘My father,’ ‘behold the fire and the wood: but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?’ Oh, what a test was this! How the endearing words, ‘my father,’ pierced Abraham’s heart! Not yet—he could not tell him now. ‘My son,’ he said, ‘God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering’ (Genesis 22:7, 8).

“At the appointed place they built the altar and laid the wood upon it. Then, with trembling voice, Abraham unfolded to his son the divine message. It was with terror and amazement that Isaac learned his fate, but he offered no resistance. He could have escaped his doom, had he chosen to do so; the grief-stricken old man, exhausted with the struggle of those three terrible days, could not have opposed the will of the vigorous youth. But Isaac had been trained from childhood to ready, trusting obedience, and as the purpose of God was opened before him, he yielded a willing submission. He was a sharer in Abraham’s faith, and he felt that he was honored in being called to give his life as an offering to God. He tenderly seeks to lighten the father’s grief, and encourages his nerveless hands to bind the cords that confine him to the altar.

“And now the last words of love are spoken, the last tears are shed, the last embrace is given. The father lifts the knife to slay his son, when suddenly his arm is stayed. An angel of God calls to the patriarch out of heaven, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’ He quickly answers, ‘Here am I,’ And again the voice is heard, ‘Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, from Me’ (verses 11, 12).



“Then Abraham saw ‘a ram caught in a thicket,’ and quickly bringing the new victim, he offered it ‘in the stead of his son.’ In his joy and gratitude Abraham gave a new name to the sacred spot—‘Jehovah-jireh,’ ‘the Lord will provide,’ (verses 13, 14).”⁹

Lessons from Abraham’s life

1. Unquestioning obedience

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience is one of the most striking evidences of faith to be found in all the Bible.”¹⁰

“Many are still tested as was Abraham. . . . They may be required to abandon a career that promises wealth and honor, to leave congenial and profitable associations, and separate from kindred, to enter upon what appears to be only a path of self-denial, hardship, and sacrifice. God has a work for them to do.”¹¹

2. A life of prayer

“The life of Abraham, the friend of God, was a life of prayer. . . . Fathers and mothers, each morning and evening gather your children round

you, and in humble supplication lift your hearts to God for help. Your dear ones are exposed to temptation and trial. Daily annoyances beset the path of young and old. Those who would live patient, loving, cheerful lives must pray. Victory can be gained only by resolute and unwavering purpose, constant watchfulness, and continual help from God.”¹²

3. His noble and unselfish spirit

Remember Abraham’s exemplary attitude toward Lot. “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:4).”

4. Love for perishing souls

Although Abraham loathed the sins of Sodom, “he desired that the sinners might be saved. His deep interest for Sodom shows the anxiety that we should feel for the impenitent. We should cherish hatred of sin, but pity and love for the sinner. All around us are souls going down to ruin as hopeless, as terrible, as that which befell Sodom. Every day the probation of some is closing. Every hour some are passing beyond the reach of mercy. And where are the voices of warning and entreaty to bid the sinner flee from this fearful doom? Where are the hands stretched out to draw him back from death? Where are those who with humility and persevering faith are pleading with God for him?”¹³

5. The father that ruled well his house

“The testimony of God concerning this faithful patriarch is, ‘Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ And again, ‘I know him,

that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him,’ (Genesis 26:5; 18:19). . . . There would be on the part of Abraham no betraying of the truth for selfish purposes.”¹⁴

6. A faith that worked

When God commanded this patriarch to offer his only begotten son, he obeyed by faith.

7. A testimony to the entire universe

“The sacrifice required of Abraham was not alone for his own good, nor solely for the benefit of succeeding generations; but it was also for the instruction of the sinless intelligences of heaven and of other worlds. The field of the controversy between Christ and Satan—the field on which the plan of redemption is wrought out—is the lesson book of the universe. . . .

“It had been difficult even for the angels to grasp the mystery of redemption—to comprehend that the Commander of heaven, the Son of God, must die for guilty man. . . . When the father’s hand was stayed as he was about to slay his son, and the ram which God had provided was offered in the place of Isaac—then light was shed upon the mystery of redemption, and even the angels understood more clearly the wonderful provision that God had made for man’s salvation.”¹⁵ *R*

References

- ¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 564.
- ² *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, pp. 182, 183.
- ³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 144.
- ⁶ *Child Guidance*, p. 520.
- ⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 132, 133.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 148.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 152, 153.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 126.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126, 127.
- ¹² *My Life Today*, p. 35.
- ¹³ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 140.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 140, 141.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 154, 155.

The Faithful Young Man

Sunday, December 4, 2016

By Eli Tenorio da Silva

In his father's home

The story of Joseph is one of the most dramatic and adventurous narratives we find in the Bible. His family was, in many ways, a dysfunctional one. He was greatly loved by his mother Rachel, and his father Jacob, but he was envied and hated by his brothers.

The sin of Jacob had been forgiven. The craft, treachery, falsehood, and other baser elements of his character had been consumed in the furnace of life until the faith of his father and grandfather showed forth in Jacob's life. Nevertheless, the consequences of his sin and the evil of polygamy accompanied his household and brought forth bitter fruits. His wives

were full of jealousy; his sons were contentious, impatient, and lacked self-control. These consequences saddened Jacob and brought him grief and anxiety.

Then Joseph was born. He arrived as a balm to comfort the heart of the elderly patriarch, a gift from heaven to comfort and motivate him. He was different from his brothers; his "rare personal beauty seemed but to reflect an inward beauty of mind and heart. . . . The qualities that afterward distinguished him in Egypt—gentleness, fidelity, and truthfulness—were already manifest in his daily life."¹



Joseph was faithful, kind, and considerate in his father's home, and this faithfulness prepared him for a greater task.

Sold as a slave

Joseph's brothers had been absent from home for months. In order to have sufficient pasturage for their flocks, they had commuted to a faraway place. Jacob missed his sons and sent Joseph to find them and bring him news regarding their welfare.

Joseph joyfully obeyed his father and parted from his home.

Through dreams God had revealed to Joseph that he would be a successful and prosperous man. His future was to be brilliant. But God did not show Joseph what was between his present and his future.

After traveling over 65 miles, Joseph finally caught up with his brothers. He was happy and rejoicing for this opportunity to see them and spend time with them. Despite the unkindness of his brothers, Joseph still loved them.

The kindness and love of Joseph for his brothers was rewarded with hatred. He was terrified by their revengeful glances, anger, taunts, and threats that revealed their deadly intentions. At times, the light shining from a righteous life disturbs those who are not converted.

Joseph's brothers wanted to kill him. They seized him and stripped his coat from him, and then rudely threw him into a deep pit. While they sat down to eat the food he had brought for them, Joseph languished in the pit where he had been left to perish from hunger.

But through God's providence he was spared: "Soon a company of travelers was seen approaching. It was a caravan of Ishmaelites from beyond Jordan, on their way to Egypt with spices and other merchandise. Judah now proposed to sell their brother to these heathen traders instead of leaving him to die. . . . To this proposition all agreed, and Joseph was quickly drawn out of the pit.

"As he saw the merchants the dreadful truth flashed upon him. To become a slave was a fate more to be feared than death. In an agony of terror he appealed to one and another of his brothers, but in vain."²

It always hurts to be despised, misunderstood, and mistreated, but it hurts even more when you are despised and mistreated by those you love!

It was a long journey to Egypt. Alone, far from home and from those whom he loved and who loved him, Joseph must have wondered, "Where

was the promise given me by God in my dreams? Has God changed His mind?" During the trip, they passed near Canaan, and from a distance he could see the hills where his father lived. Thoughts of terror and despair took over. Would he ever see his father again? He felt unprepared to face the bitter life of slavery.

"Then his thoughts turned to his father's God. In his childhood he had been taught to love and fear Him. Often in his father's tent he had listened to the story of the vision that Jacob saw as he fled from his home an exile and a fugitive. He had been told of the Lord's promises to Jacob, and how they had been fulfilled—how, in the hour of need, the angels of God had come to instruct, comfort, and protected him. And he had learned of the love of God in providing for men a Redeemer. Now all these precious lessons came vividly before him. Joseph believed that the God of his fathers would be his God. 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."³

In life, the unexpected often occurs, and the unexpected is often unexplainable by reason and is incomprehensible to the human mind. When the unexplainable happens, we can either give ourselves fully to God, or rebel against Him. The choice is ours.

I once worked with an elderly minister who told me the story of an eight-year-old boy who would often work with his father on the railroad. The child loved his father and had learned to obey him joyously and without hesitation. One day, as the boy and his father were working on the railroad tracks, they became absorbed in their work and did not notice a train quickly advancing. Often, those on the tracks are the last to hear the train until it is already upon them, due to the noise dispersing to the sides. So it was with this father and his son. By the time the father turned around and saw the train, it was quickly approaching his son. There would be no time for the father to reach him.

Instead, he shouted, "Lay flat on the ground and be still!" Without turning around or pausing to understand, the boy immediately obeyed and the train passed on the tracks above him, leaving him unscathed. He was saved by trusting and obeying, even without understanding.

In the case of Joseph, he was not yet aware of why such a trial would befall him, but somehow he needed to go through the school of affliction in order to be prepared for greater usefulness, to fulfill the plan of God for his life.

Joseph was human, after all. He had the same tendencies towards sin as you and I have today. He had faults that needed to be corrected. At home he had been surrounded by his father's care, and he was becoming accustomed to being served instead of serving others. He needed to learn not to trust in the arm of flesh, but by faith to be able to see and hold onto the hands of the Invisible. Joseph was learning that the cross comes first, and then comes the crown.

Tested in Egypt

Upon his arrival in Egypt, Joseph was sold as a slave. For ten years he served the captain of Pharaoh's guard, Potiphar.

During the ten years Joseph served Potiphar, all that he would placed under Joseph's care prospered, and thus Potiphar understood that God was with Joseph.

Joseph became a successful man, and the Bible gives the secret of his success: "And the Lord was with Joseph, and he was a prosperous man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian" (Genesis 39:2).

Joseph worked for his success, and God blessed his efforts. Long gone were the spoiled traits of entitlement. He did not expect to prosper as a result of a direct miracle. He knew that success could not be attained without direct effort, and he faithfully worked with all his heart and strength to glorify God and bless others. Once prosperity followed his efforts, he attributed his success to God.

There is a story of a young man who was looking for a job at a farm. During his interview with a farmer, the farmer asked him what his abilities were, to which the young man replied: "I can sleep during a stormy night." The farmer did not understand and asked him again: "What are your abilities?" The answer was the same: "I can sleep during a stormy night."

Lacking any other options, the farmer apprehensively hired the young man. His qualms were quieted once the young man started working, and the farmer noticed that he was an honest and hard worker. He began to grow fond of the lad and was already forgetting about his "nonsensical answer." One night the farmer and his wife woke up in the middle of the night by the winds of an approaching storm.

The farmer ran to the lad's room to wake him up in order to prepare the farm for the storm. He knocked on the door repeatedly, but the young man did not wake up. The farmer left in exasperation, planning to fire the young man in the morning. "Of what use is a farm hand if, when I need him the most, he doesn't wake up to help me?" he thought. When the farmer went to cover the tractor, he found the tractor already covered. When he went to bring the livestock into their stalls, he found the animals already peacefully in place. Everything he thought to do to be ready for the storm, he found it already done. Then he remembered and understood the answer of the young man: "I can sleep during a stormy night."

Joseph was this kind of person; he fulfilled his duties faithfully and was able to rest in peace. Though surrounded by all kinds of temptation, he was not influenced by the ostentation of the world or distracted from his duty to be faithful to God.

This behavior led Potiphar to treat Joseph as a son, rather than as a slave. He was now networking with the most prominent people of the nation. He was surrounded by the idolatry, pomp, wealth, and culture of the most highly civilized nation then

in existence. Yet he was not ashamed of his religion. He made clear in all his accomplishments that he was a servant of God.

Inspiration mentions that Joseph was a handsome young man. His looks eventually attracted the attention of his master's wife, and she invited him to transgress God's law. He knew that consequences would follow, whether he rejected or accepted her invitation. If he accepted, she would protect him and make his position in the household sure. If he rejected, she would make his life miserable. "Heretofore he had remained untainted by the corruption teeming in that heathen land; but this temptation, so sudden, so strong, so seductive—how should it be met?"⁴

It is comforting to know that the angels understand anxiety and sympathize with us in our anxieties, for as this scene in history unfolded, Inspiration claims the angels watched with eager interest: "With inexpressible anxiety, angels looked upon the scene."⁵

"His whole future life depended upon the decision of the moment. Would principle triumph? Would Joseph still be true to God?"⁶

When faced with this, the toughest of temptations, Joseph did not opt for convenience but stood firm with the resolve he had made years ago when he was first taken from home. He would stand for his beliefs and for the God he served. His answer to his master's wife was: "How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" (Genesis 39:9).

While his life's circumstances had shaped him, Joseph also had to make the active choice to remain faithful. Shunning temptation was not easy, not even for our Bible hero. Yet, through the same power offered to us today, Joseph was capable of refusing evil.

God is willing to prepare each of us to stand firm for Him, yet when the time comes, we must make the choice and act upon it ourselves despite temporal consequences.

Joseph rejected the invitation to sin against his Maker, and what

followed was the enmity of the woman that was so attracted by his exterior appearance, but who could neither see nor appreciate his inward beauty.

As a result of his faithfulness, Joseph was put into prison where his jailers treated him with great severity. But the Lord was with Joseph, and his real character shone out, even in the darkness of the dungeon.

From prisoner to governor

Joseph continued being faithful in his humble work as a prisoner, and God continued operating in his life.

Through God's providence, Joseph came into the presence of Pharaoh, who saw in Joseph the only one who could save Egypt from the imminent drought and famine. Joseph became the governor of Egypt and a saviour, not only for Egypt, but also to the neighboring people who otherwise would have perished by the drought that chastised the region.

As governor of Egypt, Joseph was second only to Pharaoh, yet he continued being kind, honest, and faithful in everything to God first and then to Pharaoh.

With all the power given him, Joseph could easily have avenged himself of his brothers, as well as of Potiphar's wicked wife. But he did not, because he still loved those who did not love him. Instead of punishing his brothers, he showed compassion, provided for, welcomed, and defended them.

Lessons from Joseph's life:

The importance of small things:

Joseph was faithful in the small duties and in his attitude towards those surrounding him. He walked knowing he was walking in the presence of God. His faithfulness in small things prepared him for success; he gained the favor of God and of men.

"Life is chiefly made up, not of great sacrifices and wonderful achievements, but of little things. It is oftenest through the little things which seem so unworthy of notice that



great good or evil is brought into our lives. . . . Only by acting upon principle in the tests of daily life can we acquire power to stand firm and faithful in the most dangerous and most difficult positions.”⁷

Patience:

In His divine wisdom, God did not show Joseph the trials he would face, and made him wait many years to see His promises of glorious days fulfilled.

“Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (James 5:8). “Patience as well as courage has its victories. By meekness under trial, no less than by boldness in enterprise, souls may be won to Christ. The Christian who manifests patience and cheerfulness under bereavement and suffering, who meets even death itself with the peace and calmness of an unwavering faith, may accomplish for the gospel more than he could have effected by a long life of faithful labor.”⁸

Self-denial:

In order to be faithful to the God he loved, Joseph denied himself the opportunity of having the favor and passion of Potiphar’s wife, when, as far as he could see, his faithfulness would only cause him persecution and suffering.

“We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God.”⁹

“It is only those who are partakers with Christ in His self-denial and sacrifice that will be partakers with Him in His glory.”¹⁰

Self -denial is to not do the wrong your inclination would lead you to do. It is to resist the temptation to retaliate with words or actions; to restrain yourself from criticizing others; to be patient with those whose conduct is annoying and trying; to do the hard work

that no one else wants to do, not for applause or for obligation’s sake, but because God wants you to do it with unwavering fidelity. Self-denial is to serve others when flesh is striving with you to serve yourself.

Love:

Joseph was a figure of Christ. He loved those that did not deserve to be loved, those that despised and rejected him. It was love that enabled him to forgive and save those that mistreated him.

Joseph experienced the love of Jesus, and thus he became a fountain of life, a sharer of Jesus’ love.

When we understand that we are loved and forgiven by God, then and only then, will we be able to love and forgive.

Conclusion

God can work with our limitations; He can fix our mistakes.

Despite his shortcomings, Joseph was victorious. This faithful young man put himself in the hands of God, and resolved to let God guide his life.

Are you sometimes unsure about all God’s plans for you? It is not necessary, and not even possible to understand all His plans because His thoughts and His ways are higher than ours.

But there is something that is up to you: to resolve to be faithful to Him,

despite the circumstances, and to always trust and believe that He can forgive you and fix even your greatest mistakes.

Everything that Joseph did in terms of rejecting temptation was a combined effort between him and God. He had been trained to rely on God through his circumstances, yet he also personally chose to say no to temptation. It is not something only he could do. God is preparing each of us to stand firm for Him, yet we must do the action. We must make the choice and act upon it. It was not easy for Joseph. It will not be easy for us. When it is nicely packaged in story form, it seems so simple, but it was not.

In Egypt when the young people were “enjoying” sensuality and all kinds of worldly pleasures, he had to choose where he would stand. He chose to be different. His speech was different, his behavior, his food, his dress, and the day on which he worshiped, were all different. And even though people did not always appreciate these differences, he was not ashamed of it; Christ was shining to them through his life.

Are you different as Joseph was different? Is Jesus shining through you? Are you living a faithful, victorious life?

We need power to live even as Christ lived. He promised: “ye shall receive power”. We need Jesus to win the war over sin, to break through the solid walls of selfishness and indifference, to reach and change human hearts.

May Jesus be a reality in my life and in your life as He was in Joseph’s life. He is coming soon to take us home. It’s time to shine! *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 209.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 211.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 213, 214.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 217.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*
- ⁶ *Ibid.*
- ⁷ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 490.
- ⁸ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 465.
- ⁹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 460.
- ¹⁰ *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 216.

The Kind and Humble Leader

Wednesday, December 7, 2016

By L. Tudoroiu

The gift

The story of Moses is one that has traveled all over the world, a tribute to the admiration and respect it has earned among many generations and cultures. “Moses” is the name that makes the entire Jewish society swell with pride and rejoice at the greatness of this renowned deliverer. But beyond what the world knows about Moses, or whatever the Jewish tradition may emphasize about this great man of God, what really stays with people is that beautiful Bible story that the children remember—the story of the little ark with the tiny baby Moses crying.

The God of Israel was tenderly watching over His oppressed people

during 400 long years of slavery. Now the Author of time was ready to fulfill the prophecy and deliver His children through the gift that was to be called “Moses.”

The intrigue

Moses came into the picture when Pharaoh's greed, hatred, and personal malicious ambitions had reached their climax. Moses was God's reply to the “pride-sick” empire of Egypt. The Egyptian pharaoh had hoped that Joseph's death would erase from the memory of his nation the God

of Joseph that had preserved them all. Yet we read that the more the Egyptian taskmasters afflicted the Hebrews, “the more they multiplied and grew” (Exodus 1:12).

Whenever the people representing the church of God have faced the most ferocious persecution under different kings and emperors, instead of decreasing in number, they have multiplied. Thus the love of God is spread in as many hearts as possible—and so it happened that the God of Moses would be the God of future generations of many believers.



Divine Providence

To all appearances, it seemed that Moses was born in the wrong time and in the wrong place. But the God of heaven does not need to explain to anyone His purpose or intentions. Therefore, in such circumstances the faith of Moses' parents—Amram and Jochebed—grew strong and the Lord rewarded their courage. Jochebed's faith was beyond human reasoning, and the angels of God were sent to protect the child for a very important mission. The very decree that intended to destroy the child was overruled by **Providence**.

An Egyptian citizen

As the little ark of bulrushes floated alone on the Nile, the winds and the currents of the great river submitted to the will of God, piloting it to the place where Pharaoh's daughter had come to wash herself. At first she was surprised, but when she opened the ark, seeing the most helpless amongst the helpless, her heart was profoundly and gently touched by the sight of this little infant. Now Moses had a "mother" and a home—and from this time on, Egypt would have a future. The hero of this chapter is Jochebed, the true mother that was to give the baby the best of the best educations as far as a human ever received. Jochebed was the mother that fought against time, and she used every single second, counting the days, sparing the nights, till the painful moment would come when her son had to face the most subtle test with which a man of his time could be confronted.

Being adopted as a grandson of Pharaoh and heir to the throne, Moses received the highest military and civil training—as a general he was a man of war. Ultimately, he became the icon of national pride. The greatest panorama a human eye could ever imagine was displayed before Moses; the attractions of the world and luxurious pleasures were at his feet, ready to enrich his passions and satisfy his "self." Would he fall, or would he stand for his "first love," the God of his childhood?

"Moses was fitted to take pre-eminence among the great of the earth, to shine in the courts of its most glorious kingdom, and to sway the scepter of its power. . . . **As historian, poet, philosopher, general of armies, and legislator, he stands without a peer.** Yet with the world before him, **he had the moral strength to refuse the flattering prospects of wealth, greatness, and fame,** 'choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God' (Hebrews 11:25)."¹

In the name of justice

Exactly when the world of Egypt was ready to see the change that was to secure the future of this empire, Moses committed the unforgivable deed and became a national traitor.

"In slaying the Egyptian, Moses had fallen into the same error so often committed by his fathers, of taking into their own hands the work that God had promised to do. It was not God's will to deliver His people by warfare, as Moses thought, but by His own mighty power, that the glory might be ascribed to Him alone. Yet even this rash act was overruled by God to accomplish His purposes. Moses was not prepared for his great work."²

In the eyes of many, Moses' act was legitimate, based on human reasoning and morality. Human solutions are often more popular than God's solutions, because they involve human merit, catering to the misguided human tendency to try to merit salvation.

"The rashness of Moses in slaying the Egyptian was prompted by a **presumptuous spirit**. Faith moves in the strength and wisdom of God, and not in the ways of men."³

How many have been killed, tortured, persecuted, or ostracized in the name of God or in the name of justice? Whenever we are filled with the same type of emotions that tend to hijack our faith and obedience to God, we are likely to behave in the same manner in otherwise legitimate social,

religious, or legislative circumstances. Moses, the Pharaoh-to-be, the man of the sword, had to be born again, yet he was not ready. Would-be deliverers first need to be delivered from their own hatred within themselves. Spiritual "surgery" was needed in order to cut away the long buildup of hatred against Egyptian bondage; Moses needed a new heart and a new spirit.

The fire

"The influences that had surrounded [Moses] in Egypt—the love of his foster mother, his own high position as the king's grandson, the dissipation on every hand, the refinement, the subtlety, and the mysticism of a false religion, the splendor of idolatrous worship, the solemn grandeur of architecture and sculpture—all had left deep impressions upon his developing mind and had molded, to some extent, his habits and character. Time, change of surroundings, and communion with God could remove these impressions. It would require on the part of Moses himself a struggle as for life to renounce error and accept truth, but God would be his helper **when the conflict should be too severe for human strength**."⁴

If we look at Moses' history, we can easily notice that his life was divided into 40-year segments. At the age of 40, he was ready to rule the world by the power of the sword. He was ready deliver his nation by human strength—but was not ready **to lead** the people of God out of bondage. Providence deemed it necessary to assign another 40 years to remove Egypt from the heart of Moses.

"Such was the experience that Moses gained by his forty years of training in the desert. To impart such an experience, Infinite Wisdom **counted not the period too long or the price too great**."⁵

The charge

Around the age of 80, Moses finally understood that he was to be the shepherd, not the warrior—and

thus he received the commission from God with such a meek and humble spirit that the Bible calls him “very meek, above all the men which were upon the face of the earth.” (Numbers 12:3).

“Moses did not merely think of God, **he saw Him**. God was the constant vision before him. Never did he lose sight of His face.

To Moses faith was no guesswork; it was a reality. He believed that God ruled his life in particular; and in all its details he acknowledged Him. For strength to withstand every temptation, he trusted in Him.”⁶

The leader

The uniqueness of Moses surfaced at the time of great apostasy: the worship of the golden calf. He took a firm stand against the sin of his nation, yet he balanced out the situation when his love for them would eventually inspire him to pray what might be the most unique prayer a mortal has ever uttered.

“Entering the camp, Moses passed through the crowds of revelers, and seizing upon the idol, cast it into the fire. He afterward ground it to powder, and having strewed it upon the stream that descended from the mount, he made the people drink of it. Thus was shown the utter worthlessness of the god which they had been worshiping.”⁷ This is what it means to stand firm against sin. It may look very merciless, but this was the right attitude because of the genuine love he had for them as people and his jealousy for the honor and glory of God.

“Love no less than justice demanded that for this sin [of worshipping the golden calf] judgment should be inflicted. God is the guardian as well as the sovereign of His people. He cuts off those who are determined upon rebellion, that they may not lead others to ruin. . . .

“It was the mercy of God that thousands should suffer, to prevent the necessity of visiting judgments upon millions. In order to save the many, He must punish the few.”⁸

The tribe of Levi had taken no part in the idolatrous worship, and some from other tribes signified their repentance. “But a large company, mostly of the mixed multitude that instigated the making of the calf, stubbornly persisted in their rebellion. In the name of ‘the Lord, God of Israel,’ Moses now commanded those upon his right hand, who had kept themselves clear of idolatry, to gird on their swords and slay all who persisted in rebellion. ‘And there fell of the people that day about three thousand men’ (Exodus 32:28). Without regard to position, kindred, or friendship, the ringleaders in wickedness were cut off; but all who repented and humbled themselves were spared.”⁹

This was the “justice” part of Moses’ character-building in behalf of God. Afterwards, he went to intercede for the ones who had been guilty, yet had repented. “Ye have sinned a great sin,” he said, “and now I will go up unto the Lord; peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin.” He went, and in his confession before God he said, “Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and **if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written**” (Exodus 32:30–32).

What a prayer is this! For many years we have desired to sing “the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb” but few have grasped the concept of what is the meaning of this song, what is the passion, what will be the emotional charge of our heart when we’ll sing this song, and to what a degree this song will reflect the object lesson of our personal earthly journey and experience. Have we prayed like Moses, saying: “Lord, if you do not bring back my son or my daughter, if you do not forgive the sin of my people, my congregation, if you do not accept their repentance, then: **“if not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written”?**

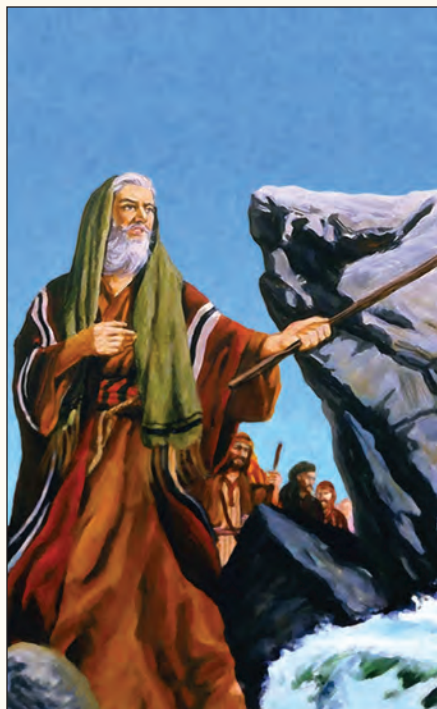
After analyzing personally this historical “clip,” I understood for myself that not every man who calls

himself a leader is a true leader and not everybody can be a leader. We tend to view Moses as the man of the sword and Aaron, his blood brother, as a decent man, “balanced,” intellectual, easygoing, popular with the people, and with a lot of charisma. But where was Aaron when Moses pleaded for his life as well? Where was he in that position to say: **“If not, blot me, I pray Thee, out of Thy book which Thou hast written”?** Now I see! Easygoing, ease-loving Aaron by comparison loved himself while Moses loved his flock. Aaron feared for his life, Moses did not; Aaron did not care for the people of Israel; Moses was ready to die for them—that was the difference. I ask the Lord Jesus forgiveness in behalf of all of us, for all the instances in which we may have been in such a sad, defeating position as that of Aaron.

On the other hand, by daily devotion, Moses allowed God to make him what he was. Am I willing to do the same? The perfect chemistry between justice and mercy found a perfect balance in the life of this great man of God. Besides Jesus Christ and the apostle Paul (Romans 9:13), here is a man that was willing to switch destinies with his people. His name was Moses—and that is why we will sing the song of Moses and the song of the Lamb.

The vision

After so many years of toil with the rebellious, murmuring, stubborn people, Moses was overtaken by the error of his adulthood. In a single moment of weariness, his patience faded out, and the human element failed to give honor to God. The aged Moses smote the rock twice. It was only necessary to speak to the rock, but by striking it he was actually defying the symbol of Christ. In thus taking the honor and power upon himself, Moses dishonored the Creator. On one single point, in one single instance after so many years of obedience, Moses committed an error that forfeited his future in the promised land. (Deuteronomy 3:23–26).



“The great Ruler of nations had declared that Moses was not to lead the congregation of Israel into the goodly land, and the earnest pleading of God’s servant could not secure a reversing of His sentence. He knew that he must die. Yet he had not for a moment faltered in his care for Israel. He had faithfully sought to prepare the congregation to enter upon the promised inheritance.”¹⁰

What a leader, knowing that he would no longer be part of the “Promised Land Project”! Now he had lost this privilege for himself, yet he still preserved the same self-sacrificing spirit for Israel. He did not utter any blame on anyone else; he humbly, without any murmur, accepted his fate and unconditionally obeyed God.

The second great prayer of Moses’ life was uttered for himself: “I pray thee, let me go over, and see the good land that is beyond Jordan, that goodly mountain, and Lebanon” (Deuteronomy 3:25). The best human language possible, the strongest passion, the most intense and agonizing plea were surely invested in every single breath of that prayer. Yet it was the first time Moses would hear the word “NO” from the One that was his dear Friend, Advisor,

Counselor, and ultimately his God. All other prayers had been answered positively—all but this one. How painful it was for him, yet he humbly submitted to the voice that said: “Get thee up . . . unto Mount Nebo, . . . and behold the land of Canaan, which I give unto the children of Israel for a possession: and die in the mount whither thou goest up, and be gathered unto thy people” (Deuteronomy 32:49, 50).

“Moses had often left the camp, in obedience to the divine summons, to commune with God; but he was now to depart on a new and mysterious errand. He must go forth to resign his life into the hands of his Creator. Moses knew that **he was to die alone; no earthly friend would be permitted to minister to him in his last hours.**”¹¹

But our God who is always an awesome God and an amazing God—preserved the ultimate, sweetest lesson for His friend Moses for the last. What made me to be in woe and adoration at the feet of Jesus was this last lesson. . . . When Jesus told Moses that he would not go into the promised land, Moses could not see anything beyond but the grave. He did have the hope of the resurrection; he knew that he was forgiven because his repentance was almost instantaneous. God revealed to him that He forgave him, yet with old, tired human eyes, Moses could only see the end of his life. One of the greatest speeches uttered by a human tongue was the speech of farewell towards his beloved flock. There was no time in the process of the exodus when Israel would have listened with so much respect, compassion, woeful regrets, pity, and tears for their leader as in this one last final speech of Moses. They were crying; if they could do something to keep him among them they would have done it—even worship his dead body, if possible. There was no time when Moses was more valued than now, but God’s verdict was firm. The last embrace was given, the last words spoken. Heavily loaded with concern for his loved ones, weary, and tired, he climbed the mountain alone.

What a compassionate shepherd! All heaven was beholding this scene. Oh, if Moses’ eyes could have been opened, if for a second he would have seen his beloved FRIEND walking beside him. . . . But, no, he had to drink the cup alone and to meditate under the influence of his Master, upon his past, present, and future life.

At the end, the love of God breaks through the cloud of his mind—banishing darkness and bringing light to every single chamber of it. With the full strength of His divine love, the Lord reveals to Moses the time ahead, the great controversy, the drama extending until the close of history—when he sees that the One who opens the gates of the Holy City is Christ! What a powerful moment, what a discovery! “It is enough,” exclaimed his heart. “I will be there with Him.” Moses saw that the honor that Christ bestowed upon him was far beyond his expectation. The earthly promised land faded into insignificance in comparison with the great vision he saw.

Definitely Moses was one of the greatest heroes of the Bible, signifying Jesus Christ the Redeemer of the World in all aspects of his life, identifying himself with the sufferings of his people, compassionately understanding their needs and infirmities. And ultimately, heaven is Jesus Christ our Redeemer—He is the sense, the rationale of everything we do in this life and in the life to come. *R*

References

- ¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 246. [Emphasis added.]
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 247.
- ³ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 344. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 248. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁵ *Education*, p. 64. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 63. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 320.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 324.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 469.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 470. [Emphasis added.]

The Prophet of Restoration

Friday, December 9, 2016

By A. C. Sas

The condition of Israel

In the days of king Ahab, the people of Israel were in a terrible apostasy. The very king was in the leading role of that appalling condition. The Bible informs us that “Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of

Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him” (1 Kings 16:30–33).

Baal was worshipped as the supreme divinity, the god of fertility. The king, priests, and prophets were all worshipping this false god.

We do not have much information about Elijah prior to his appearance before Ahab. The Bible introduces him abruptly as “Elijah the Tishbite.” He came from Tishbe, a town in the land of Gilead. Elijah did not make any special introduction to the king; he simply transmitted to him the message of the Lord. Strange was his

message: “As the Lord God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1).

Sure enough, drought and famine followed—and because of the shortage of food in the land, God directed the prophet to dwell beside the brook Cherith, near the Jordan River, where He promised to feed him. He sent him bread and meat to eat, and provided water from the brook for him to drink.

Soon the drought became so terrible that even the brook Cherith dried up. So, the Lord sent Elijah to



the home of a widow and her son. He was bidden to tell the widow to take her very last bit of flour and oil to make him a little cake, and then to prepare one for herself and her son afterwards. It would appear to be selfishness to ask the widow to prepare food for him first, and then for herself and her son. But in this way she was being tested. By faith she obeyed—and the Lord miraculously stretched the food of her household to last until the drought was over. (See 1 Kings 17:10–16.)

Elijah sent to Ahab

The drought was so terrible that there was not even any grass to be found for the animals to eat. “And there was a sore famine in Samaria” (1 Kings 18:2). The king was very angry and called for Elijah, blaming him for the prevailing calamity as he greeted him with the implied accusation: “Art thou he that troubleth Israel?” (verse 17). God’s messenger was not afraid or scared, but rather rebuked the king, saying: “I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father’s house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the Lord, and thou hast followed Baalim” (verse 18).

Reproving the sins of the people

Now Elijah took the lead by telling the king to gather all the people and the prophets of Baal to meet at Mount Carmel. “The command was issued by one who seemed to stand in the very presence of Jehovah; and Ahab obeyed at once, as if the prophet were monarch, and the king a subject.”¹

As they assembled together 450 prophets of Baal, 400 prophets of the groves (1 Kings 18:19), and the people, Elijah challenged them all with a direct, penetrating message: “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word” (verse 21).

The people were in a terrible confusion and so hardened by disobedience that they could not discern between the true God and Baal. They kept silence.

“Not one in that vast assembly dare reveal loyalty to Jehovah. Like a dark cloud, deception and blindness had overspread Israel. Not all at once had this fatal apostasy closed about them, but gradually, as from time to time they had failed to heed the words of warning and reproof that the Lord sent them. Each departure from rightdoing, each refusal to repent, had deepened their guilt and driven them farther from Heaven. And now, in this crisis, they persisted in refusing to take their stand for God.”²

Surrounded by thousands, Elijah boldly stood alone. Yet heavenly angels were at his side.

Confronting the prophets of Baal

Elijah challenged the people to give both Jehovah and the followers of Baal a chance to allow the true God to answer by fire.

As a result, “outwardly bold and defiant, but with terror in their guilty hearts, the false priests prepare their altar, laying on the wood and the victim; and then they begin their incantations. Their shrill cries echo and reecho through the forests and the surrounding heights, as they call on the name of their god, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us’ (verse 26). The priests gather about their altar, and with leaping and writhing and screaming, with tearing of hair and cutting of flesh, they beseech their god to help them.

“The morning passes, noon comes, and yet there is no evidence that Baal hears the cries of his deluded followers. There is no voice, no reply to their frantic prayers. The sacrifice remains unconsumed.

“As they continue their frenzied devotions, the crafty priests are continually trying to devise some means by which they may kindle a fire upon the altar and lead the people to believe that the fire has come direct from Baal. But Elijah watches every movement; and the priests, hoping against hope for some opportunity to deceive, continue to carry on their senseless ceremonies. . . .

“At last, their voices hoarse with shouting, their garments stained with

blood from self-inflicted wounds, the priests become desperate. With unabated frenzy they now mingle with their pleading terrible cursings of their sun-god, and Elijah continues to watch intently; for he knows that if by any device the priests should succeed in kindling their altar fire, he would instantly be torn in pieces.

“Evening draws on. The prophets of Baal are weary, faint, confused. One suggests one thing, and another something else, until finally they cease their efforts. Their shrieks and curses no longer resound over Carmel. In despair they retire from the contest.”³

Restoring the worship of the true God

“It is the hour of the evening sacrifice, and Elijah bids the people, ‘Come near unto me’ (verse 2). As they tremblingly draw near, he turns to the broken-down altar where once men worshiped the God of heaven, and repairs it. To him this heap of ruins is more precious than all the magnificent altars of heathendom.

“In the reconstruction of this ancient altar, Elijah revealed his respect for the covenant that the Lord made with Israel when they crossed the Jordan into the Promised Land. Choosing ‘twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, . . . he built an altar in the name of the Lord’ (verses 31, 32).”⁴

Before Elijah could expect any success in his work, before he could ask God to answer his prayer, he had to perform a work of restoration. And so he did. He repaired the altar of God that had been broken down. Not until this reformation was completed could the rain be expected.

“The altar completed, the prophet makes a trench about it, and, having put the wood in order and prepared the bullock, he lays the victim on the altar and commands the people to flood the sacrifice and the altar with water. ‘Fill four barrels,’ he directed, ‘and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the



second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water' (verses 33–35)."⁵

Elijah did not need to cry for hours in order to receive an answer to his prayer. The Bible tells us that as soon as he prayed, fire came down from heaven and consumed the sacrifice. His prayer was short and to the point: "Hear me, O Lord, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the Lord God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. Then the fire of the Lord fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench" (verses 37, 38).

As the people witnessed the powerful manifestation of God's answer to Elijah's prayer, their reaction was positive. "And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The Lord, he is the God; the Lord, he is the God" (verse 39).

After this wonderful manifestation of God's power, "Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there" (verse 40).

A great work of reformation had been accomplished. Now they could expect the blessings of the rain to come. Elijah went up to the mountain to pray, and his faith was tested severely as he asked for the coming of the rain. Six times he prayed, and

there was no sign or indication of rain. On the seventh time, the servant of Elijah came to him with the news: "Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand" (verse 44).

All the people were happy to see that the rain had come, except Jezebel the queen. A wicked woman hardened in sin, she responded with a bitter threat to destroy God's prophet just as he had destroyed the false prophets.

Elijah in the desert

Again the faith of Elijah was tested. He fled to the desert, thinking that only he was left as a worshipper of the true God. Now he just wanted to die, so he asked the Lord to take his life. Weary and exhausted, he lay down under a juniper tree to sleep. An angel came to him, woke him up and bade him to eat the baked cake and drink from the cruse of water he had brought. After eating and drinking he went to sleep again. The angel bade him the second time to eat and drink, for his journey to Mount Horeb would be very long. He journeyed forty days to come to the Mount of God, and near the mountain he entered a cave in the wilderness, to be safe from wild beasts. God sent an angel and inquired of him: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" Elijah explained his grievance: "I have been very jealous for the Lord God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left;

and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:9, 10).

The Lord commanded Elijah to come out of the cave. A very strong wind was blowing, and after that there was an earthquake, and then a fire. But the Lord was in none of these. A still, small voice was heard again, "What doest thou here, Elijah?" The prophet repeated the same grievance. When he thought that everything was over and he alone had remained faithful—and now even his life was threatened—the Lord revealed to him that not everything was over. There were another 7,000 faithful Israelites who did not worship Baal.

Now the Lord commanded Elijah to return not to Carmel, but further north to Damascus—and to anoint a king over Syria, anoint another king over Israel, and anoint a prophet to take his place. The work of God must not stop. It was to continue and expand.

Comparisons between Elijah and John the Baptist

Elijah

- Elijah was a great prophet.
- Elijah taught in the wilderness.
- Elijah rebuked the king.
- King Ahab had a wrong marriage.
- Jezebel killed the prophets of God.
- Elijah was discouraged and disappointed.
- Elijah was a restorer, a reformer.
- Elijah made progress in his diet.
- Elijah was threatened by death.

John the Baptist

- John the Baptist was a great prophet.
- John the Baptist taught in the desert.
- John the Baptist rebuked the king.
- King Herod was involved in a wrong marriage.
- Herodias caused John the Baptist to be killed.
- John the Baptist had doubts.
- John the Baptist was a reformer.
- John the Baptist was a vegetarian.
- John the Baptist was put to death.

Comparisons between John the Baptist and God's remnant people

John the Baptist

- John the Baptist was a restorer, or reformer.
- John the Baptist was a vegetarian.
- John the Baptist prepared the way for the first coming of Jesus.
- John the Baptist adopted simplicity of dress.
- John the Baptist called sin by its name.
- John the Baptist died for telling the truth.

God's remnant people

- God's people are restorers and reformers.
- God's people are vegetarians.
- God's people will prepare the way for Christ's second coming.
- God's people adopt simplicity of dress.
- God's people call sin by its name.
- Many of God's people are martyrs for Christ, defending the truth.

Lessons from Elijah's life

There are many lessons that we could learn from the life of Elijah:

Elijah's diet was progressive. At first, bread and meat; then bread, oil, and water; and then bread and water. By the time he was fitted for translation, he was partaking of the simplest diet. As by faith we prepare for translation, progress will likewise be seen in our health habits as well.

The prophet fearlessly rebuked king Ahab because of his apostasy, his turning away from the true God, for giving himself over to idolatry, and because he had entered into an unlawful marriage relationship—and with all this he was misleading the people.

Elijah understood that before the rain could come, a work of restoration must be completed. Likewise, before the latter rain will be poured out, the work of restoration, or reformation, must be completed and the people of God must be found without fault, ready for the finishing of God's work on earth and ready for translation.

When, like Elijah, God's servants are assailed with despondency and discouragement, thinking that there is no use to press forward—and when they plan to abandon their labor and service for God, the "small still voice" comes to their ears, asking: "What doest thou here?" The voice whispers something like this: "I sent you to work in my vineyard, but who sent you here to hide from your calling"?

The servants of God represented by Elijah might be taken away (they may cease from their labors), but the work must not stop. It will continue with others until the whole earth will be enlightened with the present truth—the righteousness of Christ, His character reflected from His faithful people. With me or without me the message of salvation will reach the uttermost parts of the world. But it is a great honor and privilege to be coworkers with God! There is only one thing that will remain, and that is what we have done for Jesus. All the rest, the Philistines with all their wealth to whom our talents are lent, will perish. The souls that are saved by our efforts are stars placed in our crowns as a reward for earnestly working for the Lord.

John the Baptist was the Elijah that was to come and "restore all things" (Matthew 11:12–14; 17:11). He rebuked Herod who was involved in a wrong marriage relationship (Matthew 14:3, 4), just as Elijah rebuked king Ahab who also had a wrong marriage relationship. John

the Baptist was a vegetarian,⁶ having a simple diet like Elijah had before his translation.

The people of God who are waiting for the second coming of Jesus are represented by both Elijah and John the Baptist. The Lord has declared: "Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

God's remnant people will promote the work of reformation, or restoration: "And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in" (Isaiah 58:12).

"Those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Christ are represented by faithful Elijah, as John came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ's first advent. The great subject of reform is to be agitated, and the public mind is to be stirred. Temperance in all things is to be connected with the message, to turn the people of God from their idolatry, their gluttony, and their extravagance in dress and other things."⁷ "Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of the Saviour shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own. It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ."⁸

Are you ready? *R*

References

¹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 143.

² *Ibid.*, p. 147.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 149, 150.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 151.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 151, 152.

⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 62.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69.

The Moral and Intellectual Giant

Sabbath, December 10, 2016

By R. Ionita

“Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect” (Matthew 5:48).

“Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.”¹ As we consider the Lord’s ideal for us, we feel intimidated, even hopeless, “for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Can we someday reach this ideal? Can we live a life of continual growth, and not merely a series of ups and downs? (Romans 7:14–19).

Yes, through Him who lived a perfect life for 33½ years, we can be more than victorious! His life was

given to us. We will not be saved because of our obedience, but we will obey because we are saved—resurrected with Him in newness of life, renewed by His Spirit, new creatures in Christ Jesus and clothed with His righteousness! (Romans 6:4, 6, 8; 2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Lord not only sets the ideal—He abundantly pours out His grace upon us and displays His methods and His power, plus He gives us inspiring human examples in His word.

“The word of God not only sets forth the great principles of truth and duty which should govern our

lives, but it presents also, for our encouragement, the history of many who have exemplified these principles. Men ‘subject to like passions as we are’ (James 5:17) have fought with temptation and conquered in the strength of an Almighty Helper. Under difficulties greater than we are called to meet, men have been true to duty and to God.”²

Second only to Jesus in character

Among these examples there is one that shines for the glory of our Lord in a very special way:



“Except the one perfect Pattern, there is not described in the sacred pages a single character more worthy of emulation than that of the prophet

Daniel. Exposed in youth to all the allurements of a royal court, he became a man of unbending integrity and fervent devotion to God. He was subjected to the fierce temptations of Satan, yet his character was not vacillating, nor his course changeable. He was firm where many would be yielding; he was true where they would be false; he was strong where they would be weak. Daniel was a lofty cedar of Lebanon.”³

“A lofty cedar” of “unbending integrity” under the roaring Babylon—what could be more encouraging for us today, as we soon must face the storm of tomorrow’s Babylon! Such a beautiful life, such an inspiring experience! From the plentiful life with his parents belonging to the noble class in Jerusalem to being enchained as an exile to Babylon; from the desolation of slavery, to the brilliance of the royal university among the palaces and temples of the world’s emperor; from the position of ruling the whole empire to the lions’ den, this man was shining for his God—and no device of the enemy could make him waver! Humble, noble, with a brilliant intellect, spotlessly serving his oppressors and his beloved Saviour, ruling an empire and still never missing his devotional time, Daniel’s life became an encouragement for many generations.

“Would that the faith, integrity, and devotion of the prophet Daniel might live in the hearts of God’s people of today. Never were these noble qualities more needed in the world than now.”⁴

How could this man “subject to like passions as we are,” succeed under such heavy circumstances? If we understand his motivation, we can be inspired to follow the same principles, use the same spiritual tools in our own experience, and expect similar results. So, let us prayerfully examine some aspects of Daniel’s experience:

The foundation

For the Burj Khalifa, the highest artificial structure in the world today—standing at 829.8 meters (2,716.5 feet)—the foundation of 45,000 cubic meters, weighing 110,000 tons, represents about 1/7 of the total amount of concrete used for the whole building. It’s true that visitors generally admire only the “visible” part of the tower, not the 50-meter buried foundation. But who can doubt the crucial importance of such a foundation?

Likewise, what about the foundation of the character possessed by Daniel, “a moral giant,”⁵ the best one presented in the Bible, after Jesus? How could he gain the confidence of about ten emperors as the best prime minister—being a foreigner, even a slave?

“Daniel’s parents had trained him in his childhood to habits of strict temperance. They had taught him that **he must conform to nature’s laws** in all his habits; that his eating and drinking had a direct influence upon his physical, mental, and moral nature, and that he was accountable to God for his capabilities; for he held them all as a gift from God, and must not, by any course of action, dwarf or cripple them. **As the result of this teaching, the law of God was exalted** in his mind, and revered in his heart.”⁶

At the Babylonian siege of Jerusalem, Daniel’s earthly riches and social status were abruptly snatched away by instant slavery. But his royal, spiritual riches would never be taken away—an understanding of self-control and a deep sense of responsibility, of accountability to God for all his talents. This noble youth and his three friends understood early in life that there is only One possible foundation (1 Corinthians 3:11), broad, large, eternal—and they resolutely decided to build their life on it!

“This [parental] education was to Daniel and his companions the means of their preservation amid the demoralizing influences of the

court of Babylon. Strong were the temptations surrounding them in that corrupt and luxurious court, but they remained uncontaminated. No power, no influence, could sway them from the principles they had learned in early life by a study of the word and works of God.”⁷ The faithful work done by God-fearing parents had immeasurable results, touching not only time, but eternity. The people of Israel were passing through difficult times. Disobedience and idolatry had brought disaster upon the whole nation. But these families had managed to set things in their proper place in their home life, to set their priorities correctly. This brings us hope in our day.

The pillars

The solid roots planted in their childhood brought their blessed results. Daniel and his friends could have reasoned that because of their difficult circumstances, it would not be advisable to go against the king’s will and thereby offend him and endanger their lives, presuming that a slight departure from obedience to God’s ordinances would have had no effect.

“But Daniel did not hesitate. **The approval of God was dearer to him** than the favor of the most powerful earthly potentate—**dearer than life itself. He determined to stand firm** in his integrity, let the result be what it might.”⁸

On the other hand, today, why are so many of God’s children wavering as little puppets at the whim of the enemy? “To renounce their own will, their chosen objects of affection or pursuit, requires a sacrifice at which they hesitate and falter and turn back. . . . They desire the good, they make some effort to obtain it; but they do not choose it; they have not a settled purpose to secure it at the cost of all things.”⁹

In Daniel’s experience, determination was the key (Daniel 1:8). God’s honor, the glory of His name was dearer to him “than life itself”! Humanity cannot, by the use

of the will, exercise self-control and silence the storms of passion in the heart. None can do it. But we can choose to submit our will unto the will of our Holy Father, and then our will becomes omnipotent!¹⁰ By God's grace we "can do all things"! (Philippians 4:13.) This power, this strength is seen in the lives of all the heroes of faith—and the life of Daniel is shining at the top of the list.

Continual growth implies continual effort

Daniel started well, with the right purpose and an unwavering determination. Would he continue in the same line? "Let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon" (1 Corinthians 3:10). Have not many others who have started well found later in the battles of life that failure is part of the human plight? Here is the determining factor:

"Character does not come by chance. It is not determined by one outburst of temper, one step in the wrong direction. It is the repetition of the act that causes it to become habit, and molds the character either for good or for evil. Right characters can be formed only by **persevering, untiring effort**, by improving every entrusted talent and capability to the glory of God. . . . If the youth today would stand as Daniel stood, they must **put to the stretch every spiritual nerve and muscle**. The Lord does not desire that they shall remain novices. He wishes them to reach the highest point of excellence. He desires them to reach the very highest round of the ladder, that they may step from it into the kingdom of God."¹¹

This desire of God was abundantly fulfilled in Daniel's life. Untiring effort, the daily improvement of any endowment brought him "from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:18). "Although **Daniel was a man of like passions with ourselves**, the pen of inspiration presents him as a **faultless character**. His life is given us as a bright example of what man may become, even in this life,

if he will make God his strength and wisely improve the privileges and opportunities within his reach."¹²

Principles

Which is the recipe for a faultless character? What makes this kind of people be so different from the majority? Here is the answer: "The Bible teaches men to **act from principle**; and whenever we successfully resist evil influence, we are strengthening that principle which has been assailed. The mere possession of talent is no guarantee of usefulness or happiness in life. **Right principles are the only basis of true success**."¹³

The very same thing is boldly revealed in the life of Daniel: "Although [Daniel] was surrounded with distrust and suspicion, and his enemies laid a snare for his life, yet he maintained a serene and cheerful trust in God, **never once deviating from principle**."¹⁴

"From the history of Daniel we may learn that a strict compliance with the requirements of God will prove a blessing, not only in the future, immortal life but also in the present life. **Through religious principles, men may triumph** over the temptations of Satan and the devices of wicked men, even though it costs them a great sacrifice. What if Daniel had made a compromise with those heathen rulers and had denied his God? What if, on first entering the court, he had yielded to the pressure of temptation, by eating and drinking as was customary among the Babylonians? That one wrong step would probably have led to others, until, his connection with heaven being severed, he would have been borne away by the power of temptation. But while he clung to God with unwavering, prayerful trust, he could not be forsaken. The **divine protection is pledged to those who thus seek it**, and God cannot forget His word."¹⁵

This means that Christ—the Eternal Rock of Ages—was not only the Foundation; He was the Pillar, the

Cornerstone, the Roof, the Beginning and the End. He was the Assurance for a spotless, successful life. By the faithful application of His Word to the daily life, clinging to Him as Daniel did, a believer can be victorious at any stage of his or her life!

This is the wonderful promise for you and for me, even today: "**Balanced by religious principle, you may climb to any height** you please. We would be glad to see you rising to the noble elevation God designs that you shall reach."¹⁶

Communion with the Almighty

How can it be that the children of such an Infinite God are less than conquerors in the battles of life? Or even worse, to be ashamed, defeated, lost? Sadly, this is because God honors His children and respects their liberty in not asking for His help! How sad it is for Him to have to tell them, "Ye will not come to me, that ye might have life" (John 5:40).

"Daniel was sorely tried; but **he overcame because he was of a humble and prayerful spirit**."¹⁷

"Daniel was **a man of prayer**, and God gave him wisdom and firmness to resist every influence that conspired to draw him into the snare of intemperance. Even in his youth he was **a moral giant** in the strength of the Mighty One."¹⁸ How does a "moral giant" feel inside? "When I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10), widely opening the windows of the heart to the Source of all strength, wisdom, and comfort. He or she has doubt in self and fully trusts the Mighty One. With a humble spirit he or she asks for and receives the light of heaven. The apostle Paul said he would "keep under" his body, "and bring it into subjection" (1 Corinthians 9:27). The power of God is given freely to such a one. A moral giant is a person of prayer, for this is "the breath of the soul. It is the secret of spiritual power."¹⁹ Prayer was a daily reality in Daniel's life. Amazingly, even his enemies realized this about him when they plotted to have him thrown in the lions' den. (Daniel chapter 6.)



“Daniel knew the value of communion with God,”²⁰ and he did not conceal it to protect his life from the jealous men. Nothing could cut it off! (Romans 8:35–39.)

“Through the **moral courage** of this one man [Daniel] who chose, even in the face of death, to take **a right course rather than a politic one**, Satan was defeated, and God honored. For the deliverance of Daniel from the power of the lions was a striking evidence that the Being whom he worshiped was the true and living God.”²¹

The big little things

For God there is nothing of small importance; so with his beloved child: “The secret of Daniel’s strength was found in **his conscientious attention to what the world would call things of minor importance.**”²² Neither in his devotion three times a day, nor in the small things or the great affairs of the empire was he deficient to regard any thing as unimportant! His enemies, after careful examination of his entire ministry, couldn’t find any blame, any spot at all!

A humble channel of light

Daniel became a depositor of God’s Spirit—“**an excellent spirit was in him**” (Daniel 6:3). By communion, by beholding, a human being is changed.²³ Amazed, the kings observed the heavenly presence in Daniel’s life, “in whom is the spirit of the holy gods!” (Daniel 4:8). “Daniel **valued his human capabilities**, but he **did not trust in them**. His

trust was in that strength which God has promised to all who will come to Him in humble dependence, relying wholly upon His power.”²⁴

Daniel did not selfishly enjoy the privileges of his administrative position, boasting of his merits²⁵ while God’s people were in danger. He identified his interest with theirs, his condition with theirs, interceding for himself and for them (Daniel 9). Indeed, this “greatly beloved” (Daniel 10:11) son of man closely reflected the Perfect Model. He constantly shaped his spiritual understanding “with fasting, and sackcloth, and ashes” (Daniel 9:3), he was “grieved in [his] spirit” and “troubled” in his mind (Daniel 7:15), seeking “for the meaning” (Daniel 8:15) of the things unveiled. And precious were the treasures of light revealed to him for the dark ages that were to come.

Lessons for you and me

Now is our time!

“Claim the promises of God. The Lord will do all for you that He did for Daniel, if you will cooperate with Him as Daniel did. You may be conquerors through humble, earnest trust in your Redeemer.”²⁶

“**Stand like Daniel**, that faithful statesman, a man whom no temptation could corrupt. Do not disappoint Him who so loved you that He gave His own life to cancel your sins. He says, ‘Without Me ye can do nothing’ (John 15:5). Remember this. If you have made mistakes, you certainly gain a victory if you see these mistakes and regard them as

beacons of warning. Thus you **turn defeat into victory**, disappointing the enemy and honoring your Redeemer.”²⁷

“‘Dare to be a Daniel, dare to stand alone!’ Have courage to do the right.”²⁸

“Daniel was counted peculiar, and every man who makes God his counselor, and who seeks Him in simplicity of heart, will be counted peculiar by the world. But **this is the faith we need**, this is the experience that we must have.”²⁹

“And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever” (Daniel 12:3). Will you be one of them? The price is paid, the victory gained! The decision, the solemn decision to shine is yours! Shine with living brightness, shine for the Lord! Amen! *R*

References

- ¹ *Education*, p. 18.
- ² *The Review and Herald*, November 7, 1882.
- ³ *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ *Ibid.*
- ⁵ *My Life Today*, p. 20.
- ⁶ *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 23. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 482.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 483. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁹ *God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 225.
- ¹⁰ *Our High Calling*, p. 298.
- ¹¹ *The Youth’s Instructor*, July 27, 1899. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹² *The Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1886. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹³ *The Review and Herald*, September 25, 1883. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁴ *The Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1886. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁶ *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 83. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁷ *The Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1886. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁸ *My Life Today*, p. 20. [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁹ *Messages to Young People*, p. 249.
- ²⁰ *The Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1886.
- ²¹ *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- ²² *The Signs of the Times*, May 25, 1891. [Emphasis added.]
- ²³ *Lift Him Up*, p. 266.
- ²⁴ *Christian Temperance and Bible Hygiene*, p. 22. [Emphasis added.]
- ²⁵ *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 353.
- ²⁶ *Gospel Workers* (1892), p. 239.
- ²⁷ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 332. [Emphasis added.]
- ²⁸ *Temperance*, p. 189.
- ²⁹ *The Signs of the Times*, November 4, 1889. [Emphasis added.]

Living a Victorious Life

Sunday, December 11, 2016

By D. P. Silva

The human race was created to reflect God's character and to glorify the Creator. Our life should be in full harmony with God's will. Adam and Eve possessed all the conditions to fulfill the Lord's purpose in their existence. And while they maintained their submission and obedience to the divine word, they lived a very happy life in Eden.

In Genesis chapter 3, we find the beginning of the whole drama of humanity. Eve separated from her husband and entered into a dangerous dialogue with the enemy of souls. Satan used all his craftiness to flatter Eve, promising her the possibility of being "like God"—the same idea that the archenemy had developed in heaven. This is a well-known history.

Eve followed the suggestion of the devil and was deceived into bypassing God's specific instructions. She ate the forbidden fruit and gave it to Adam. "Adam was not deceived by the serpent, as was Eve, and it was inexcusable in Adam to rashly transgress God's positive command. Adam was presumptuous because his wife had sinned. He could not see what would become of Eve. He was sad, troubled, and tempted. He listened to Eve's recital of the words of the serpent, and his constancy and integrity began to waver. Doubts arose in his mind in regard to whether God did mean just as He said. He

rashly ate the tempting fruit."¹ Both were then expelled from the Garden of Eden to live a very different life.

When the couple accepted the words of Satan, they became friends of the devil and enemies of their Creator. Now their nature had become corrupted, and they no longer had power to do God's will. They asked the Lord to allow them to remain in their paradise of bliss and promised that they would be obedient to His word, but the Lord informed them that—as sinful beings separated from Him—they could no longer be privileged to be in Eden, where they would have access to the tree of life.



However, in His great mercy, God gave them hope to be restored through His grace. In Genesis 3:15, the Lord said to Satan, who had used the serpent as a medium to deceive the couple: “I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shall bruise his heel.”

In this divine declaration, God made it clear that humanity had become subject to Satan, and the human race needed the Lord’s intervention to change this sad reality. God would “put enmity” between Satan and those who would submit themselves to the Lord. Moreover, He also promised to send a Redeemer, “the seed of the woman”—Jesus Christ, who would come free from sin, free from sinful human tendencies to overcome Satan, restore the lost dominion, and bring back repentant sinners to live again in harmony with God.

In due time, Christ took human nature, lived a perfect life in full harmony with God, and died on the cross of Calvary to pay the penalty that was due to every human being. He then resurrected and ascended to heaven and is now interceding in our behalf. Through His perfect and righteous character which is imputed to repentant sinners, Christ gave to humanity all the grace needed in order to live a victorious life in harmony with God. The human race was placed on a level where, in communion with the Lord, it is now possible to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil.

In this process, we have at our reach the grace of Christ, which is revealed in His Word. In addition we have the power of the Holy Spirit, which is imparted to us with the timely help of the heavenly angels and the cooperation of the believers within God’s church.

The main condition necessary in order for us to become overcomers is found by a connection with the Lord through faith in the merits of Christ.

“Sinful man can find hope and righteousness only in God, and no

human being is righteous any longer than he has faith in God and maintains a vital connection with Him.”²

A personal experience with Christ

Christ invites all sinners to be His faithful followers. In Matthew 11:28–30, we find His invitation and the conditions upon which we can be overcomers: Jesus says: “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.”

Summarizing, we have an invitation, a promise, and the conditions needed in order to be overcomers:

“Come unto Me, all.”

“I will give you rest.”

“Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart.”

“You will find rest for your souls.”

All humanity is invited to accept Christ. No one is excluded from His invitation, “For God so loved **the world**, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16, emphasis added).

In Matthew 16:24, Christ repeats the invitation and gives the conditions:

“If any man **will** come after **me**, let him **deny himself**, and **take up his cross**, and **follow me**” (emphasis added).

In this short Bible verse, we find four basic steps in the way of salvation:

“If any man will.” We need to decide to follow Christ by our own choice. No one is forced to do that. Christ only accepts a willing heart. However, as slaves of sin, humans have no power or willingness to follow Christ. Then, by His wonderful grace, God gives willingness and power for us to go to Him and follow Him, if we

are willing to be made willing. “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:13).

“Let him deny himself.” We cannot follow Christ and at the same time follow the dictates of a selfish heart. Again, by God’s grace, through the influence of the Holy Spirit, we receive power to deny our own perverse will and accept His will.

“Take up his cross.” Christ is not talking about “His” cross. Only He could take up His cross. We need to accept what He has done for us through His cross, and take our cross, to crucify our own sinful desires and inclinations. The apostle Paul explained: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.” “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 6:14; 2:20). “I protest by your rejoicing which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.” “I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection” (1 Corinthians 15:31; 9:27).

“Follow Me.” Through studying God’s word, we know Christ—and by His saving grace, we can follow His example of continuous communion with God, total submission, and obedience to His will, as well as victory over Satan and sin.

Overcoming the world

In His intercessory prayer, Christ asked from His Father in behalf of His followers: “I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil” (John 17:15).

In God’s wisdom and purpose, we need to live in this world until the second coming of Christ. But we must not be contaminated by the sins, customs, and practices of the world. Through Paul, God calls us to be separated from those who are under the control of the prince of this world.

“Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion hath light with darkness? And what concord hath Christ with Belial? or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel? And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? For ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty” (2 Corinthians 6:14–18).

We see this victory over the world in the life of John the Baptist, for example. His life “was so unselfish, marked with humility and self-denial. His teachings, exhortations, and reproofs, were fervent, sincere, and courageous. In his mission, he turned not to the right or to the left to court the favors or applause of any. He did not aspire to worldly honor or worldly dignity, but was humble in heart and life, and did not assume honors that did not belong to him.”³

John, the apostle of love, declares: “For whatsoever is born of God overcometh the world: and this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus Christ is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:4, 5).

Overcoming the flesh

In Galatians chapter 5, there are two opposing conditions, explaining that “the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would” (verse 17).

Then Paul describes the work of the flesh: “Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft,

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

The New International Version expresses the warning against these practices in more contemporary terms as “sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like.”

But then Paul goes on to describe the blessed opposite: The fruit of the Spirit is “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law” (verses 22, 23).

After describing the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit, the apostle also gives the key of victory in Christian life: “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit” (verses 24, 25).

“Those who enter into a contest of physical strength for a corruptible prize realize the necessity of rigid abstinence from every indulgence that would weaken the physical powers. . . .

“How much more should those who enter for the gospel race, restrain themselves from the unlawful indulgence of appetite and ‘abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul’ (1 Peter 2:11). They must be temperate at all times. The same restraint that gives them the power to obtain the victory at one time will, if practiced constantly, give them a great advantage in the race for the crown of life.”⁴

Our victory, then, depends on surrendering our life to Christ and being guided by the Holy Spirit through God’s Word. “But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 15:57).

Overcoming the devil

Satan is the great adversary of Christ. He started the war against our Saviour in heaven and continues it on earth.

“There was war in heaven: Michael and his angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, and prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him” (Revelation 12:7–9).

“Our chief adversary is the devil. He is represented as going about as a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour. When he finds men and women who have become self-exalted, as he himself became in heaven, and full of jealousy, and ambitious for power and prominence, he knows just how to lead them by his temptations so that they will prostitute their powers to his use, and become his agents in ruining their fellow men. He is ready to work through his human agents in such a way as to conceal himself from view, in order that he may set in operation a train of circumstances that will lead men away from God, lead them away from the association and companionship of those who are connected with Christ, and influence them to do the work of annoying, distressing, and discouraging those who love Jesus. The spell of temptation holds these souls like a bewitching charm. ‘Every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed’ (James 1:14). Yielding to the voice of the tempter, the tempted one surrenders virtue and principle, and in place of turning at once to God with contrition and repentance, he severs the last link whereby God’s power can work for him, and hell triumphs because he has become the prey of the enemy. When the adversary thus bewitches the soul and entraps the unwary feet, he then represents God as inexorable and unforgiving, declaring that it will be of no use to make a confession of sin now, for God will not pardon.



Let not the tempted soul listen to the voice of the accuser and destroyer, and take the way of the hopeless apostate, and plunge into midnight darkness. Remember the promise of God. He says, 'Return unto the Lord thy God; for thou hast fallen by thine iniquity. Take with you words, and turn to the Lord; say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously' (Hosea 14:1, 2). The Lord answers, 'I will heal their backsliding, I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him' (verse 4). Break with the enemy, and seek the presence of Jesus; with tears of confession and with penitential grief urge once more your suit at the throne of grace. The Lord will hear, the Lord will answer; return ere it be too late."⁵

John the Revelator confirms how this victory is possible. He describes: "I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. **And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.** Therefore rejoice, ye heavens, and ye that dwell in them. Woe to the inhabitants of the earth and

of the sea! For the devil is come down unto you, having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time" (Revelation 12:10–12, emphasis added).

We see above how John describes the battle and the victory of God's people: "**They overcame him by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.**"

"These [political and religious powers] shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them: for he is the Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful" (Revelation 17:14).

Do you see? Victory has already been won by Christ in our behalf, and those who are with Him also become overcomers through their union with their Redeemer. They are called, and chosen, and faithful.

Can we be overcomers? Of course! As long as we keep our faith in Christ and maintain a vital connection with Him.

The song of victory written by Paul in Romans 8 is very appropriate to finish this message:

"What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be

against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 31–39). *R*

References

- ¹ *Confrontation*, p. 86.
- ² *Testimonies for Ministers*, p. 367.
- ³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1119.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1089.
- ⁵ *The Review and Herald*, December 11, 1894.

P.O. Box 7240
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240

MOVING? Please let us know.

Victorious Lives

*They're mocked and they're scorned,
For their standards are stricter.
Some view them as losers,
But each one's a victor.*

*They've come throughout hist'ry—
Just turn back the clock:
A notable one was
The man named Enoch.*

*Then Abraham followed.
He offered his son,
But God intervened and
The vict'ry was won.*

*And then there was Joseph—
Mistreated by brothers.
Forgiving and noble
Was his life for others.*

*On death they're acclaimed and
Their graves strewn with roses—
But life was with hardship:
Another was Moses.*

*One prophet whose courage
Has much we admire:
God answered Elijah
With heavenly fire.*

*Another was Daniel,
A prophet whose fate
Was slavery, threatenings—
Then head of state.*

*They're only just human—
Some frail, striving sinners.
But with Jesus' guidance
How soon they were winners!*

*We've named just a few here;
These only are some.
For we, too, are bidden
To win—overcome!*

*The time is now closer
For God's tiny few.
Let's learn from these victors—
Will one then be you?*

*The pathway is steep, and
The passage, its pain.
But let us recall how
God's own Lamb was slain.*

*Beholding, our hearts melt
For gain and not loss—
In laying all down at
The foot of the cross.*

—B. Montrose

