REFORMATION Leville

Shall Be One

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

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More Woes on the Pharisees

n His denunciation against the Jewish leaders, Christ said: "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:4). How does God consider those who place burdens on someone's shoulder, while they themselves will not move them? Hypocrites.

This was and still is the main sin of the Pharisees in the time of Christ and as well as those modern Pharisees. False Christians are very severe with others while they are compassionate with themselves. They even create human rules to control other people even though they themselves do not obey those same rules. By the way, does the Christian need human rules in addition to the duties prescribed in the Word of God?

Why are we inclined to create religious rules, when we have so many inspired commandments in the Holy Scriptures?

"The effort to earn salvation by one's own works inevitably leads men to pile up human exactions as a barrier against sin. For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey. All this turns the mind away from God to self. His love dies out of the heart, and with it perishes love for his fellow men. A system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions, will lead its advocates to judge all who come short of the prescribed human standard. The atmosphere of selfish and narrow criticism stifles the noble and generous emotions and causes men to become self-centered judges and petty spies."1

This Spirit of Prophecy quotation is very deep and broad. It shows the root of all attempts to control oneself and others by human rules: salvation by works. And who is the author of the doctrine of salvation by works? Satan.

"The principle that man can save himself by his own works lay at the foundation of every heathen religion; it had now become the principle of the Jewish religion. **Satan had implanted this principle.** Wherever it is held, men have no barrier against sin."²

What is the result of this false religious principle: Selfishness, Selfcentered attention, and despising and controlling the conscience of others. People who follow this principle become "self-centered judges, and petty spies."

Instead of submitting to the leadership of Christ, the Jewish leaders tried to control the Lord and judged Jesus according to their own system.

A warning to God's church today

"The remnant church is called to go through an experience similar to that of the Jews; and the True Witness, who walks up and down in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks, has a solemn message to bear to His people (Revelation 2:2–5 quoted).

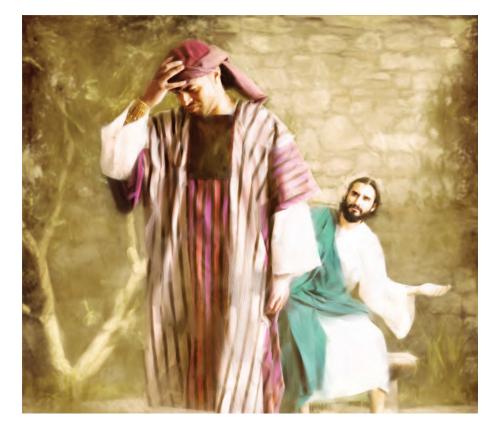
"A legal religion has been thought quite the correct religion for this time. But it is a mistake. The rebuke of Christ to the Pharisees is applicable to those who have lost from the heart their first love. A cold, legal religion can never lead souls to Christ; for it is a loveless, Christless religion. When fastings and prayers are practiced in a self-justifying spirit, they are

abominable to God. The solemn assembly for worship, the round of religious ceremonies, the external humiliation, the imposed sacrifice-all proclaim to the world the testimony that the doer of these things considers himself righteous. These things call attention to the observer of rigorous duties, saying, This man is entitled to heaven. But it is all a deception. Works will not buy for us an entrance into heaven. The one great Offering that has been made is ample for all who will believe. The love of Christ will animate the believer with new life. He who drinks from the water of the fountain of life, will be filled with the new wine of the kingdom. Faith in Christ will be the means whereby the right spirit and motive will actuate the believer, and all goodness and heavenly-mindedness will proceed from him who looks unto Jesus, the author and finisher of his faith. Look up to God, look not to men. God is your heavenly Father who is willing patiently to bear with your infirmities, and to forgive and heal them. 'This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent' (John 17:3). By beholding Christ, you will become changed, until you will hate your former pride, your former vanity and self-esteem, your self-righteousness and unbelief. You will cast these sins aside as a worthless burden, and walk humbly, meekly, trustfully, before God. You will practice love, patience, gentleness, goodness, mercy, and every grace that dwells in the child of God, and will at last find a place among the sanctified and holy."3 R

References

- ¹ Thoughts on the Mount of Blessings, p. 123.
- ² The Desire of Ages, pp. 35, 36. [Emphasis added.]
- ³ Selected Messages, vol. 1, p. 388.

Rich, Royal... and Needing Reform By Barbara Montrose [Emphasis supplied throughout.]



s the old saying goes, he had everything going for him—a winning personality. Who was he? What was he like?

"This young man's tastes and desires were not offensive, but favorable to the growth of spirituality. As he saw Jesus blessing the little children, he was convinced that this must be a good man. He was sure that he could live in perfect harmony with Him. **Hastening** to the Saviour, he knelt before Him."

Was he a worldly-minded apostate or hardened heathen? Not at all.... We read that "he had been flattered for his amiable traits of character. He was willing to do good things."²

Perhaps you know someone like this. A "good" person. Perhaps you are such a one. Perhaps I am. Yet into what fatal deception had this individual fallen?

"He flattered himself that by his integrity in dealing with his fellowmen he was fulfilling the law. The perfection of character he thought he possessed, ranked him in the same state spiritually as was Paul when, touching the letter of the law, he thought himself blameless."³

Human standards of measuring what constitutes a good person are pitifully deceiving. We may even try to sandwich a few Bible verses into the equation, but the computation will still be inaccurate.

The individual's story is found in Matthew chapter 19. Let us read the whole passage about this earnest, successful, young man who hurriedly ran toward Jesus.

"Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? And [Jesus] said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.... The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? Jesus said unto him, **If thou** wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me" (Matthew 19:16, 17, 20, 21, emphasis supplied).

In your conscience, has a still, small voice been reminding you lately of Christ's appeal to the rich young ruler?

Perhaps this is a Bible story that always used to apply to someone else—not necessarily in a direct way to you or to me. After all, most of us are not really all that rich. And we're not usually rulers. And we already follow Christ, of course. We've done it for years, even from our youth.

But please remember—the 144,000 follow the Lamb "whithersoever he goeth" (Revelation 14:4), not just part way. Sanctification is a progressive work. What if He is now taking you into uncharted waters? Are you still going to follow? Or are you going to say "thus far and no further. I've had enough"?

As more and more prophecies are fulfilling, now may be an appropriate time to think about some things in a different way than we ever have needed to before. The reality is that the closer we get to the end of time, the more closely the call to the rich young ruler will apply to an increasing number of believers.

The servant of the Lord writes:

"The Lord has shown me repeatedly that it is contrary to the Bible to make any provision for our temporal wants in the time of trouble. I saw that if the saints had food laid up by them or in the field in the time of trouble, when sword, famine, and pestilence are in the land, it would be taken from them by violent hands and strangers would reap their fields. Then will be the time for us to trust wholly in God, and He will sustain us. I saw that our bread and water will be sure at that time, and that we shall not lack or suffer hunger; for God is able to spread a table for us in the wilderness. If necessary He would send ravens to feed us, as He did to feed Elijah, or rain manna from heaven, as He did for the Israelites.

"Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have

their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down.

"I saw that if any held on to their property and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able. I heard some mourn like this: 'The cause was languishing, God's people were starving for the truth, and we

If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things.

made no effort to supply the lack; now our property is useless. Oh, that we had let it go, and laid up treasure in heaven!' I saw that a sacrifice did not increase, but it decreased and was consumed. I also saw that God had not required all of His people to dispose of their property at the same time; but if they desired to be taught, He would teach them, in a time of need, when to sell and how much to sell. Some have been required to dispose of their property in times past to sustain the Advent cause, while others have been

permitted to keep theirs until a time of need. Then, as the cause needs it, their duty is to sell."4

A three-step process: SELL, GIVE, COME

To those who currently sense this particular call from heaven, the Lord has given three steps:

1. Sell.

2. Give to the poor. (DON'T BE STUBBORN AND INSISTENT UPON GETTING ABSOLUTE "TOP DOLLAR"-THE MAXIMUM PRICE-FOR YOUR SALE!! REMEMBER, YOU'RE GOING TO BE GIVING OF THE PROCEEDS ANYWAY!!!) Do not insist so strongly upon basing your selling price on the neighbor's. Base it on however God impresses you, even if it is less. Base it on the fact that you're going to be giving more away, not aiming to become more increased with goods. How much time is lost to the cause of God by selfishly waiting to achieve the absolutely greatest maximum returns on investments. Then—surprise the market drops substantially and we actually end up losing more by overambition.

3. THEN come and follow Christ.

Why was it difficult for the rich young ruler? Why did he feel sorrowful at Christ's amazing command? It was because he had great possessions; he had become rich. The riches had become cumbersome. Probably they were even causing him stress. Yet he still did not want to part with them simply because they were so plentiful. They had become a habit. They had become part of him. They had become an intrinsic aspect of his identity and sense of pride. They were symbolic of his accomplishment. They were tangible proof that he had been successful. If he were to sell them, surely he would expect that at least it would be in exchange for something that would be another good investment. He was stacking up for the future—that may have been his method of becoming rich in the first

place. After all, why not continue in the same successful pattern? Many Christians would feel that their practice of smart investing has been indicative of good stewardship. It would certainly appear to be so from reading the parable of the talents.

But there is more than one way to be a good steward. Good stewardship is not limited merely to something delivered back in the same typical package. Good stewardship involves first of all our heart, our attitude. The first step to sound stewardship is a humble realization that what we think we own is not ours anyway. Then we handle these matters with godly fear because it all belongs to the Master, who has other children whom He loves besides just ourselves and our families. And when the Master says, "SELL THAT THOU HAST, AND GIVE TO THE POOR," good stewardship means to do exactly that. Sometimes "the poor" may partly include the one to whom you are selling the item! Then you cannot get top dollar without defrauding your Master and going against His will!

"Some of the **Sabbathkeepers** who say to the world that they are looking for Jesus' coming, and that they believe we are having the last message of mercy, give way to their natural feelings, and barter, and trade, and are a proverb among unbelievers for their keenness in trade, for being sharp, and always getting the best end of a bargain. Such **would better lose a little and exert a better influence in the world, and a happier influence among brethren and show that this world is not their god.**" 5

The rich ruler was young. Surely he needed the proceeds of all these things to prepare for the future. He was not an old man freely giving away his stuff just before dying, when he would not need it anyway. Since he was young, his possessions might still come in handy for years to come. Maybe a famine could arise in the future, and he would need something with which to bargain in order to avoid starvation. Plus, he was also a ruler. He had power and influence. Without his riches, it

also could be likely that he'd lose some prestige among his peers. In view of all these factors, how would you respond in such a situation? How would I?

The Bible tells us how the young man responded:

"When the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions" (Matthew 19:22).

He went away sorrowful! How strange! It was odd for a person to leave the presence of Jesus sorrowfully. Most went away beaming with tremendous delight over newfound health or great spiritual fulfillment. Even children left with joy overflowing in their hearts. To pay a visit to Christ was a wonderfully rewarding experience. Yet this man went away sorrowful. How tragic!

Typical worldly concerns, we might say. We tend to judge that man rather harshly. Surely we would never be afflicted with such ambition—or would we? What about the disciples—were they immune to such concerns? Let's see what thoughts this incident triggered even in the mind of devoted Peter:

"Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eve of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matthew 19:23-27).

Peter is thinking, "by the way, we're following You, Lord, but what's in this for us?" Perhaps he was afraid or reluctant to ask this question before. After all, it seems a rather self-centered, unattractive thing to ask openly. But it's evidently something that Peter had been wondering about. . . . Now is his big chance to

ask a question that has secretly been troubling him. What will be Christ's answer?

"Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life." (Matthew 19:28, 29).

Sitting upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.... Likely to be during the millennium, for sure. But when it says Israel—not the Gentile world—it shows something special. A unique calling. These people are those who have really sacrificed a lot. They have forsaken houses and lands—symbolic of solid wealth. They did not sell something only to reinvest in something bigger. They GAVE. They FORSOOK their possessions and their dearest earthly ties in order to follow the bleeding Lamb of God, the Man of sorrows acquainted with grief.

The steps in the right order

Why did the rich young man have to sell before giving to the poor? Why couldn't he just give what he had directly to the poor? Perhaps what he had was not what they really needed. Likewise, perhaps many of the things we have are not what the worthy poor really need. Such items might be sold and the proceeds given instead.

"When Jesus presented to the rich young ruler the condition of discipleship, Judas was displeased. He thought that a mistake had been made. If such men as this ruler could be connected with the believers, they would help sustain Christ's cause. If Judas were only received as a counselor, he thought, he could suggest many plans for the advantage of the little church. His principles and methods would differ somewhat from Christ's, but in these things he thought himself wiser than Christ."

Remember: When Jesus spells out a certain step-by-step pattern to follow, do not presume to try to improve on the idea as Judas thought to do.

"How many have come to Christ, ready to cast their interests in with His, and, like the rich young ruler, earnestly desiring to inherit eternal life! But when the cost is presented to them—when they are told that they must forsake all, houses and lands, wife and children, and count not their lives dear unto themselves—they go away sorrowful."

To those who are feeling cumbered about by the things of this world: Remember again the step-by-step process outlined by Jesus: **1. Sell**. (Get rid of stuff.) **2. Give**. (Be willing to sacrifice of those proceeds for the good of others.) **3. Come** and follow Jesus. (You'll then be free to discern His leading without being dragged down and confused by all the things that have been getting in your way.)

To attempt to carry out this process by mixing up the order of steps will not work. If Abraham had gone a different direction first instead of where God led, he would have gotten lost. Being lost at this point in earth's history can have very dangerous consequences. Due to the nearness of the close of probation and Christ's return, we may not now have the luxury of time to retrace our steps too many times. Therefore do not try to improvise on God's plan. Stick to the narrow way. Follow the GPS-God's Plan of Salvation, God's Positioning System, God's Preparation to Sacrifice.

"A great work needs to be done in our churches. The members are not prepared for the coming of the Lord. God's law needs to be written in mind and heart. Many, like the rich young ruler, when tested and tried, will refuse to deny self, to take up the cross and follow Christ. . . .

"Better, far better, to have shattered hopes and the world's denunciation with the approval of God, than to sit with princes and forfeit heaven. 'Ye cannot serve God and mammon,' Christ declares." 8

Positive role models

Abraham went out, not knowing where he was to go. God did not make the whole pathway clear. He simply told him what to do step by step. (See Genesis 12:1.)

Gideon wisely chose to destroy his father's idols BEFORE he dared to go out to battle. There is a lesson in this for us when we want to advance for God. (Judges 6:15, 25–31.)

The widow of Zarephath gave her only food to the man of God FIRST and was spared from starvation. (1 Kings 17:12–16).

Today, we like to have every roadmap and destination clear. In the current Information Age, we insist on having everything spelled out. But perhaps there is a reason why God did not provide modern computerized technology to Abraham on his spiritual journey. He wanted the patriarch simply to trust Him step by step.

The Lord bids us, "Seek not ye what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, neither be ye of doubtful mind. For all these things do the nations of the world seek after: and your Father knoweth that ye have need of these things. But rather seek ye the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Luke 12:29–31).

"Laying aside His royal robe and kingly crown, [Christ our great example] stepped down from His high command in the heavenly courts, and, clothing His divinity with humanity, came to this world to help human beings to rid themselves of selfish practices, and to give themselves to the service of God in helping others.

"The healing of diseased souls and diseased bodies—this was Christ's work in our world, and it is our work also. His words to the rich young ruler, 'Sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven,' are spoken to all who possess this world's goods. If they will follow Christ's example, using their entrusted possessions to relieve the physical and spiritual necessities of those less fortunate than themselves,

they will secure the enduring riches of eternal life....

"Self-surrender is the keynote of the teachings of Christ. Often it is presented and enjoined in language that seems authoritative, because God sees that there is no other way to save man than to cut away from his life that which, if entertained, would demoralize the whole being.

"The work of evangelizing the world has been greatly hindered by personal selfishness....

Money is needed in order that the work waiting to be done all over our world may be carried forward. If Christ's words were obeyed, there would be thousands where there are hundreds willing to carry out His directions to the ruler."

"The young ruler represents many in our world today. God has entrusted His goods to them, that they may advance His kingdom by planting the standard of truth in places where the message has never been heard. But they do not carry out God's purpose. The words, 'Deny thyself, take up thy cross, and follow me,' cut directly across their cherished plans, and they refuse to obey.' "10

Let us then tear out of our heart every fiber of selfishness. Why go away from the presence of Christ sorrowful? The future is coming quickly. He has shown a better way. Listen to His still, small voice, and see if Christ's famous appeal to the young man somehow applies with greater force now than ever before.

References

- ¹¹ The Review and Herald, September 11, 1900.
- ²² Ibid.
- 33 Ibid.
- ⁴⁴ Early Writings, pp. 56, 57.
- 55 Testimonies, vol. 1, p. 150.
- 66 The Desire of Ages, p. 719.
- ⁷⁷ The Review and Herald, April 19, 1898.
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- ⁹⁹ Ibid., January 12, 1905.
- 10 10 Ibid., September 11, 1900.

Conversion From the Inside Out

Based on a sermon given By Jeff Wiktorowski

Introduction

What is involved in conversion to Christ? The steps are:

- 1. Recognition of God's love for humanity
- 2. The acknowledgement of the sinner's need of Christ
- 3. Repentance
- 4. Confession
- 5. Consecration
- 6. Faith and acceptance

How important is conversion? Jesus answers, "Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3).

"In order to be saved, we must know by experience the meaning of true conversion. It is a fearful mistake for men and women to go on day by day professing to be Christians yet having no right to the name. In God's sight profession is nothing, position is nothing. He asks, Is the life in harmony with My precepts? There are many who suppose that they are converted but who are not able to bear the test of character presented in the Word of God." 1

Where do we look?

Outside. "Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them" (Matthew 7:20). As a result, we often think that if we see the correct outward signs, one has passed the test.

Yet is it also possible to be right on the outside and wrong on the inside? Let's look at the experience of the apostle Paul:

"Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4–6).

Jesus' description of the so-called righteous Pharisees was: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matthew 23:27, 28).

"It is true that there may be an outward correctness of deportment without the renewing power of Christ. The love of influence and the desire for the esteem of others may produce a well-ordered life. Self-respect may lead us to avoid the appearance of evil. A selfish heart may perform generous actions. By what means, then, shall we determine whose side we are on?" 2

What about within the church?

The apostle appeals to us with a warning: "Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Romans 16:17, 18).

He told the believers, "After my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2 Timothy 3:1–5).

Is this the test? Will all be well in the church?

"We have far more to fear from within than from without. The hindrances to strength and success are far greater from the church itself than from the world." 3

"A bare assent to the truth is not Bible religion. Men do not become Christians merely by having their names written in the churchbooks. This belief is proving fatal to thousands upon thousands. It does not displease Satan to have any number of names upon the church books while the heart is not brought into unity with Christ: he can work through those who have the form of godliness without the spirit and power." 4

"A religion of externals is attractive to the unrenewed heart." 5

The inside is what counts

Jesus declared: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25, 26).

"Character is tested and registered by Heaven more by the inward spirit, the hidden motive, than by that which appears to men. Men may have a pleasing exterior, and be outwardly excellent, while they are but whited sepulchers, full of corruption and uncleanness. Their works are registered as unsanctified, unholy. Their prayers and works, devoid of the righteousness of Christ, do not ascend before God as sweet fragrance, but they are abomination in the eyes of the Lord. To those who will open their eyes, the law presents a perfect likeness of the soul, a complete photograph of the inner man; and as this picture is unveiled before the sinner, he is constrained to acknowledge that he is sold under sin, but that the law is holy, and just, and good."6

Modification—or transformation?

Inspiration describes a process of complete transformation:

"Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, <u>all</u> things are become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

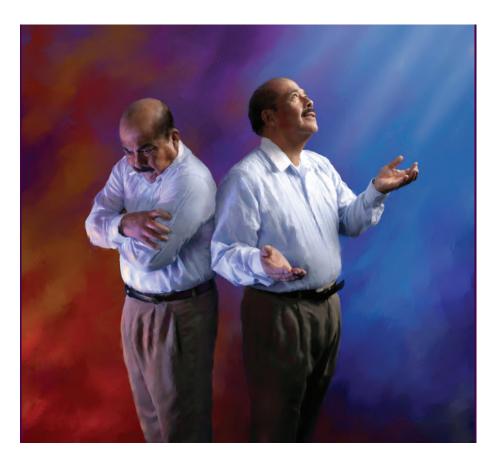
"As the sinner, drawn by the power of Christ, approaches the uplifted cross, and prostrates himself before it, there is a new creation. A new heart is given him. He becomes a new creature in Christ Jesus." 7

"[God's] hungering, thirsting people . . . will find that Christ is a personal Saviour. As they feed upon His word, they find that it is spirit and life. The word destroys the natural, earthly nature, and imparts a new life in Christ Jesus. The Holy Spirit comes to the soul as a Comforter. By the transforming agency of His grace, the image of God is reproduced in the disciple; he becomes a new creature. Love takes the place of hatred, and the heart receives the divine similitude. This is what it means to live 'by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.' This is eating the Bread that comes down from heaven."8

"The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit." ⁹

Something that cannot be completely explained

"The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound



thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit" (John 3:8).

"It is impossible for finite minds to comprehend the work of redemption. Its mystery exceeds human knowledge; yet he who passes from death to life realizes that it is a divine reality. The beginning of redemption we may know here through a personal experience. Its results reach through the eternal ages." 10

"Through the power of Christ, men and women have broken the chains of sinful habit. They have renounced selfishness. The profane have become reverent, the drunken sober, the profligate pure. Souls that have borne the likeness of Satan have become transformed into the image of God. This change is in itself the miracle of miracles. A change

wrought by the Word, it is one

of the deepest mysteries of the

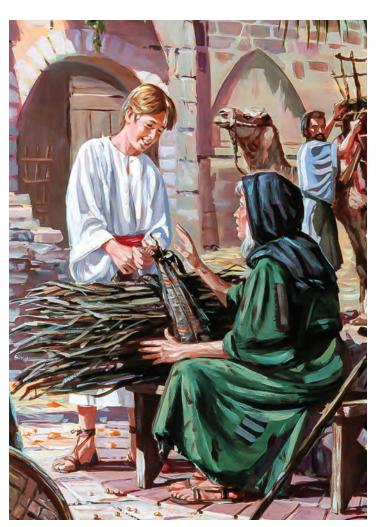
we can only believe, as declared by

hope of glory." 11

Word. We cannot understand it;

the Scriptures, it is 'Christ in you, the

"A person may not be able to tell the exact time or place, or trace all the chain of circumstances in the process of conversion; but this does not prove him to be unconverted. . . . [John 3:8 quoted.] Like the wind, which is invisible, yet the effects of which are plainly seen and felt, is the Spirit of God in its work upon the human heart. That regenerating power, which no human eye can see, begets a new life in the soul; it creates a new being in the image of God. While the work of the Spirit is silent and imperceptible, its effects are manifest."12



they now love, and the things they once loved they hate. The proud and self-assertive become meek and lowly in heart. The vain and supercilious become serious and unobtrusive. The drunken become sober, and the profligate pure. The vain customs and fashions of the world are laid aside. Christians will seek not the 'outward adorning,' but 'the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit' (1 Peter 3:3, 4)."13

"No compromise with sin can ever be accepted by a pure and holy God. No conversion is genuine that does not radically change the heart, the character, every line of conduct." ¹⁴

Manifestations of transformation

The fruit of the Spirit

"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22, 23).

This is not only inwardly, but will be revealed outside as well.

"Those who become new creatures in Christ Jesus will bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, 'love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance' (Galatians 5:22, 23). They will no longer fashion themselves according to the former lusts, but by the faith of the Son of God they will follow in His steps, reflect His character, and purify themselves even as He is pure. **The things they once hated**

Obedience becomes a delight

The declaration of a converted heart is: "I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart" (Psalm 40:8).

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1 John 5:2, 3).

"All true obedience comes from the heart. It was heart work with Christ. And if we consent, He will so identify Himself with our thoughts and aims, so blend our hearts and minds into conformity to His will, that when obeying Him we shall be but carrying out our own impulses. The will, refined and sanctified, will find its highest delight in doing His service. When we know God as it is our privilege to know Him, our life will be a life of continual obedience. Through an appreciation of the character of Christ, through communion with God, sin will become hateful to us."15

Cheerful, willing obedience

"Those who have genuine love for God will manifest an earnest desire to know His will and to do it. Says the apostle John, whose epistles treat so fully upon love, 'This is the love of God, that we keep his commandments' (1 John 5:3). The child who loves his parents will show that love by willing obedience; but the selfish, ungrateful child seeks to do as little as possible for his parents, while he at the same time desires to enjoy all the privileges granted to the obedient and faithful. The same difference is seen among those who profess to be children of God. Many who know that they are the objects of His love and care, and who desire to receive His blessing, take no delight in doing His will. They regard God's claims upon them as an unpleasant restraint, His commandments as a grievous yoke. But he who is truly seeking for holiness of heart and life delights in the law of God, and mourns only that he falls so far short of meeting its requirements."16

"But notice here that obedience is not a mere outward compliance, but the service of love. The law of God is an expression of His very nature; it is an embodiment of the great principle of love, and hence is the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life? When the principle of love is implanted in the heart, when man is renewed after the image of Him that created him, the new-covenant promise is fulfilled, 'I will put My laws into their hearts. and in their minds will I write them' (Hebrews 10:16). And if the law is written in the heart, will it not shape the life? Obedience-the service and allegiance of love—is the true sign of discipleship. Thus the Scripture says, 'This is the love of God, that we

"If our hearts are renewed in the likeness of God, if the divine love is implanted in the soul, will not the law of God be carried out in the life?"

keep His commandments.' 'He that saith, I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him' (1 John 5:3; 2:4). Instead of releasing man from obedience, it is faith, and faith only, that makes us partakers of the grace of Christ, which enables us to render obedience." ¹⁷

Awakened to a sense of duty

"For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: and that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again" (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

"The words 'A new heart will I give you' mean, 'A new mind will I give you.' This change of heart is always attended by a clear conception of Christian duty, an understanding of truth. The clearness of our views of truth will be proportionate to our understanding of the Word of God. He who gives the Scriptures close, prayerful attention will gain clear comprehension and sound judgment, as if in turning to God he had reached a higher grade of intelligence." 18

"There is no evidence of genuine repentance unless it works reformation. If he restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, confess his sins, and love God and his fellow men, the sinner may be sure that he has passed from death unto life.

"When, as erring, sinful beings, we come to Christ and become partakers of His pardoning grace, love springs up in the heart. Every burden is light, for the yoke that Christ imposes is easy. Duty becomes a delight, and sacrifice a pleasure. The path that before seemed shrouded in darkness, becomes bright with beams from the Sun of Righteousness." ¹⁹

"Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary. He who drinks of the living water becomes a fountain of life. The receiver becomes a giver. The grace of Christ in the soul is like a spring in the desert, welling up to refresh all, and making those who are ready to perish eager to drink of the water of life." ²⁰

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive" (John 7:37–39).

May the Lord help us enjoy this experience—from the inside out! \mathscr{R}

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How Can I Meet Temptation Successfully?

A study from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy with commentary by Daniel Arwa

esus taught us to pray this way: "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen" (Matthew 6:13).

Dictionaries explain temptation as solicitation to do that which is evil. What is it temptation more specifically, according to the Spirit of Prophecy,? "It is the means by which those who claim to be the children of God are tested and tried." ¹

Let us consider the following issues:

1. The actual source of temptation:

"Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth He any man. But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust and enticed" (James 1:13, 14).

"God permits temptation to come to His people today, that they may realize that He is their helper. If they draw nigh to Him when they are tempted, He strengthens them to meet the temptation. But if they yield to the enemy, neglecting to place themselves close to their Almighty Helper, they are overcome. They separate themselves from God. They do not give evidence that they walk in God's way."²

2. Who is known as the tempter?

Jesus was "forty days tempted of the devil" Luke 4:2. "Ministers, as well as people, have a warfare before them to resist Satan. The professed minister of Christ is in a fearful position when serving the purposes of the tempter, by listening to his whisperings, and letting him captivate the mind and guide the thoughts." ³

3. God's part when we are faced with temptation

"For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Hebrews 4:15).

"In His name, through His grace, man may be an overcomer, even as Christ was an overcomer. In Christ divinity and humanity were united, and the only way in which man may be an overcomer is through becoming a partaker of the divine nature. . . . Divinity and humanity are blended in him who has the spirit of Christ." ⁴

"For in that He himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted" (Hebrews 2:18).

"Those who are partakers of the divine nature will not give way to temptation. The enemy is working with all his might to overcome those who are striving to live the Christian life. He comes to them with temptations, in the hope that they will yield. Thus he hopes to discourage them. But those who have planted their feet firmly on the Rock of Ages will not yield to his devices. They will remember that God is their Father and Christ their Helper. The Saviour came to our world to bring to every tried, tempted soul strength to overcome even as He overcame. I know the power of temptation; I know the dangers that are in the way; but I know, too, that strength sufficient for every time of need is provided for those who are

4. Our part in meeting temptation

struggling against

temptation."5

When the enemy came to Jesus to try to tempt Him, the Lord "answered and said, It is written . . . " (Matthew 4:4).

"Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on Him whom he hath sent" (John 6:29).

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13).

"The example of Christ is before us. He overcame Satan, showing us how we also may overcome. Christ resisted Satan with Scripture. He might have had recourse to His own divine power, and used His own words; but He said, 'It is written...' If the Sacred Scriptures were studied and followed, the Christian would be fortified to meet the wily foe; but the word of God is neglected, and disaster and defeat follow."

5. How does God help me?

The Lord Jesus declares to each of us as He did to the apostle Paul, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9).

uphold thee with the right hand of my righteousness" (Isaiah 41:10).

"While the Lord has not promised His people exemption from trials, He has promised that which is far better.... 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' If you are called to go through the fiery furnace for His sake, Jesus will be by your side even as He was with the faithful three in Babylon. Those who love their Redeemer will rejoice at every opportunity of sharing with Him humiliation and reproach. The love they bear their Lord makes suffering for His sake sweet."

6. Conclusion

What shall we then say to these things?

"If God is for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

"No man is safe for a day or an hour without prayer. Especially should we entreat the Lord for wisdom to understand His word. Here are revealed the wiles of the tempter and the means by which he may be successfully resisted.... We should study the Bible with humility of heart, never losing sight of our dependence upon God. While we must constantly guard against the

devices of Satan, we should pray in faith continually: 'Lead us not into temptation.'" 8

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- ⁷ Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings, p. 30.
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"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by his spirit in the inner man" (Ephesians 3:16).

"Fear thou not; for I am with thee: be not dismayed; for I am thy God: I will strengthen thee; yea, I will



he apostle Peter exhorts us:
"Wherefore the rather, brethren,
give diligence to make your calling
and election sure: for if ye do
these things, ye shall never fall"
(2 Peter 1:10).

To make our calling and election sure means to develop a character like that of Jesus Christ.

What is character?

"Mental ability and genius are not character, for these are often possessed by those who have the very opposite of a good character. Reputation is not character. True character is a quality of the soul, revealing itself in the conduct." ¹

"The mental and moral powers which God has given us do not constitute character. They are talents which we are to improve and which, if properly improved, will form a right character." ²

The harvest of life

"The harvest of life is character, and it is this that determines destiny, both for this life and for the life to come. The harvest is a reproduction of the seed sown. Every seed yields fruit after its kind." 3

"He that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting" (Galatians 6:8). Character is the result of my sowing. Seeds are manifested in the thoughts I choose, the words I speak, and the actions I do. We need to sow seeds with eternal benefits, not only earthly ones.

How valuable is the character?

"A good character is more precious than worldly possessions, and the work of forming it is the noblest in which men can engage." 4

"A good character is a capital of more value than gold or silver. It is unaffected by panics or failures, and in that day when earthly possessions shall be swept away, it will bring rich returns." 5

Think of Job in his life and the type of character he demonstrated under extreme suffering. Think of Solomon at the end of his life. In the face of trial, Job's character strengthened. Despite Solomon's failures, he finally achieved the victory needed in his character.

The only treasure taken from this world

"A character formed according to the divine likeness is the only treasure that we can take from this world to the next. Those who are under the instruction of Christ in this world will take every divine attainment with them to the heavenly mansions. And in heaven we are continually to improve. How important, then, is the development of character in this life."⁶

Character development

It doesn't come by chance

"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."

Not based on circumstances

"Characters formed by circumstance are changeable and discordant—a mass of contraries. Their possessors have no high aim or purpose in life. They have no ennobling influence upon the characters of others. They are purposeless and powerless."8

Development and growth

"The germination of the seed represents the beginning of spiritual life, and the development of the plant is a figure of the development of character. There can be no life without growth. The plant must either grow or die. As its growth is silent

The Work of a Lifetime Giving All, Every Day

and imperceptible, but continuous, so is the growth of character. At every stage of development our life may be perfect; yet if God's purpose for us is fulfilled, there will be constant advancement."9

My family bought a young peach tree and planted it—and we were amazed to see how fast it grew. The next spring, it bloomed. Then as the blossoms fell off, the ovules remained to form little peaches. These baby fruits started out tiny and greenbut if left on the tree long enough, they developed into sweet, delicious peaches. Each stage of development was important and each stage was perfect in the process. But the tree had to be nurtured and cared for in order for success to occur. The same is true with our character development as we seek to bear the fruit of the Spirit (mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23.)

The will

We are bidden, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12, 13).

"Strength of character consists of two things—power of will and power of self-control." 10

A character is only strong if it has these two things.

What do we need to continue in order to be following God's will?

"For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise" (Hebrews 10:36). It is interesting to notice that the New Living Translation of this verse says: "Patient endurance is what you need now, so that you will continue to do God's will. Then you will receive all that he has promised."

What do we need to give so that we will never fail?

"Wherefore the rather, brethren, give **diligence** to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall" (2 Peter 1:10).

Diligence is a constant and earnest effort to accomplish what is undertaken; persistent exertion of body or mind.

"Sanctification is not the work of a moment, an hour, a day, but of a lifetime. It is not gained by a happy flight of feeling, but is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. Wrongs cannot be righted nor reformations wrought in the character by feeble, intermittent efforts. It is only by long, persevering effort, sore discipline, and stern conflict, that we shall overcome." ¹¹ "The excellence of character that you possess must be the result of your own effort. Friends may encourage you, but they cannot do the work for you. Wishing, sighing, dreaming, will never make you great or good. You must climb. Gird up the loins of your mind, and go to work with all the strong powers of your will." 12

The Lord will reveal to us our defects

"In order to purify and refine our characters, we need the grace given us of Christ that will enable us to see and correct our deficiencies and improve that which is excellent in our characters." 13

What do we need for character formation?

Develop good mental habits

"If we would develop a character which God can accept, we must form correct habits in our religious life. Daily prayer is as essential to growth in grace, and even to spiritual life itself, as is temporal food to physical well-being. We should accustom ourselves to lift the thoughts often to God in prayer. If the mind wanders, we must bring it back; by persevering effort, habit will finally make it easy. We cannot for one

moment separate ourselves from Christ with safety. We may have His presence to attend us at every step, but only by observing the conditions which He Himself has laid down."¹⁴

God's doctrine and His Word

We are bidden: "Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for in doing this thou shalt both save thyself, and them that hear thee" (1 Timothy 4:16).

The way in which God works with us is by showing our defects and our need of Him through His Word.

"The Scriptures are the great agency in the transformation of character.... If studied and obeyed, the Word of God works in the heart, subduing every unholy attribute." 15

"But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed" (James 1:25).

The aim must be high

"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 round of the ladder, that they may step from it into the kingdom of God." ¹⁶

"It is the wise improvement of your opportunities, the cultivation of your God-given talents, that will make you men and women that can be approved of God, and a blessing to society. Let your standard be high, and with indomitable energy, make the most of your talents and opportunities, and press to the mark." ¹⁷

Keeping the eye on the goal

"Add to your faith virtue; and to virtue, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity" (2 Peter 1:5–7).



Small things matter!

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much" (Luke 16:10).

"The conversation we have by the fireside, the books we read, the business we transact, are all agents in forming our characters, and day by day decide our eternal destiny." 18

"The importance of the little things is often underrated because they are small; but they supply much of the actual discipline of life. There are really no nonessentials in the Christian's life. Our character building will be full of peril while we underrate the importance of the little things." 19

Face obstacles one at a time!

"We must meet all obstacles placed in our way and overcome them one at a time. If we overcome the first difficulty, we shall be stronger to meet the next, and at every effort will become better able to make advancement. By looking to Jesus we may be overcomers. It is by fastening our eyes on the difficulties and shrinking from earnest battle for the right that we become weak and faithless." ²⁰

There have been times when I have been assigned to develop a very complicated software project. The task seemed insurmountable, impossible and overwhelming! Yet by dividing the project into small portions—and accomplishing each part one at a time, step-by-step, the task could indeed be accomplished.

"There is no such thing as instantaneous sanctification. True sanctification is a daily work, continuing as long as life shall last." ²¹

"We are to live only one day at a time. We do not have to do the work of a lifetime in a few hours. We need not look into the future with anxiety; for God has made it possible for us to be overcomers every day." ²²

"But Christ has given us no assurance that to attain perfection of character is an easy matter. A noble, all-around character is not inherited. It does not come to us by accident. A noble character is earned by individual effort through the merits and grace of Christ. God gives the talents, the powers of the mind; we form the character. It is formed by hard, stern battles with self. Conflict after conflict must be waged against hereditary tendencies. We shall have to criticize ourselves closely, and allow not one unfavorable trait to remain uncorrected."23

Character malformation

What are some ways by which the archenemy attempts to weaken our character?

1. Bad company

"Be not deceived: evil communications corrupt good manners" (1 Corinthians 15:33). The New International Version (NIV) says: "Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character."

2. Having the tendency to go to extremes

As an example: "Abstract meditation is not enough; busy action is not enough—both are essential to the formation of Christian character." ²⁴

3. Giving up the fight

"Let no one say, I cannot remedy my defects of character.... The real difficulty arises from the corruption of an unsanctified heart and an unwillingness to submit to the control of God."25

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by **the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Romans 12:2).

4. Having problems with self-confidence

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

The temptation of a lot of people today is movies. The real issue is neglecting prayer and devotional time.

"Peter's fall was not instantaneous, but gradual. Self-confidence led him to the belief that he was saved, and step after step was taken in the downward path, until he could deny his Master. Never can we safely put confidence in self or feel, this side of heaven, that we are secure against temptation." ²⁶

"Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak" (Mark 14:38).

5. Not growing

We are never to rest in a satisfied condition, and cease to make advancement, saying, 'I am saved.'

When this idea is entertained, the motives for watchfulness, for prayer, for earnest endeavor to press onward to higher attainments, cease to exist. No sanctified tongue will be found uttering these words till Christ shall come, and we enter in through the gates into the city of God. Then, with the utmost propriety, we may give glory to God and to the Lamb for eternal deliverance." ²⁷

We need to be watchful that we don't presumptuously live our life based on past everyday habits, as

"Sanctification is the result of constantly dying to sin, and constantly living for Christ. God has made it possible for us to be overcomers every day."

if operating in "autopilot" mode. Instead, we should be serious about putting on the "gas pedal" to move forward, climbing on the upward way with the help of God.

"Let us be growing Christians. We are not to stand still. We are to be in advance today of what we were yesterday; every day learning to be more trustful, more fully relying upon Jesus. Thus we are to grow up." ²⁸

Conclusion

- Character is the harvest of life.
- It is the most valuable thing on Earth.

- It doesn't come by chance.
- It's not based on circumstances.
- Will power is essential
- Diligence is more than essential.
- God's Word is our guide.
- We must aim high!
- The small things are really not small.
- One step at a time.

"By the exercise of living faith today, we are to conquer the enemy. We must today seek God, and be determined that we will not rest satisfied without His presence. We should watch and work and pray as though this were the last day that would be granted us. If you are right with God today, you are ready if Christ should come today." ²⁹

May each of us so improve every day given us of God that at last we may hear the Master say, 'Well done, thou good and faithful servant' (Matthew 25:21)." Amen!

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Kay Clark

n Eden, the Garden was to be beautifully decorated, as only the hand of God could do it. It was to be set apart for someone special, someone who would be made in the very image of God Himself. The creation of all things had been an ongoing process for the past five days, and God was about to bring about the crowning act of His creation.

It was not for His benefit alone that God called into existence all the beauty of His creation. No. He had someone else in mind who would share and enjoy these things. He said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness" (Genesis 1:26). Thus it came about that the object of God's great love was carefully made by His own hand, in His own image; one who would have dominion over all the other creatures which He had made. And God called him Man.

A new and distinct being

Of all the wonderful things God created and made, man was to be a new and distinct being. "All heaven took a deep and joyful interest in the creation of the world and of man. Human beings were a new and distinct order. They were made ' in the image of God,' and it was the Creator's

design that they should populate the earth."1

How very close we should all feel to the ties that bind us to our Creator! As is stated in Genesis 2:7, "And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." The very form and breath of life which we have came from His hand and from His very breath! How much He loved the "new" being to which He gave such thought and care! Man indeed was God's crowning act.

Man should not be alone

Now we have the Garden in place, a beautiful paradise placed eastward in Eden; now also we have the man made in God's own image who was to occupy that garden. But something was missing - what was that? We find the answer in Genesis 2:18, "The Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him." The scriptures tell us how this was done. Genesis 2:21-24, "The Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept: and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof; and the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and

brought her unto the man. And Adam said, This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man. Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."

Here, in verse 24, we find the beginning of the marriage institution, set forth by God Himself. This was a sacred institution which was to be kept holy and undefiled as long as time upon earth should last.

"And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden; and there He put the man whom He had formed' (Genesis 2:8). Everything that God had made was the perfection of beauty, and nothing seemed wanting that could contribute to the happiness of the holy pair; yet the Creator gave them still another token of His love, by preparing a garden especially for their home. . . . In the midst of the garden stood the tree of life, surpassing in glory all other trees. Its fruit appeared like apples of gold and silver, and had the power to perpetuate life." ²

How perfect and beautiful is the scene thus portrayed before us! God's crowning glory of creation, Man, and someone who was to be his companion for life, Woman. For them He had prepared a beautiful home which contained everything which they would need. He did not leave anything undone in this, His plan, for a beautiful and lasting marriage.

Marriage, a lasting moral institution

"God celebrated the first marriage. Thus the institution has for its originator the Creator of the universe. 'Marriage is honourable'; it was one of the first gifts of God to man, and it is one of the two institutions that, after the fall, Adam brought with him beyond the gates of Paradise. When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature.

Centuries later, "He who gave Eve to Adam as a helpmeet performed His first miracle at a marriage festival. In the festal hall where friends and kindred rejoiced together, Christ began His public ministry. Thus He sanctioned marriage, recognizing it as an institution that He Himself had established." 3

Thus we find that God knew what man's needs would be and He wanted to supply for him one who could meet those needs; one who would be a helpmeet, or one suitable, for him; one in whom his desires could be fulfilled.

A joyous occasion

As was just quoted, Jesus' first miracle was performed at a wedding feast. You may read of this more detail in John chapter 2. There we find an account of Jesus' desire to be of help to the wedding party by supplying them with a need that they had.

"The Scriptures state that both Jesus and His disciples were called to this marriage feast (at Cana). Christ has given Christians no sanction to say when invited to a marriage, We ought not to be present on so joyous "We find that God knew what man's needs would be and He wanted to supply for him one who could meet those needs."

an occasion. By attending this feast Christ taught that He would have us rejoice with those who do rejoice in the observance of His statutes. He never discouraged the innocent festivities of mankind when carried on in accordance with the laws of Heaven. A gathering that Christ honored by His presence, it is right that His followers should attend. After attending this feast, Christ attended many others, sanctifying them by His presence and instruction."4

"By His presence Jesus honored the marriage ceremony. The active interest that He manifested on this occasion showed that He came not to put a cloud over the happiness of the family and the guests. Jesus was in full sympathy with the pure joy to be found in this occasion. By His presence He showed Himself to be in harmony with the blessed institution of marriage. And He gave His sanction to every gathering that is pure, and lovely and of good report." 5

Marriage was designed to be a blessing

"Marriage has received Christ's blessing, and it is to be regarded as a sacred institution. True religion is not to counterwork the Lord's plans. God ordained that man and woman should be united in holy wedlock, to raise up families that, crowned with honor, would be symbols of the family in heaven.

"And at the beginning of His public ministry Christ gave His decided sanction to the institution that had been sanctioned in Eden. Thus He declared to all that He will not refuse His presence on marriage occasions, and that marriage, when joined with purity and holiness, truth and righteousness, is one of the greatest blessings ever given to the human family." 6

United together, yet with separate roles

"The two who unite their interest in life will have distinct characteristics and individual responsibilities.

Each one will have his or her work, but women are not to be valued by the amount of work they can do as are beasts of burden. The wife is to grace the family circle as a wife and companion to a wise husband. At every step she should inquire 'Is this the standard of true womanhood?' and 'How shall I make my influence Christlike in my home?' The husband should let his wife know that he appreciates her work.

"The wife is to respect her husband. The husband is to love and cherish his wife; and as their marriage vow unites them as one, so their belief in Christ should make them one in Him. What can be more pleasing to God than to see those who enter into the marriage relation seek together to learn of Jesus and to become more and more imbued with His Spirit?" 7

"In your life union your affections are to be tributary to each other's happiness. Each is to minister to the happiness of the other. This is the will of God concerning you. But while you are to blend as one, neither of you is to lose his or her individuality in the other. God is the owner of your individuality. Of Him you are to ask: What is right? What is wrong? How may I best fulfill the purpose of my creation? 'Ye are not your own; for

ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's'(1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Your love for that which is human is to be secondary to your love for God. The wealth of your affection is to flow forth to Him who gave His life for you. Living for God, the soul sends forth to Him its best and highest affections. Is the greatest outflow of your love toward Him who died for you? If it is, your love for each other will be after heaven's order." §

Love one another as Christ loves His church

The Scriptures make a comparison between the love a husband and wife should have for one another with that love which Christ has for His church. "So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church. . . . For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh" (Ephesians 5: 28, 29, 31).

"Marriage, a union for life, is a symbol of the union between Christ and His church. The spirit that Christ manifests toward His church is the spirit that the husband and wife are to manifest toward each other. If they love God supremely, they will love each other in the Lord. . . . In their mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice they will be a blessing to each other." 9

Ephesians 4:32 states, "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

A serious question

"If there is any subject that should be considered with calm reason and unimpassioned judgment, it is the subject of marriage. If ever the Bible is needed as a counselor, it is before taking a step that binds persons together for life. But the prevailing sentiment is that in this matter the feelings are to be the guide, and in too

"In their mutual self-denial and self-sacrifice the husband and wife will be a blessing to each other."

many cases lovesick sentimentalism takes the helm and guides to certain ruin. It is here that the youth show less intelligence than on any other subject; it is here that they refuse to be reasoned with. The question of marriage seems to have a bewitching power over them. They do not submit themselves to God. Their senses are enchained, and they move forward in secretiveness, as if fearful that their plans would be interfered with by someone. . . .

"If men and women are in the habit of praying twice a day before they contemplate marriage, they should pray four times a day when such a step is anticipated. Marriage is something that will influence and affect your life, both in this world and in the world to come." 10

A need for much contemplation

So it was that the man and woman were placed in the garden to keep it and dress it, to enjoy its beauty. They were to live within the love with which their Creator had made them. They were also to be obedient to His law. "To man, the crowning work of creation, God has given power to understand His requirements, to comprehend the justice and beneficence of His law, and its sacred claims upon him; and of man unswerving obedience is required." But, as we know by reading the third chapter of Genesis, the once-innocent

and holy pair did fall by transgressing the law which God had given them to obey. And, because Adam did fall, his posterity has been born with inherent propensities of disobedience. We can see the result of this in our world today.

It is for this reason that much thought, prayer, and contemplation should be given to the subject of marriage, of uniting oneself with someone who is to be a partner for life. It can be a partnership for happiness and increasing love toward God or for much misery and loss of souls in the end.

"It is often the case that persons before marriage have little opportunity to become acquainted with each other's habits and disposition; and, so far as everyday life is concerned, they are virtually strangers when they unite their interests at the altar. Many find, too late, that they are not adapted to each other, and lifelong wretchedness is the result of their union." 12

Qualities to look for . . .

In the prospective husband:

"Before giving her hand in marriage, every woman should inquire whether he with whom she is about to unite her destiny is worthy. What has been his past record? Is his life pure? Is the love which he expresses of a noble, elevated character, or is it a mere emotional fondness? Has he the traits of character that will make her happy? Can she find true peace and joy in his affection? Will she be allowed to preserve her individuality, or must her judgment and conscience be surrendered to the control of her husband? As a disciple of Christ, she is not her own; she has been bought with a price. Can she honor the Saviour's claims as supreme? Will body and soul, thoughts and purposes, be preserved pure and holy? These questions have a vital bearing upon the well-being of every woman who enters the marriage relation."13

In the prospective wife:

"Let a young man seek one to stand by his side who is fitted to bear her share of life's burdens, one whose influence will ennoble and refine him, and who will make him happy in her love....

"'A prudent wife is from the Lord.' (Proverbs 19:14). 'The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her.... She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.' 'She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up, and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. Many daughters have done virtuously, but thou excellest them all' " (Proverbs 19:14; 31:11, 12, 26-29)....

"In your choice of a wife study her character. Will she be one who will be patient and painstaking? Or will she cease to care for your mother and father at the very time when they need a strong son to lean upon? And will she withdraw him from their society to carry out her plans and to suit her own pleasure, and leave the father and mother who, instead of gaining an affectionate daughter, will have lost a son?" 14

A warning given

Make haste slowly. "Few have correct views of the marriage relation. Many seem to think that it is the attainment of perfect bliss; but if they could know one quarter of the heartaches of men and women that are bound by the marriage vow in chains that they cannot and dare not break, they would not be surprised that I trace these lines. Marriage, in a majority of cases, is a most galling yoke. There are thousands that are mated but not matched. The books of heaven are burdened with the woes, the wickedness, and the abuse that lie hidden under the marriage

mantle. That is why I would warn the young who are of marriageable age to make haste slowly in the choice of a companion."15

Seek counsel

Get counsel from the Bible.

"Instituted by God, marriage is a sacred ordinance and should never be entered upon in a spirit of selfishness. Those who contemplate this step should solemnly and prayerfully consider its importance and seek divine counsel that they may know whether they are pursuing a course in harmony with the will of God.

The instruction given in God's word on this point should be carefully considered. Heaven looks with pleasure upon a marriage formed with an earnest desire to conform to the directions given in the Scripture." ¹⁶

Youth need the wisdom of age and experience. "When so much misery results from marriage, why will not the youth be wise? Why will they continue to feel that they do not need the counsel of older and more experienced persons? In business men and women manifest great caution.

Before engaging in any important enterprise, they prepare themselves for their work. Time, money, and much careful study are devoted to the subject, lest they shall make a failure in their undertaking.

"How much greater caution should be exercised in entering the marriage relation - a relation which affects future generations and the future life?" ¹⁷

Conclusion

We have seen through this study, taken from the Scriptures and the Spirit of Prophecy, just how God looks upon marriage. It has been from the beginning a blessed event, an institution formed and honored by Him and as old as the earth itself.

Because of the entrance of sin and the fall of humanity, many things have become perverted,

even the heart itself. It is because of this that there is an ongoing struggle between right and wrong. But, with divine guidance, we can make the correct choices and decisions in all the relationships of life, including that of marriage.

Whether you are already married or considering taking this great step, look diligently into the instruction given by God Himself. For as it is stated in Matthew 19:6, "What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." We are to be joined together "til death do us part."

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- 6 Daughters of God, pp. 180, 181.
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- ⁹ The Faith I Live By, p. 259.
- ¹⁰ The Adventist Home, pp. 70, 71.
- ¹¹ Conflict and Courage, p. 15.
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- ¹³ Daughters of God, p. 183.
- ¹⁴ The Adventist Home, pp. 45, 46.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 44.
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"I Will Never Leave Thee mor Forsake Thee" Hebrews 13:5

By T. J. Westra

didn't grow up going to church.
On occasion my siblings and I
attended with our mother, but
our father made it known that he
wasn't fond of our going there, so we
obeyed.

My grandmother, however, was very faithful in church attendance. When we took turns visiting her, we would get to go.

An interesting event occurred when I was 14 years old. My younger sister almost died from an appendicitis attack, and ended up in Porter Hospital, a Seventh-day Adventistrun facility in Denver, Colorado. She was in the hospital for nearly a month. While I was visiting her there one Friday afternoon, I overheard a nurse saying she was going home early because it was "preparation day." I was pretty shy, but managed to ask her what "preparation day" meant. She told me it was the day before the Sabbath, and that God had provided us a day to get ready for it.

I had never heard of such a thing, so I began asking more questions. The nurse was so patient and kind, and even though her plans were to leave in a few minutes, she stayed longer to explain about the week of creation, and how it ended with a rest day. She said if I had a Bible at home I could read about it in the first couple of chapters.

Actually, I *did* have a Bible because a nice Baptist lady had a weekly Bible study in her home for a half a dozen of us girls in the neighborhood. She had given us all a Bible and I loved her studies, but when they were over, I just kept the Bible in a drawer.

However, that evening, I immediately went to retrieve it. What I read was so surprising! "Why didn't anyone else tell me about this before?" I wondered. The next time I saw my Grandma, I asked her why we weren't going to church on Saturdays. She explained that after Jesus rose from the dead on Sunday, everyone started worshiping on that day instead. Because I believed Grandma was very smart where the Bible was concerned, I let the conversation end there. But I wasn't thoroughly convinced.

Married life and friendship

Time went on, when I was nearly 18, I met a young man, Ron—and we

married when I was 20. Shortly before our wedding he asked me if I was a Christian. It might seem strange that it would take two years to get around to that subject, but we were more interested in running around with other young people, in visiting with both our families, and in going to his bowling leagues. Nothing spiritual ever came up in our conversations.

When he asked me that evening if I was a Christian, I answered, yes. I asked if he was, and he said he thought so, but really hadn't thought much about it.

Whatever the reason for the question, it got us both thinking, and we decided it might be a good idea to visit my grandmother's church, the First Christian Church of Englewood. (A few years before, I had actually been baptized there at Grandma's urging, but there had not been any real heart conviction about what it all meant.)

So, Ron and I married at this church and attended there for the next five years, even going to Sunday school every week. We were learning about Jesus and really liked the pastor. As a result, we decided to

be baptized—and this time it meant more to me. We were both growing spiritually together.

Our first home was a cute little white, two-bedroom house with red shutters, and was located only a few blocks from the hospital my sister had been in when I had that conversation with that nice nurse. Just a few months after we moved to the house, the nicest couple, Jo and Charles, moved next door to us. They had gotten married just three months after we had, even though they were several years older than us. They both worked at Porter Hospital. She was the head nurse there, and he worked in the billing department.

After a year and a half of marriage, Ron and I were blessed with the sweetest little baby girl anyone could ever pray for-Pamela Dawn. It was then that I really experienced what true love was all about. Never did I ever believe anyone could love anyone more than I loved my tiny, little blond baby! And I believe our neighbors felt almost the same way. Because Jo and Charles had married later in life, they decided not to have any children, and they became like little Pam's second set of parents. They would come over often to visit with us, and we would return their visits.

One day when Pamela was two years old and I was expecting our second child, Jo and Charles invited us to a Revelation Seminar. We went with them and attended nearly every one. My old questions about the Sabbath popped up again in my heart when that subject was covered at one of the meetings.

After the Sabbath study, they invited us to visit their church. I gladly accepted their invitation. Ron had to work half days on Saturdays, but he said it was okay with him if I went.

The church was located right next door to Porter Hospital. I remember how strange I felt sitting inside a church on a Saturday. This was usually my day for grocery shopping. As I sat in the pew, I kept thinking that the rest of the world had no idea there were people sitting in church "The pilot ignited the fumes and caused an explosion. Suddenly, we were knee-deep in flames.."

today. Jo took Pamela down to Cradle Roll and sat with her while I stayed up with Charles as he taught the adult Sabbath School. His face beamed as I sat listening and even speaking up some.

The next day Pam and I attended church again, this time with my husband, Ron. It went that way for a few months—and our second child was born.

Troubles and trials

Little Ronald Lee, Jr. arrived February 25, 1965. He seemed to have trouble breathing and was placed in an incubator. It was heartbreaking to us, but on February 26, 1965, little Ronnie went to his rest at just 40 hours old. His short but hard battle was over.

The next day, we called Brother Miller, the pastor from the First Christian Church. He came to our home to console us and to set up funeral plans. While we were talking, I told him I had been visiting the Seventh-day Adventist Church every week.

He replied, "The Seventh-day Adventists are really nice people. But their beliefs are on shaky ground." I accepted that, and discontinued going to church on Sabbath, and continued going to his church every Sunday.

Meanwhile, Jo and Charles, our friends next door, were so sweet. They even took off part of a day to attend the funeral service. One might think they would have given up on us when I stopped going to church with them. But they continued being our best of friends. (Of course, they must have been very disappointed.)

Brought through the fire

A year and a half later we had another baby boy, Michael Lee. Our cute two-bedroom home proved to be too small, and so shortly before Pam's sixth birthday and Mike's second birthday, we moved to a larger home in Englewood. Our Adventist friends stayed in close contact with us.

I was working full-time then at a title insurance company. Ron and his brother were in business together in concrete construction. We bought a small, 13-foot camping trailer which we used nearly every week-end, all summer long.

One Thursday night, November 13, 1969, Ron and I were preparing for a hunting trip. (Yes, I was a hunter, too.) I was standing at the kitchen sink, hand washing some clothes, and Ron was outside getting the trailer ready. I told the children they needed to go to their bedrooms to prepare for bed—that I would come in there in a few minutes. While washing the clothes I decided to include the nylon stockings I was wearing, so took I them off. It was a good thing I did that....

Ron left to have the propane tank filled. When he got back, he was going to put it on the camper. He had second thoughts and decided to store it in the basement, since a few nights earlier we had had something stolen from our yard. He came through the back door right off the kitchen and carried the tank to the basement. When he placed it on the floor, the top part of the tank popped off. It was leaking very fast, and he used his glove to try getting the top back in place. I heard the hissing from the kitchen and went down the

stairs to warn him that he was going to asphyxiate himself with the fumes. When I opened a window for fresh air, the breeze from the open window blew the fumes to the gas water heater. The pilot ignited the fumes and caused an explosion. Suddenly, we were kneedeep in flames. Then there was a wall of flame separating my husband and me as the propane tank became a flaming torch. We both were terrified.

Ron grabbed a hammer and hooked onto the handle of the tank and dragged it up the stairs. At the top the tank slipped from the claws and rolled into the kitchen. Ron made it out the back door, but flames were shooting from the kitchen, barring the way for me to get through. I took a deep breath and ran up the stairs, through the flames, and out the back door. We both ran to the front door where we tried to get in to the children; but the door was locked! I tried ringing the doorbell and pounding on the door so the children would come open it. What I didn't know was that the circuit breaker box in the kitchen had already burned up and there was no electricity, so ringing the bell did no good. The last I had seen the children was when I had told

them to go to their bedrooms. I feared they were still in the kitchen.

With no electricity, it was dark and Ron was frantically trying to find the key. He rushed a few steps toward the neighbor's house where there was some light. I kept pounding and praying, "Please God, please God, My children! Please God." Ron found the keys and unlocked the door and we both ran in. The heat and smoke were unbelievable! There was no way I could breathe. I saw flames shooting from the kitchen out into the dining room. I tried desperately to get to the kitchen. I still thought the children were there! I ran back to the front door for a quick breath and turned back to the kitchen. I was determined I was not leaving until I found them!

Then a miracle happened. In the midst of all the roaring and crackling of the fire I heard a soft "thump" and turned to see the silhouette of my husband carrying both children out the front door, one child under each arm. The "thump" was when our daughter's foot bumped the door case. I ran after them, and the fire caught the carpet and with a rush hit the front entrance just as I ran out.

The children (praise God!) had gone to their bedrooms when I had told them to. Pam told me they had been in their bedrooms when they heard the explosion. Then the house went dark. They were standing in the hallway between their two bedrooms, crying. That's where my husband found them.

Our neighbor had called the fire department. An ambulance came, too. Ron had third degree burns on his right wrist and right thigh from dragging the tank upstairs. My legs were burned from the knees down because of the explosion. Had I had my nylon stockings on, who knows how much worse they would have been? My hair was burned very short on the top from running through the flames to get out the back door. But my face was not touched. Our children miraculously had no injuries other than a scrape on our daughter's right ankle where it hit the doorway on the way out.

The firemen got the fire under control before it got to the bedrooms. The next day we were walking through the destroyed house with our insurance agent when something caught my eye that haunted me for a



long time. It was our children's large, plastic piggy banks that were in their bedrooms. They were all curled up from the intense heat. That's where my children would have been had they not been rescued!

The night of the fire I told a fireman I shouldn't have opened the window. But he explained that if I had not opened it, the gas would have built up to the point where there would have been a huge, much more damaging explosion that probably would have killed us all.

While we stayed in a motel for the next six weeks, the brick exterior of the house was rebuilt and the entire interior removed and replaced. The insurance company did extensive research and learned that the propane company had overfilled the tank, which had caused the top to blow off when placed on the floor.

What does all this have to do with my finding the truth?

During the first week or so I didn't go back to work. My legs were swollen and blistered and it was excruciating just getting to a standing position each morning. But soon I was working again and the children were back with their babysitter each day.

The motel was close to my work, so I would drive back and forth each day for lunch. During those drives, I listened to Christian stations on the car radio. I heard so many different beliefs I started becoming confused. One lunch break I went to the bedroom at the back of our motel room and knelt by the bed and prayed with all my heart, "I know, Lord, there is only one God. I know, then, that there can only be one truth. How can I know what that truth is? Please show me!" I believe the Lord was working on me. I was truly in earnest; there was no doubt in my mind that He had saved us that night. There were too many things that happened that could not be chalked up as luck: I took off my stockings; the children obeyed me and went to their rooms; I heard

"I know, Lord, there is only one God. I know, then, that there can only be one truth."

that soft thump in the midst of all that noise; the carpet didn't catch on fire until we were all safely out; and the big one—there could have been an explosion that would have killed us all! I didn't deserve it, but God loved us enough to do all that.

While we were staying at the motel, Jo and Charles were concerned and had come to our house looking for us—and after we returned, they began visiting us more often.

They had gone on vacation a short while before all of this, so they invited us to their place one night to see the slides they had taken. They had many, and it took several visits to see them all. For several weeks, every Friday evening, we were looking at their slides with them.

Then one night they told us it was the last of their vacation slides; but they said they had other slides they would love to share with us. They said they knew we were interested in Christian topics and these slides were Christian studies. We loved these people very much, so we accepted the invitation. When we left their house and got into our car, we laughed, saying they were now going to try to make Seventh-day Adventists out of us.

We started learning new things every Friday night. There was the state of the dead, the signs of Jesus' coming, the Ten Commandments, the Sabbath, and on and on. We never felt we were intruding. They were such gracious hosts!

After each lesson, the children would sleep in the back seat of the car. Ron and I were silent all the way home. We didn't discuss what we learned. We just pondered separately. Finally one Friday night as we were crawling into bed, I said, "You know what? I think they're right." And to my amazement and joy, he answered, "Me, too!"

The next Friday evening after our study, we told our friends that we were convinced. We believed what they were telling us, and we wanted to join their church. I'm sure they were surprised and filled with joy, since neither of us had let them know how we felt. But we had sure pelted them with many questions during all those evenings.

God answers prayers. Hadn't I asked God in that motel room to show me the truth?

Blessings in the Lord

We met with the pastor the following Friday night, and the rest is history . . . for a while. We raised our children Seventh-day Adventists. Pam started second grade in Mile High Academy.

We had a third child, Patrick Daryl, ten months after we joined the church. What a precious, precious blessing. When we lost our baby boy, Ron thought he would never have another son. God doubled the blessing, giving him two more little boys! After several years, being convinced of the necessity to leave the city, we moved out to the country near a town called Elizabeth, where I homeschooled the children.

But not all was perfect. We began noticing inconsistencies. It wasn't Jo and Charles' fault. In heart they were Reformers. They had taught us about jewelry and we took off our wedding rings. They taught us about makeup and I washed my face clean. They explained how a person should really keep the Sabbath, and most of

the time we kept it with them until we moved too far away.

But the things they taught us weren't all happening in the church. We learned to ignore the little things, but bigger things began to happen. Ron eventually stopped going, and unfortunately after a while he wasn't even living the life of an SDA. I really slipped, too. For instance, after we had moved back to the city, I would go for a "Sabbath walk" but would steer us to the garage sales, and we'd stop and look at things. I never started buying, but in my heart I was. The whole family went back to meat eating.

God blessed us through our middle child, Michael, who never fell as the rest of us did, even though he was eating meat and hunting with his dad. Still, he was the spiritual light in our home. He began meeting with other young people and getting involved in Bible studies. On his days off from work it wasn't an unfamiliar sight to see him sitting at the desk in his bedroom, Bible and notebook open, and writing notes.

In spite of my falling so far away, I still went to church on Sabbaths and still continued with my tithing. In fact I believe the tithing, coupled with our faithful son's influence, was what kept me from going too far.

One year when it was nearing Christmas, Mike told me this holiday was not really Christian. He said it was the same for Easter. He explained some about the pagan beliefs, and it seemed to make some sense, but I wasn't convinced.

Then one Sabbath, the day before Easter, Mike asked if I would like to go visit a church out in the country. We had passed its sign several times when we lived in the country, and had wondered what Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement was all about. I thought I might as well go. Otherwise, I would have to be going to church by myself. So off we went.

The "church" was actually a made-over house. After we parked, we followed the signs that led us to the back to a walkout basement. I was pleasantly surprised to see a long-time friend there.

We found a seat and listened to a sermon by a young man. I was so impressed with the spirituality, length, and depth of the talk. There weren't the half-hour long announcements I was used to in the other churches just a few words, and then a full hour of teaching.

We never stopped visiting. Every Sabbath we came and listened and learned so much—about the war issue, the 144,000, divorce and remarriage, and so much more. We also distributed missionary literature together.

I was baptized into the SDARM in June 1993, about ten months after our first visit. Around a year later Mike was baptized. I continue to believe in the doctrines of this denomination. I can't say things have always been perfect, but considering we are living in an imperfect world, I wouldn't consider ever joining any other denomination.

As the years go by, especially since I have retired, I have been growing closer and closer to my Creator and Savior. Praise God, shortly before my retirement, I began learning about Christ our Righteousness. Every year is going better than the last. My greatest of joys came a few years after we moved to South Dakota. My husband came back to the Lord. And he has grown even closer to Him than he was before. We both have a long way to go, but now I have someone I can grow with. I no longer have to stand by myself—we stand together. We are being polished as precious jewels that will fit us into the Lord's palace (Psalm 144).

And together we can hardly wait until we see that little cloud appearing in the eastern skies, to see our blessed Savior coming to take us home—and to see our little infant "... come forth immortal from [his dusty bed and wing his way to his] mother's arms. They meet again never more to part." ¹

Amen! R

References

¹ The Youth's Instructor, April 1, 1858.



CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS

FORUM

By Perlynette Namulngo Cay-ohen

ith the help of our God, the first Asia Pacific Region Symposium on **Justification by Faith** (also referred to as the **Christ** Our Righteousness Forum) was held in the Philippines at the Bible Missionary Training School compound in Cabatang, Tiaong, Quezon Province from May 21-26, 2018. Representatives from the different countries in the Asia Pacific Region under the leadership of the Regional Secretary, Bro. Rolly Dumaguit, attended this forum. Hereunder is a list of the countries with representation:

- Vietnam- 2 representatives
- Thailand-3 representatives
- Indonesia 13 representatives
- East Timor-1 representative
- China-13 representatives
- South Korea 12 representatives
- Australia 2 representatives
- Malaysia 2 representatives
- Philippines 42 representatives

Those who attended this symposium were ministers, Bible workers, lay evangelists, church leaders and members of our church who felt the need to deepen their understanding on the precious message of Justification by Faith. There were many women who participated, but the great majority of the attendees were men.

Three representatives from the General Conference attended the symposium—Bro. Davi Paes Silva, GC president; Bro. Peter Lausevic, first GC vice President; and Bro. Rolly Dumaguit, second GC vice president. They were the main speakers during this five-day event.

Most of the attendees arrived on Sunday, May 20, 2018. But there were early comers who arrived on Friday to make sure to maximize their mental and physical preparation to hear and absorb the words of God, having two days of rest before the program started. A few people arrived a little bit late on Monday, missing the lessons discussed on this day.

Monday

The symposium officially started on Monday, May 21, 2018. The





brethren were happy to begin the day by gathering for the morning worship with Bro. Frederick Felipe as he gave an introductory devotional message on the topic of the Godhead. He carefully proved from the Bible and the SOP that the three persons of the Godhead—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—are three individual beings and each of them is God in their own right.

After breakfast, the attendees were gathered together in the church at 8 o'clock in the morning and the Philippine Union Conference President, Bro. Samuel Andres, gave a warm welcome to all participants of the symposium. At 9 o'clock, Bro. D. P. Silva, the main speaker of the day, gave a two-hour study on the subject of the Godhead. Shortly after lunch (at 2 p.m.) Bro. Silva continued to develop his thesis on the subject of the Godhead for two more hours. Like the speaker during the morning worship, he proved from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that the three persons of the Godhead—the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit—are three living persons, three divine dignitaries, three highest powers, three great powers and three great and glorious heavenly characters.

The most exciting part of the program of the day was the question-and-answer period where the speakers were grilled with many questions from the participants. Most of the questions were related to the topic of the Godhead, but other questions not related to that topic were also raised and answered. The question-and-answer period ended at 5 p.m. The activity of the day closed with the evening worship conducted by Bro. J. H. Hyun from South Korea.

Tuesday

Tuesday, the second day of the symposium, began with morning worship led by the delegate from East Timor, brother Daniel Micu. His message was also related to the subject *Christ Our Righteousness*, which he delivered in the Portuguese language, a tongue which is unfamiliar to the participants—yet Bro. Silva translated it into English.

After a hearty breakfast, the symposium resumed at 8 a.m. with Bro. Peter Lausevic as the main speaker of the day. He discussed about the faith of Abraham for three hours with fifteen minutes break in between each hour. He clearly explained the difference between the faith that justifies—like the faith of Abraham—and the faith that does not justify—like the belief of the devils.



In the afternoon, the presentation on the faith of Abraham continued for only an hour because the rest of the afternoon was used for answering questions from the participants. Questions that had something to do with the SDARM and IMS took most of the time since the speaker thought it best to clarify several IMS issues raised by the brethren.

After dinner, the brethren gathered for the evening worship during which Bro. Marcelo Gines, our minister assigned to Thailand, gave a study about the incarnation of Christ that made it possible for Him to possess two natures-human and divine. He proved from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy that Christ did not use His own divine power in His work of overcoming temptation. As "the author of sin" "left no means untried to overcome Christ with his wily, deceptive power," Christ did not use His own divine power to resist and overcome, "But our Saviour relied upon His heavenly Father for wisdom and strength to resist and overcome the tempter. The Spirit of His heavenly Father animated and regulated His life. He was sinless. Virtue and purity characterized His life."1

Wednesday

On Wednesday, the third day of the symposium, the first activity, as usual, was the morning worship from 6–6:30 a.m., during which Bro. J. H. Hyun delivered the devotional message entitled "The True Sign," delivered in English. He explained that "the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth." ²

After the morning meal, the delegates gathered at the church to resume the symposium, when Bro. D. P. Silva again took the floor as the main speaker of the day. This time he spoke about the two kinds of righteousness, namely the righteousness of Christ and spurious righteousness of the Pharisees. He emphasized the fact that we are justified by faith alone through the merits of Christ's righteousness and His atoning death, and warned that following the example of the Pharisees, in hoping to be justified through the works of the law, will avail nothing. He developed his thesis by a verse-by-verse exposition of Romans chapters 3, 4, and 5 and occasionally taking verses from other books to support his point. The whole afternoon from 2-5 p.m. was utilized for answering various questions on various topics from the participants. Many of the questions raised were

answered, while some were not discussed for lack of time.

During the evening worship from 7-8 p.m., Bro. Rolly Dumaguit gave an inspiring message on justification that complimented what had been presented by the previous speakers. He expounded on the principle of representation as it applies to Adam and Christ, explaining that it was through the disobedience of one man, Adam, the first head and representative of the human race, that all of humanity came under the condemnation of the law. In like manner, it was through the obedience and death of one man, Christ, the second Adam, that the human race was legally justified from their sins and can be made righteous in Him. This work of Christ for us, His obedience and death for our sin, is the legal basis of justification by faith and the work of sanctification, without which none shall be justified by faith nor be sanctified by faith.

Thursday

On the fourth day, Thursday, Bro. Benyamin Linga, a brother from Indonesia, took charge of the morning worship with his message entitled, "The People of God Must Have the Courage to Face the Temptations of Satan." It was a wonderful experience to be able to worship God together and study His word together.



After a hearty breakfast, the brethren gathered again for the symposium. The main speaker of this day was Bro. Peter Lausevic, who spent three hours to expound on his topic entitled "Married to Christ." He discussed about divorce and remarriage and applied it to our spiritual condition. The speaker resumed his topic in the afternoon, discussing about the first and second husband in the spiritual sense. He explained that we were married to Sin, our first husband. After we died and were resurrected, we were then married to Christ, our second husband.

Then, during the evening worship, Bro. Peter Cay-ohen shared his insights on justification by faith with his topic entitled, "Clarifying Issues on the Doctrine of Justification by Faith." He pointed out that there is need to be careful because there are dangers when we approach the subject of justification by faith. Then he discussed the two equally dangerous errors that Christians need to avoid namely:

Legalism, the idea that one can make himself deserve forgiveness and eternal life by keeping the law and doing good works; and

Antinomianism, the idea that since we are saved by grace through faith, we need not keep God's law.

He closed his study by briefly discussing about the two kinds of justification accomplished by Christ for us, namely:

Justification from sin for all of humanity that He accomplished through His death, and

Justification of life for all humanity that He accomplished through His perfect obedience to the law

Friday

The last day of the symposium was Friday, May 18, 2018. Brother Ding from China gave a message during the morning worship related to *Christ Our Righteousness*. The brethren happily partook of this spiritual

food before they had their breakfast. On this day, only the morning was utilized for the symposium and this session was led by Bro. Peter Lausevic. He expounded more on the errors of legalism and antinomianism that had been presented the night before and ultimately concluded that neither the legalist nor the antinomian really keeps the law of God. They are both transgressors of the law, but with different reasons. He went on to discuss also the danger of conservatism.

In the afternoon, everybody was free so that all could prepare for the Sabbath. However, the local mission that hosted the symposium had a very special event this afternoon and that was the baptism of two souls. One was a former SDARM member, but for some reason had been separated from the church for a long time. But, praise the Lord, he came back to the fold of Christ. The other brother is a teacher by profession and was happy to be a part of God's remnant church in the last days.

An early supper was served and the Sabbath was welcomed by all the brethren as they sang praises to God in the church. Bro. Samuel Andres, the president of the Philippines Union Conference, gave a short, inspiring message as the people welcomed the Sabbath. His message was about the relationship between God and man, and man and the Sabbath—and its importance and proper observance.

After a short break, another season of worship was held and Bro. Peter Lausevic shared some interesting insights regarding the experiences of some of the Protestant reformers and how they were ready to risk their lives for the sake of the truth. He drew a parallel to the experience of the SDA pioneers who were ready to die for the sake of the truth of the three angels' messages.

On the Sabbath day, many brethren from different parts of Luzon—some from Visayas and some from Mindanao—came to join us for Sabbath worship. A special Sabbath school teachers' class was conducted by brother Jeremias Cano before the start of Sabbath school program.

Brother Allan Alingan, the Philippines Union Conference Sabbath school department leader, opened the Sabbath school program by calling the congregation to sing the opening song. Psalm 133:1 was read before the congregation knelt for prayer. All the attendees from the different countries in Asia Pacific region were welcomed, including the visitors from the neighboring provinces. A smaller group of brothers and sisters, sang the song, "When Peace Like A River" to the delight of the saints. It was followed by an experience shared by Bro. Park from South Korea, with Brother



Joel Cho translating for him into English. Brother Marcelo Gines gave a comprehensive review lesson about the parable of the fig tree, while Bro. Peter Cay-ohen led the congregation in a more comprehensive discussion of the parable of the wedding garment.

After Sabbath school, all the brethren solemnly joined together for the Divine Service. This actually marked the dedication of the new church building at Cabatang, Tiaong, Quezon Province (the venue of the seminar). Bro. D. P. Silva was the speaker. He spoke about churches and temples both in a physical sense and spiritual sense. After his message, brother Samuel Andres related the short history of this local church and explain how it started. The dedication ceremony then followed

and the program was closed with the benediction pronounced by Bro. Silva.

In the afternoon, the young people's program was led by our youth leader in the Philippines. The program allowed representatives from different countries to share some of the experiences from their own countries. They were also given the chance to sing songs as a group. After all were done, the fellowshipment service was conducted, to accept the two newly baptized souls as members of the church. This was led by Bro. Rolly Dumaguit.

Dinner was served early before sunset. Then the brethren gathered in the church for closing the Sabbath. Bro. Vincente Villapando, a Filipino brother working in Thailand as a teacher, gave a short message with some experiences he had in the past. And finally, for the ending of the seminar, Bro. Rolly Dumaguit led the farewell meeting. The different presidents of every union were also given the chance to express their thankfulness to God and to all to whom they felt gratitude.

It was a blessed gathering for all who gave their time in attending this *Christ Our Righteousness* Forum. It is hoped that as the brethren departed from this place they took with them many blessings from God to share with the brethren in their own individual countries and that our members in the various areas will be encouraged to go and share the gospel of salvation to every nation, tongue, and people!

References

- ¹ Selected Messages, vol. 3, p. 134.
- ² The Review and Herald, November 22, 1892.





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MOVING? Please let us know.

A Fruitful Harvest in Life

By Barbara Montrose

ave you ever canned fruit? When the season comes, it's so exciting to see fruit getting ripe on the trees! Tiny, green peaches become big, richly colored, and juicy. Plums, apples, and pears become

large and sweet.

Often, God makes the harvest so great that there is too much fruit to eat fresh before it spoils—so we need to preserve it in jars or dry it. The Bible says there's a time for everything (Ecclesiastes 3:1) and if fruit is kept beyond the time it is ripe, it will spoil. It might get moldy, shrivel up, or simply ferment (become stinky-sour like vinegar). When we eat rotten fruit, it makes us sick—sometimes sooner or sometimes later.

The Creator wants not only the trees to bear fruit—He wants us to, also! But we bear a different kind of fruit, the fruit of the Spirit-"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance" (Galatians 5:22, 23). Jesus tells us "that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain" (John 15:16). He wants us to bear fruit not just once or twice, but always. Remember the story about the fig tree:

"A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came and sought fruit thereon, and found none. Then said he unto the dresser of his vineyard, Behold, these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig tree, and find none:

cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground? And he answering said unto him, Lord, let it alone this year also, till I shall dig about it, and dung it: And if it

bear fruit, well: and if not, then after that thou shalt cut it down"

(Luke 13:6-9).

God is giving us a chance to bear good fruit. Like the man who dug around the tree, the Holy Spirit works in our heart to inspire us to do what is right-and God's word is like fertilizer to feed our faith. If we trust in Christ, He will preserve us unto eternity. That's what salvation is—being preserved forever in a freshness better than anything on

So let's not let the enemy spoil or ruin the good fruit the Lord wants to create in us through Jesus.

"Now being made free from sin, and become servants to God, ye have your fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life" (Romans 6:22). R

earth.