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The Gathering STORM

Week of Prayer, December 2-11, 2022

the REFORMATION herald

Volume 63, Number 4

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PRAYER IN THE STORM

With a level of intensity perhaps unforeseen in history, this planet is like a huge powder keg ready to explode. Those who genuinely seek and submit to the God of heaven for inner peace, hope and guidance are few in number.

"We are living in an important and interesting period of this earth's history. We need more faith than we have yet had; we need a firmer hold from above. Satan is working with all power to obtain the victory over us, for he knows that he has but a short time in which to work. Paul had fear and trembling in working out his salvation; and should not we fear lest a promise being left us, we should any of us seem to come short of it, and prove ourselves unworthy of eternal life? We should watch unto prayer, strive with agonizing effort to enter in at the strait gate."¹

What a privilege it is to participate in the annual Week of Prayer! Now more than ever, we need to treasure every possible opportunity to press together in earnest praise and petition to our only Source of strength, the Lord Jesus Christ who is still graciously interceding in our behalf in the heavenly courts.

This year's series of readings based on the theme, *The Gathering Storm*, acknowledge the current situation we face, bringing words of faith to fortify us for the challenging days to come.

So, let us each prayerfully consider the readings for this Week of Prayer, sharing them also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and remember the following dates:

Prayer with fasting: Sabbath, December 10

Offering for missions: Sunday, December 11

May the Holy Spirit speak to our hearts and strengthen us according to our needs as individuals and as a people. May "the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you. To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 5:10, 11). *R*

¹ *Faith and Works*, p. 49.

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"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold."—*Education*, p. 57.

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AS THE STORM GATHERS . . .

Regardless of where you may live on this planet, chances are that at some time you will face a storm at least once in life. Clouds typically form and merge together so closely until the entire sky darkens and eventually the storm bursts—sometimes with tremendous fury.

In these last days of Earth's history, life is compared to the development of a storm. The spiritual state of the human psyche is becoming darker and darker as various forms of evil close in on hearts and minds everywhere.

But we need not feel abandoned in the darkness! The God of heaven has given in His Word complete information so that we need not be surprised about what is happening and what is still to come. In His abundant grace, God has provided precious words of hope for us.

"Angels are now restraining the winds of strife, that they may not blow until the world shall be warned of its coming doom; but a storm is gathering, ready to burst upon the earth; and when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture.

"The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world, events that already are casting their shadows before, the sound of their approach causing the earth to tremble and men's hearts to fail them for fear.

"Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . They have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the

curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate. . . . The mirth of tabrets ceaseth, the noise of them that rejoice endeth, the joy of the harp ceaseth.' Isaiah 24:1–18. . . .

"I am pained at my very heart; . . . I cannot hold my peace, because thou hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is cried; for the whole land is spoiled.'

"I beheld the earth, and, lo, it was without form, and void; and the heavens, and they had no light. I beheld the mountains, and, lo, they trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I beheld, and, lo, there was no man, and all the birds of the heavens were fled. I beheld, and, lo, the fruitful place was a wilderness, and all the cities thereof were broken down.' Jeremiah 4:19, 20, 23–26.

"Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it.' Jeremiah 30:7.

"Come, My people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.' Isaiah 26:20."¹

The protection of God and His angels, as well as the assurance of His abiding presence are promised to those who fully surrender to Christ. As we see the storm gathering with such tremendous intensity, let us trust in the awesome Hand that is above all—the Hand that holds the universe in place and was nailed to the cross for every one of us. *R*

References:

¹ *Education*, pp. 179–181.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2022

Compiled from the writings of Ellen G. White

1

STANDING FIRM — KNOWING GOD

Of the disciples after the transfiguration of Christ it is written that at the close of that wonderful scene “they saw no man, save Jesus only.” Matthew 17:8. “Jesus only” — in these words is contained the secret of the life and power that marked the history of the early church. When the disciples first heard the words of Christ, they felt their need of Him. They sought, they found, they followed Him. They were with Him in the temple, at the table, on the mountainside, in the field. They were as pupils with a teacher, daily receiving from Him lessons of eternal truth.

After the Saviour’s ascension, the sense of the divine presence, full of love and light, was still with them.

It was a personal presence. Jesus, the Saviour, who had walked and talked and prayed with them, who had spoken hope and comfort to their hearts, had, while the message of peace was upon His lips, been taken from them into heaven. As the chariot of angels received Him, His words had come to them, “Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end.” Matthew 28:20. He had ascended to heaven in the form of humanity. They knew that He was before the throne of God, their Friend and Saviour still; that His sympathies were unchanged; that He would forever be identified with suffering humanity. They knew that He was presenting before God the merit of His blood, showing His wounded hands

and feet as a remembrance of the price He had paid for His redeemed ones; and this thought strengthened them to endure reproach for His sake. Their union with Him was stronger now than when He was with them in person. The light and love and power of an indwelling Christ shone out through them, so that men, beholding, marveled.¹

IN THE DARK AGES THAT FOLLOWED

Satan well knew that the Holy Scriptures would enable men to discern his deceptions and withstand his power. It was by the word that even the Saviour of the world had resisted his attacks. At every assault,

Christ presented the shield of eternal truth, saying, "It is written." To every suggestion of the adversary, He opposed the wisdom and power of the word. In order for Satan to maintain his sway over men, and establish the authority of the papal usurper, he must keep them in ignorance of the Scriptures. The Bible would exalt God and place finite men in their true position; therefore its sacred truths must be concealed and suppressed. This logic was adopted by the Roman Church. For hundreds of years the circulation of the Bible was prohibited. The people were forbidden to read it or to have it in their houses, and unprincipled priests and prelates interpreted its teachings to sustain their pretensions. Thus the pope came to be almost universally acknowledged as the vicegerent of God on earth, endowed with authority over church and state.

The detector of error having been removed, Satan worked according to his will. Prophecy had declared that the papacy was to "think to change times and laws." Daniel 7:25. This work it was not slow to attempt. To afford converts from heathenism a substitute for the worship of idols, and thus to promote their nominal acceptance of Christianity, the adoration of images and relics was gradually introduced into the Christian worship. The decree of a general council . . . finally established this system of idolatry. To complete the sacrilegious work, Rome presumed to expunge from the law of God the second commandment, forbidding image worship, and to divide the tenth commandment, in order to preserve the number.

The spirit of concession to paganism opened the way for a still further disregard of Heaven's authority. Satan, working through unconsecrated leaders of the church, tampered with the fourth commandment also, and essayed to set aside the ancient Sabbath, the day which God had blessed and sanctified (Genesis 2:2, 3), and in its stead to exalt the festival observed by the heathen as "the venerable day of the sun." This change was not at first

attempted openly. In the first centuries the true Sabbath had been kept by all Christians. They were jealous for the honor of God, and, believing that His law is immutable, they zealously guarded the sacredness of its precepts. But with great subtlety Satan worked through his agents to bring about his object. That the attention of the people might be called to the Sunday, it was made a festival in honor of the resurrection of Christ. Religious services were held upon it; yet it was regarded as a day of recreation, the Sabbath being still sacredly observed.

To prepare the way for the work which he designed to accomplish, Satan had led the Jews, before the advent of Christ, to load down the Sabbath with the most rigorous exactions, making its observance a burden. Now, taking advantage of the false light in which he had thus caused it to be regarded, he cast contempt upon it as a Jewish institution. While Christians generally continued to observe the Sunday as a joyous festival, he led them, in order to show their hatred of Judaism, to make the Sabbath a fast, a day of sadness and gloom.²

SCRIPTURE PRESERVED AND LIVED

In lands beyond the jurisdiction of Rome, there existed for many centuries bodies of Christians who remained almost wholly free from papal corruption. They were surrounded by heathenism, and in the lapse of ages were affected by its errors; but they continued to regard the Bible as the only rule of faith, and adhered to many of its truths. These Christians believed in the perpetuity of the law of God, and observed the Sabbath of the fourth commandment. Churches that held to this faith and practice, existed in Central Africa and among the Armenians of Asia.

But of those who resisted the encroachments of the papal power, the Waldenses stood foremost. In the very land where popery had fixed its seat, there its falsehood and corruption were most steadfastly resisted. For centuries the churches

of Piedmont maintained their independence; but the time came at last when Rome insisted upon their submission. After ineffectual struggles against her tyranny, the leaders of these churches reluctantly acknowledged the supremacy of the power to which the whole world seemed to pay homage. There were some, however, who refused to yield to the authority of pope or prelate. They were determined to maintain their allegiance to God, and to preserve the purity and simplicity of their faith. A separation took place. Those who adhered to the ancient faith now withdrew; some, forsaking their native Alps, raised the banner of truth in foreign lands; others retreated to the secluded glens and rocky fastnesses of the mountains, and there preserved their freedom to worship God.

The faith which for many centuries was held and taught by the Waldensian Christians was in marked contrast to the false doctrines put forth from Rome. Their religious belief was founded upon the written word of God, the true system of Christianity. But those humble peasants, in their obscure retreats, shut away from the world, and bound to daily toil among their flocks and their vineyards, had not themselves arrived at the truth in opposition to the dogmas and heresies of the apostate church. Theirs was not a faith newly received. Their religious belief was their inheritance from their fathers. They contended for the faith of the apostolic church—"the faith which was once delivered to the saints." "The church in the wilderness," and not the proud hierarchy enthroned in the world's great capital, was the true church of Christ, the guardian of the treasures of truth which God has committed to His people to be given to the world.

Among the leading causes that had led to the separation of the true church from Rome, was the hatred of the latter toward the Bible Sabbath. As foretold by prophecy, the papal power cast down the truth to the ground. The law of God was trampled in the dust, while the traditions and customs of men were ex-

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alted. The churches that were under the rule of the papacy were early compelled to honor the Sunday as a holy day. Amid the prevailing error and superstition, many, even of the true people of God, became so bewildered that while they observed the Sabbath they refrained from labor also on the Sunday. But this did not satisfy the papal leaders. They demanded not only that Sunday be hallowed, but that the Sabbath be profaned; and they denounced in the strongest language those who dared to show it honor. It was only by fleeing from the power of Rome that any could obey God's law in peace.

The Waldenses were the first of all the peoples of Europe to obtain a translation of the Holy Scriptures. Hundreds of years before the Reformation, they possessed the Bible in manuscript in their native tongue. They had the truth unadulterated, and this rendered them the special objects of hatred and persecution. They declared the Church of Rome to be the apostate Babylon of the Apocalypse, and at the peril of their lives they stood up to resist her corruptions. While, under the pressure of long-continued persecution, some compromised their faith, little by little yielding its distinctive principles, others held fast the truth. Through ages of darkness and apostasy, there were Waldenses who denied the supremacy of Rome, who rejected image worship as idolatry, and who kept the true Sabbath. Under the fiercest tempests of opposition they maintained their faith. Though gashed by the Savoyard spear, and scorched by the Romish fagot, they stood unflinchingly for God's Word and His honor.

Behind the lofty bulwarks of the

mountains—in all ages the refuge of the persecuted and oppressed—the Waldenses found a hiding-place. Here the light of truth was kept burning amid the darkness of the Middle Ages. Here, for a thousand years, witnesses for the truth maintained the ancient faith.

God had provided for His people a sanctuary of awful grandeur, befitting the mighty truths committed to their trust. To those faithful exiles the mountains were an emblem of the immutable righteousness of Jehovah. They pointed their children to the heights towering above them in unchanging majesty, and spoke to them of Him with whom there is no variableness nor shadow of turning, whose word is as enduring as the everlasting hills. God had set fast the mountains, and girded them with strength; no arm but that of infinite power could move them out of their place. In like manner He had established His law, the foundation of His government in Heaven and upon earth. The arm of man might reach His fellow men and destroy their lives; but that arm could as readily uproot the mountains from their foundations, and hurl them into the sea, as it could change one precept of the law of Jehovah, or blot out one of His promises to those who do His will. In their fidelity to His law, God's servants should be as firm as the unchanging hills.

The mountains that girded their lowly valleys were a constant witness to God's creative power, and a never-failing assurance of His protecting care. Those pilgrims learned to love the silent symbols of Jehovah's presence. They indulged no repining because of the hardships of their lot; they were never lonely amid the mountain solitudes. They thanked God that He had provided for them an asylum from the wrath and cruelty of men. They rejoiced in their freedom to worship before Him. Often when pursued by their enemies, the strength of the hills proved a sure defense. From many a lofty cliff they chanted the praise of God, and the armies of Rome could not silence their songs of thanksgiving.

Pure, simple, and fervent was the piety of these followers of Christ.

The principles of truth they valued above houses and lands, friends, kindred, even life itself. These principles they earnestly sought to impress upon the hearts of the young. From earliest childhood the youth were instructed in the Scriptures, and taught to sacredly regard the claims of the law of God. Copies of the Bible were rare; therefore its precious words were committed to memory. Many were able to repeat large portions of both the Old and the New Testament. Thoughts of God were associated alike with the sublime scenery of nature and with the humble blessings of daily life. Little children learned to look with gratitude to God as the giver of every favor and every comfort.

Parents, tender and affectionate as they were, loved their children too wisely to accustom them to self-indulgence. Before them was a life of trial and hardship, perhaps a martyr's death. They were educated from childhood to endure hardness, to submit to control, and yet to think and act for themselves. Very early they were taught to bear responsibilities, to be guarded in speech, and to understand the wisdom of silence. One indiscreet word let fall in the hearing of their enemies, might imperil not only the life of the speaker, but the lives of hundreds of his brethren; for as wolves hunting their prey did the enemies of truth pursue those who dared to claim freedom of religious faith.

The Waldenses had sacrificed their worldly prosperity for the truth's sake, and with persevering patience they toiled for their bread. Every spot of tillable land among the mountains was carefully improved; the valleys and the less fertile hillsides were made to yield their increase. Economy and severe self-denial formed a part of the education which the children received as their only legacy. They were taught that God designs life to be a discipline, and that their wants could be supplied only by personal labor, by forethought, care, and faith. The process was laborious and wearisome, but it was wholesome, just what man needs in his fallen state, the school which God

has provided for his training and development.

While the youth were inured to toil and hardship, the culture of the intellect was not neglected. They were taught that all their powers belonged to God, and that all were to be improved and developed for His service.

The Vaudois churches, in their purity and simplicity, resembled the church of apostolic times. Rejecting the supremacy of pope and prelate, they held the Bible as the only supreme, infallible authority. Their pastors, unlike the lordly priests of Rome, followed the example of their Master, who “came not to be ministered unto, but to minister.” They fed the flock of God, leading them to the green pastures and living fountains of His holy Word. Far from the monuments of human pomp and pride, the people assembled, not in magnificent churches or grand cathedrals, but beneath the shadow of the mountains, in the Alpine valleys, or, in time of danger, in some rocky stronghold, to listen to the words of truth from the servants of Christ. The pastors not only preached the gospel, but they visited the sick, catechized the children, admonished the erring, and labored to settle disputes and promote harmony and brotherly love. In times of peace they were sustained by the free-will offerings of the people; but, like Paul the tent-maker, each learned some trade or profession by which, if necessary, to provide for his own support.

From their pastors the youth received instruction. While attention was given to branches of general learning, the Bible was made the chief study. The Gospels of Matthew and John they committed to memory, with many of the Epistles. They were employed also in copying the Scriptures. Some manuscripts contained the whole Bible, others only brief selections, to which some simple explanations of the text were added by those who were able to expound the Scriptures. Thus were brought forth the treasures of truth so long concealed by those who sought to exalt themselves above God.

By patient, untiring labor, sometimes in the deep, dark caverns of

the earth, by the light of torches, the sacred Scriptures were written out, verse by verse, chapter by chapter. Thus the work went on, the revealed will of God shining out like pure gold; how much brighter, clearer, and more powerful because of the trials undergone for its sake, only those could realize who were engaged in the work. Angels from Heaven surrounded these faithful workers.

Satan had urged on the papal priests and prelates to bury the Word of truth beneath the rubbish of error, heresy, and superstition, but in a most wonderful manner it was preserved uncorrupted through all the ages of darkness. It bore not the stamp of man, but the impress of God. Men have been unwearied in their efforts to obscure the plain, simple meaning of the Scriptures, and to make them contradict their own testimony; but, like the ark upon the billowy deep, the Word of God outrides the storms that threaten it with destruction. As the mine has rich veins of gold and silver hidden beneath the surface, so that all must dig who would discover its precious stores, so the Holy Scriptures have treasures of truth that are revealed only to the earnest, humble, prayerful seeker. God designed the Bible to be a lesson-book to all mankind, in childhood, youth, and manhood, and to be studied through all time. He gave His Word to men as a revelation of Himself. Every new truth discerned is a fresh disclosure of the character of its Author. The study of the Scriptures is the means divinely ordained to bring men into closer connection with their Creator, and to give them a clearer knowledge of His will. It is the medium of communication between God and man.

While the Waldenses regarded the fear of the Lord as the beginning of wisdom, they were not blind to the importance of a contact with the world, a knowledge of men and of active life, in expanding the mind and quickening the perceptions. From their schools in the mountains some of the youth were sent to institutions of learning in the cities of France or Italy, where was a more extended field for study, thought, and observation that in their na-

tive Alps. The youth thus sent forth were exposed to temptation, they witnessed vice, they encountered Satan's wily agents, who urged upon them the most subtle heresies and the most dangerous deceptions. But their education from childhood had been of a character to prepare them for all this.

In the schools whither they went, they were not to make confidants of any. Their garments were so prepared as to conceal their greatest treasure—the precious manuscripts of the Scriptures. These, the fruit of months and years of toil, they carried with them, and, whenever they could do so without exciting suspicion, they cautiously placed some portion in the way of those whose hearts seemed open to receive the truth. From their mother's knee the Waldensian youth had been trained with this purpose in view; they understood their work, and faithfully performed it.³

AN APPEAL TO US

Whatever your work may be, dear brethren and sisters, do it as for the Master, and do your best. Do not overlook present golden opportunities and let your life prove a failure while you sit idly dreaming of ease and success in a work for which God has never fitted you. Do the work that is nearest you. Do it, even though it may be amid perils and hardships in the missionary field; but **do not, I beg of you, complain of hardships and self-sacrifices. Look at the Waldenses.** See what plans they devised that the light of the gospel might shine into benighted minds. We should not labor with the expectation of receiving our reward in this life, but with our eyes fixed steadfastly upon the prize at the end of the race. Men and women are wanted now who are as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men and women who will work without having their way smoothed and every obstacle removed.⁴ *R*

References:

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 64, 65.

² *The Great Controversy*, pp. 51–53.

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 63–70. [1888 edition.]

⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 406. [Emphasis added.]



SABBATH, DECEMBER 3, 2022

By David Zic

2

THE END TIMES

In the midst of the agony of the cross, Christ cried out “it is finished” (John 19:30). All the prophecies given over the centuries pointing to this moment had now come to an end. All that the universe saw was that He who was without sin “was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him;” and still it was a glorious event for humanity because “with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). “It is finished” was for the wicked a dreadful declaration. They had lost in their attempt to vanquish the Saviour and they fled from the scene of the cross. “It is finished” was not for the people of God a dreadful declaration. This

was a statement that made possible the access to grace to everyone who desired salvation.

Christ is once more about to declare an end. Once more, prophecies given over the centuries are about to reach their fulfillment. The final warnings given to a world drowning in sin will reach their conclusion. As it was when He said “it is finished” at the cross, there will be two groups at this closing proclamation of Christ. “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man accord-



ing as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last” (Revelation 22:11–13).

Right now, as we approach this declaration of Christ, we are all

making choices as to which group we will be in. The signs foretold in prophecy are fulfilling faster and faster. The sins of humanity are now boldly practiced in defiance of the Creator. Our greed, our indulgence, our desire for the supremacy are killing both our bodies and the world around us. As humanity pushes the Creator further away, His mercy is withdrawn from the world and what follows is devastation on an unprecedented scale. There have been natural disasters throughout the millennia, but the ones we are experiencing today go beyond anything of the past, and it will only get worse. "But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be" (Matthew 24:37). Thinking we know better than God, mankind has released upon itself plagues, pandemics, and disasters of our own making.

The moment comes when the sins are too great for the Lord to bear, "for her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities" (Revelation 18:5). When Christ makes that final declaration that His work of intercession for humanity is finished, on which side will you be found? As a child I remember hearing this message preached at my little church in Puslinch, Canada. The prophecies were presented clearly. The dates, the empires and nations, the charts visually depicting the prophecies, were all important because today as I see these prophecies being fulfilled before my eyes I can recognize them for what they truly are. I am so thankful to all those who shared the prophecies and messages of warning. Many of us have studied the prophecies, but now we are eyewitnesses to their fulfillment.

THE END TIMES AND THE RIGHTEOUS

For those who have accepted the transforming power of the gospel of Christ, the end times bring them incomprehensible joy. They have recognized that their own righteousness is nothing but "filthy rags" (Isaiah 64:6) and they have accepted Christ and His righteousness as their very

own. The power of Christ has transformed their lives and placed them in a condition of harmony with the Creator's will. They delight to do the will of God, and His law is in their heart (Psalm 40:8).

The people of God have accepted salvation by His grace and transformation by His power. The same John who was given the revelation prophecies to share with us tells us that their power comes from their source, Jesus Christ. "But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name" (John 20:31). Revelation is simply an extension of the good news of salvation. After all, the prophecies recorded in the last book of Scripture are declared to be "The Revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1). The prophecies of end times reveal the power of a mighty God to save His people. "Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand" (Revelation 1:3).

The end times do not scare the people of God. Our Saviour has told us that when we see the signs of the end fulfilled, we should "look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:28). We eagerly wait to see our Lord face to face. We desire to give praise and thanks to our Saviour who sacrificed all for us. Even though we are undeserving of it, He

made a way of escape for us. The prophetic record says that on that great day the people of God will look up, while all the terrors of sin are consuming the world and its inhabitants, we will shout out "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation" (Isaiah 25:9).

The Adventist pursuit of understanding prophecy is not to find moments of fire and brimstone, but to gain a deeper relationship, a revelation, of Jesus Christ. Unworthy as we are, we know that we have not done anything to earn this salvation, "we are unprofitable servants: we have done that which was our duty to do" (Luke 17:10). We recognize that "there must be a power working from within, a new life from above, before men can be changed from sin to holiness. That power is Christ. His grace alone can quicken the lifeless faculties of the soul, and attract it to God, to holiness."¹

In prophetic vision, the servant of the Lord sees the people of God on our journey through the end times. As the terrors of the end take place around them, they have separated more and more from this world until they have become fully, totally, and utterly dependent on God. Cords from above are shown in the vision and God's people hold on firmly to these cords.

"As we heard the sounds of mirth and revelry that seemed to



“Because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. This need not be if all who would come to Jesus, and confidently and in faith trust in Him. His meekness and His lowliness, if cherished, will bring peace and rest and moral power to every soul.”

come from the abyss below, we shuddered. We heard the profane oath, the vulgar jest, and low, vile songs. We heard the war song and the dance song. We heard instrumental music, and loud laughter, mingled with cursing and cries of anguish and bitter wailing, and were more anxious than ever to keep upon the narrow, difficult pathway. Much of the time we were compelled to suspend our whole weight upon the cords, which increased in size as we progressed. . . .

“For a moment we hesitated to venture. Then we exclaimed: ‘Our only hope is to trust wholly to the cord. It has been our dependence all the difficult way. It will not fail us now.’ Still we were hesitating and distressed. The words were then spoken: ‘God holds the cord. We need not fear.’ These words were then repeated by those behind us, accompanied with: ‘He will not fail us now. He has brought us thus far in safety.’”²

Fully dependent on God, for the righteous the end times are the fulfillment of prophecy and a sure expectation of meeting our Saviour. The terrors taking place around us are the result of a removal of God’s protective grace. But we have relied on Him and He gives us the promise that our bread and water will be sure. (Isaiah 33:16.)

THE END TIMES AND THE WICKED

Devoid of the saving grace of Christ, the wicked have a very different experience during the end times. They cannot understand why the people of God live the way we do. Salvation is a mystery to them. “To whom God would make known

what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). They look with horror as the world around them unravels before their eyes.

The name for the last book of the Bible is different, depending on the language into which it was translated. In Germanic and Slavic languages, for example, it is a “Revelation,” but in many Latin languages it is referred to as an “Apocalypse.” It is the same book, but your personal experience with Christ determines if the prophecies contained in it, and their fulfillment, are a revelation of your Saviour or your horrifying apocalypse. As the final events unfold, the wicked remember a people who had shared the messages of warning from those prophecies. In the final moments just prior to the declaration that it is finished—as the last rays of mercy remain—some accept the gospel message and join with the righteous in thanks for their salvation in the revelation. Sadly, many refuse the final message of warning and the apocalypse is poured out upon them.

The prophetic scenes show the mercy of God withdrawn, but in reality it is not God that has withdrawn, but humanity that has pushed Him away. Human beings have turned upon creation by their own will. The created being now tells its Creator that He is no longer welcome among them. They don’t need God. They believe they know better than God.

The magnitude of sin has been growing exponentially. “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, dis-

obedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Timothy 3:1–4).

In these verses, the apostle Paul describes a situation at the end times where society has so fully divorced itself from God that nature itself begins to break down under the weight of corruption. The human body becomes a perversion, in some instances from disease and some from intentional corruption of the body. The very nature of the world around us, burdened by human greed, begins to break down. And still, knowing and seeing the breakdown of society, they push on. The wicked declare that they have freed themselves from the restraints placed upon them by the Creator. “While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption: for of whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage” (2 Peter 2:19).

But now Christ says, “it is finished.” In horror, the wicked realize there is nothing they can do. They have rejected salvation and they succumb fully to the control of evil. They will fight for the remnants of resources that remain. Society is crumbling around them, and they look for someone to blame, since they cannot admit that their own sins have overcome them.

The Word has already recorded for us what happens to society and nature itself when a people rejects their Creator’s will. “Behold, the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down, and scattereth abroad the inhabitants thereof. . . . The land

shall be utterly emptied, and utterly spoiled: for the Lord hath spoken this word. The earth mourneth and fadeth away, the world languisheth and fadeth away, the haughty people of the earth do languish. The earth also is defiled under the inhabitants thereof; because they have transgressed the laws, changed the ordinance, broken the everlasting covenant. Therefore hath the curse devoured the earth, and they that dwell therein are desolate: therefore the inhabitants of the earth are burned, and few men left" (Isaiah 24:1, 3–6).

Whatever disasters and horrors have been recorded in history, they cannot begin to compare to what is about to break upon this world. Already we see the trouble arising. The spread of pandemic diseases, the distorted weather events, the increase in violent conflict, and the destruction of nature—these all are only beginnings of what is to come. For the wicked, the time of the end is truly an "apocalypse."

A TIME OF MERCY

Now, while the final moments of God's mercy remain, each of us is given a final appeal to take hold of grace. "And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues" (Revelation 18:4). To come out of this world and be separate from it, is simply to take hold of grace. Our Creator earnestly desires to give us the best gifts and fill us with the righteousness of Christ. "Wherefore come out

from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Corinthians 6:17, 18).

"We are making life's journey amid the perils of the last days. We need to watch carefully every step, and to be sure that we are following our great Leader. Skepticism, infidelity, dissipation, and crime are on every hand. It would be an easy matter to let go the reins of self-control, and plunge over the precipice to sure destruction. How great the mercy that surrounds and preserves us every moment!"³

The people of God have accepted His gift of righteousness in Christ, "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:1–3).

Now, having received the gift—and been transformed by it—will we not share this with others? Ours is not a message of terror. We do not preach fire and brimstone. The events are recorded prophetically so that you and I will know the time in which we live. Now as never before, we need to share the righteousness of Christ with a world desperately

in need of transformation.

"We are living in an age when wickedness prevails. The perils of the last days thicken around us, and because iniquity abounds, the love of many waxes cold. This need not be if all would come to Jesus, and confidently and in faith trust in Him. His meekness and His lowliness, cherished, will bring peace and rest and moral power to every soul.

"The shortness of time is urged as an incentive for us to seek righteousness and to make Christ our friend. This is not the great motive. It savors of selfishness. Is it necessary that the terrors of the day of God be held before us to compel us through fear to right action? This ought not to be. Jesus is attractive. He is full of love, mercy, and compassion. He proposes to be our friend, to walk with us through all the rough pathways of life. He says to you, I am the Lord thy God; walk with me, and I will fill thy path with light. Jesus, the Majesty of Heaven, proposes to elevate to companionship with Himself those who come to Him with their burdens, their weaknesses, and their cares. He will make them His dear children, and finally give them an inheritance of more value than the empires of kings, a crown of glory richer than has ever decked the brow of the most exalted earthly monarch."⁴ *R*

References:

¹ *Steps to Christ*, p. 18.

² *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, pp. 182, 184.

³ *The Signs of the Times*, January 26, 1882.

⁴ *The Review and Herald*, August 2, 1881.





SUNDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2022

By Benjamin Thiel

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

3

A TIME OF WRESTLING

Ever since the sad time when our first parents left their garden home, it has been the hope of every believer to see the day when sin, suffering and sorrow will be ended and we can return to our heavenly home at last. Life here in this world of sin has many struggles, trials and temptations with which every person must wrestle. Considering this Job wrote, “Man that is born of a woman is of few days, and full of trouble” (Job 14:1). Later in history when facing many challenges David exclaimed, “For my soul is full of troubles: and my life draweth nigh unto the grave” (Psalm 88:3).

Men and women throughout history have wrestled with physical difficulties, financial struggles, prob-

lems in relationships, battles of the mind or the emotions, and struggles for health or survival. Yet in all these struggles, there is a blessed hope. Though sometimes the hand of faith may be weak, though sometimes we may wrestle with despair, doubt, or depression, yet somehow, even in the darkness, we can grasp hold of the wonderful promises of God.

“The powers of darkness gather about the soul and shut Jesus from our sight, and at times we can only wait in sorrow and amazement until the cloud passes over. These seasons are sometimes terrible. Hope seems to fail, and despair seizes upon us. In these dreadful hours we must learn to trust, to depend solely upon the merits of the atonement, and in all

our helpless unworthiness cast ourselves upon the merits of the crucified and risen Saviour. We shall never perish while we do this—*never!*”¹

What a wonderful promise! Even in the darkest hour of trouble, even though we may have failed in our Christian walk, if we come to Him in all our unworthiness—then Jesus, who stands for us, our Saviour, our Intercessor, will not turn us away. He takes us as we are, in all our helpless unworthiness. He will never, ever leave us to perish because He forgives “all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases” (Psalm 103:3)—even the terrible disease of sin.

Now at this late hour of earth’s history with storm clouds gather-

ing around us, Jesus still stands to intercede for us. We can bring our case to Him and be sure that if we trust all to Him, He will be with us to the end.

"Our great need is itself an argument and pleads most eloquently in our behalf. But the Lord is to be sought unto to do these things for us. He says, 'Ask, and it shall be given you.' And 'He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' Matthew 7:7; Romans 8:32."²

"The blood of Jesus is pleading with power and efficacy for those who are backslidden, for those who are rebellious, for those who sin against great light and love. Satan stands at our right hand to accuse us, and our Advocate stands at God's right hand to plead for us. He has never lost a case that has been committed to Him. We may trust in our Advocate; for He pleads His own merits in our behalf. Hear His prayer before His betrayal and trial. Listen to His prayer for us; for He had us in remembrance."³

"Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the Lord delivereth him out of them all" (Psalm 34:19).

THE TIME OF TROUBLE

There can be many difficulties when sailing on the open ocean. Often some of the greatest difficulties are faced when nearing the shore. Sometimes when traveling on vessels large or small, I have gotten very seasick and wished to be back on dry land. But as the land finally comes into view, the last part of the journey often becomes even more turbulent. The danger of breakers, currents and rocks may threaten death or destruction at any moment. In order to land in the right place and with safety, the course needs to be set and the ship or boat prepared well before landing to avoid being smashed on the shore. So, in our life's journey, we may be sick and tired of this world of sin and suffering and long to be in heaven at last. As we look forward, it is with joy that we realize we are nearing the heavenly shore. But the last part of

the journey has dangers for which preparation needs to be made well in advance. Our course and preparation will determine how we will manage in the time of wrestling just ahead. Are we ready for the final landing with all its turbulence? How shall we prepare?

WARNING OTHERS

Today there is still opportunity for human beings to come to Jesus, the great High Priest, and experience the forgiveness and peace that He is freely offering. We can prepare for the time of wrestling by sharing the message of salvation with the world around us while probation lasts.

"There are many who are at ease, who are, as it were, asleep. They say, 'If prophecy has foretold the enforcement of Sunday observance, the law will surely be enacted,' and having come to this conclusion they sit down in calm expectation of the event, comforting themselves with the thought that God will protect His people in the day of trouble. **But God will not save us if we make no effort to do the work He has committed to our charge.** We must be found faithfully [doing our duty as] vigilant soldiers, lest Satan shall gain an advantage which it is our duty to prevent.

"We should diligently study the Word of God, and pray in faith that God will restrain the powers of darkness, for as yet the message has gone to comparatively few, and the world is to be lightened with its glory. The present truth—the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus—has not yet been sounded as it must be. There are many almost within the shadow of our own doors for whose salvation no personal effort has ever been made.

"We are not prepared for the time when our work must close. . . . The controversy for the Sabbath will open the subject to the people, and an opportunity will be given that the claims of the genuine Sabbath may be presented. . . .

"It is time for God's people to work as never before, because of the increase of wickedness. The God-fearing, commandment-keeping

people should be diligent, not only in prayer, but in action; and this will bring the truth before those who have never heard it. The world is overborne with falsehood and iniquity, and those whom God has made the depositaries of His law and of the pure religion of Jesus must be determined to let their light shine."⁴

HABITUALLY DEPENDING ON GOD

It has been truly said that character is revealed in a crisis. To stand firm in the crisis ahead we need to make a habit of depending on God by faith each day. The natural human reaction to trouble is to worry, complain, fight, hide, or to run. Rather than do any of these things our oft repeated action or habit should be to get on our knees and wrestle with God in prayer by faith.

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God.

"Those who exercise but little faith now, are in the greatest danger of falling under the power of Satanic delusions and the decree to compel the conscience. And even if they endure the test, they will be plunged into deeper distress and anguish in the time of trouble, because they

have never made it a habit to trust in God. The lessons of faith which they have neglected, they will be forced to learn under a terrible pressure of discouragement.”⁵

HAVING OUR SINS FORGIVEN!

The time is fast coming when Jesus will cast down the censor in the heavenly sanctuary and the following words will be uttered: “He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still” (Revelation 22:11).

To stand during the time of wrestling, when Jesus is no longer interceding for each of us in the heavenly sanctuary, it is essential by God’s grace, to have our sins blotted out by the blood of the Lamb. “Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered” (Romans 4:7).

“They afflict their souls before God, pointing to their past repentance of their many sins, and pleading the Saviour’s promise: ‘Let him take hold of My strength, that he may make peace with Me; and he shall make peace with Me.’ [Isaiah 27:5.] Their faith does not fail because their prayers are not immediately answered. Though suffering the keenest anxiety, terror, and distress, they do not cease their intercessions. They lay hold of the strength of God as Jacob laid hold of the Angel; and the language of their souls is: ‘I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.’

“Had not Jacob previously repented of his sin in obtaining the birthright by fraud, God would not have heard his prayer and mercifully preserved his life. So, in the time of trouble, *if the people of God had unconfessed sins to appear before them while tortured with fear and anguish, they would be overwhelmed; despair would cut off their faith, and they could not have confidence to plead with God for deliverance.* But while they have a deep sense of their unworthiness, **they have no concealed wrongs to reveal. Their sins have gone**

beforehand to judgment and have been blotted out, and they cannot bring them to remembrance.

“All who endeavor to excuse or conceal their sins, and permit them to remain upon the books of heaven, unconfessed and unforgiven, will be overcome by Satan. . . .

Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless.

“Those professed Christians who come up to that last fearful conflict **unprepared will, in their despair, confess their sins in words of burning anguish, while the wicked exult over their distress. These confessions are of the same character as was that of Esau or of Judas.** Those who make them, lament the *result* of transgression, but not its guilt. They feel no true contrition, no abhorrence of evil. They acknowledge their sin, through fear of punishment; but, like Pharaoh of old, they would return to their defiance of Heaven should the judgments be removed.”⁶

“Jacob would not be turned away. He knew that God was merciful, and he appealed to His mercy. He pointed back to his past sorrow and repentance of his wrongs, and urged his petition for deliverance from the hand of Esau. Thus his importuning continued all night. As he reviewed his past wrongs, he was driven almost to despair. But he knew that he must have help from God or perish. He held fast the angel, and urged his petition with agonizing, earnest cries, until he prevailed. Thus will it be with the righteous. As they review the events of their past life, their hopes will almost sink. But as they realize that it is a case of life or death, they will earnestly cry unto God, and appeal to Him in regard to their past sorrow and humble repentance of their many sins. . . . Thus will their earnest petitions be offered to God day and night.”⁷

Now is the time to make peace



with God and to ask forgiveness for our sins. Now is the time to forsake the things that stop us from making a full surrender to God.

LOSING OUR EARTHLINESS

During the last time of wrestling, all earthliness—any last attachment to this earth—will be consumed. In our daily Christian walk as we look to Jesus, our Friend, our Elder Brother, our Intercessor, our all-in-all, we too lose our attachment to earthly things. The things we have here, are just tools to serve our needs, the needs of others and the cause of truth. We look for a city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Though this is to be our life-long focus during the time of wrestling, any last physical attachment to this world will disappear.

“Those who are collaborators with God will have no disposition to engage in the various expedients for amusement; they will not be seeking after happiness and enjoyment. . . . The great work of redemption will be their first consideration. Eating and drinking and dressing,

“It is time for God’s people to work as never before, because of the increase of wickedness. The God-fearing, commandment-keeping people should be diligent, not only in prayer, but in action; and this will bring the truth before those who have never heard it.”

houses and lands, will be secondary matters.”⁸

“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.”⁹

“We should now acquaint ourselves with **God by proving His promises**. Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We **should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God.**”¹⁰

“Jacob’s history is also an assurance that **God will not cast off those who have been deceived, and tempted, and betrayed into sin, but who have returned unto Him with true repentance. While Satan seeks to destroy this class, God will send His angels to comfort and protect them in the time of peril.** The assaults of Satan are fierce and determined, his delusions are terrible; but the Lord’s eye is upon His people, and His ear listens to their cries. Their affliction is great, the flames of the furnace seem about to consume them; but the Refiner will bring them forth as gold tried in the fire. God’s love for His children during the period of their severest trial is as strong and tender as in the days of their sunniest prosperity; but it is

needful for them to be placed in the furnace fire; **their earthliness must be consumed that the image of Christ may be perfectly reflected.**”¹¹

THE TIME OF WRESTLING ENDED

Thank God that the time of wrestling will come to an end with a wonderful assurance from God Himself. As “the righteous in their mental anguish . . . cry to God day and night for deliverance from the hand of the wicked who surround them,”¹² God hears their prayer and pleading, and the voice of God like many waters shakes the heavens and the earth. Buildings are shaken and destroyed. “The living saints, 144,000 in number, knew and understood the voice, while the wicked thought it was thunder and an earthquake. When God spoke the time, He poured upon us the Holy Ghost, and our faces began to light up and shine with the glory of God, as Moses’ did when he came down from Mount Sinai.”¹³

The Lord’s messenger further describes: “I then heard a triumphant shout of victory, loud, musical, and clear. I looked upon the company who, a short time before, were in such distress and bondage. Their captivity was turned. A glorious light shone upon them. How beautiful they then looked! All marks of care and weariness were gone, and health and beauty were seen in every countenance. Their enemies, the heathen around them, fell like dead men; they could not endure the light that shone upon the delivered, holy ones. This light and glory remained upon them, until Jesus was seen in the clouds of heaven, and the faithful, tried company were changed

in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, from glory to glory. And the graves were opened, and the saints came forth, clothed with immortality, crying, ‘Victory over death and the grave;’ and together with the living saints they were caught up to meet their Lord in the air, while rich, musical shouts of glory and victory were upon every immortal tongue.”¹⁴

Brothers and sisters, a wonderful future is before us—but it is high time to prepare for the tempest and time of wrestling before the final approach to the heavenly shore. As we examine our life, are we prepared to face this time just ahead of us? In love for the souls around us, are we earnestly giving the final warning to the people as we should? Is it our habit to depend completely on God or are we relying on some earthly props? We may feel utterly unworthy but should not remain unforgiven; Jesus’ blood will blot out our sins. This and every moment have you been to Jesus? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb? Let us follow the Lamb, and as we turn our eyes on Jesus, our attachment to earthly things, the things so soon to pass, will fade into insignificance. May God help us to make this preparation for the time of wrestling! *R*

References:

- ¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 309, 310.
- ² *Steps to Christ*, p. 95.
- ³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White], vol. 7, p. 948.
- ⁴ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 502, 503.
- ⁵ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 621, 622. [1888 edition.]
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 619, 620.
- ⁷ *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 133.
- ⁸ *Daughters of God*, p. 16.
- ⁹ *Early Writings*, pp. 56, 57.
- ¹⁰ *The Great Controversy*, p. 622. [1888 edition.]
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 621.
- ¹² *The Story of Redemption*, p. 97.
- ¹³ *Early Writings*, p. 14.
- ¹⁴ *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 178.



WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 7, 2022

By Radu Ionita

4

TRUTH IN A TIME OF CRISIS

“What is truth?” (John 18:38). The Roman praetor inferred that the prisoner before him had the answer. Yet sadly, he didn’t bother to wait for that answer. What a loss, a terrible loss, . . . not to know! He could have known! The Truth personified was right there in front of him, but Pontius Pilate didn’t pursue it. What about us? “And knowest not . . .” (Revelation 3:17), the True Witness tells each of us today.

The worst thing for Pilate was that he didn’t know he was in the crisis of his life! He thought Jesus was in danger, not him. He thought he was the judge—that he was fine! What an enormous deceit! Probably that attitude cost him eternal life. In those few hours he decided his eter-

nal destiny. Right there, standing in his presence, covered in the humble resemblance of a prisoner was “the Way, the Truth, and the Life” (John 14:6). He looked like a captive, but He was the Liberator. “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). But Pilate missed it altogether! He did not know . . .

What would you have done in that situation? Would you have sought and followed the truth by any means?

By the way, are you in a crisis right now? Am I? What if we are, unknowingly, like Pilate, assuming that somebody else might be in danger? To all of us, the Lord may say: “If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which be-

long unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes” (Luke 19:42).

Today we must know, my dear brethren! Tomorrow could be too late! We need to know the truth that shall make us free. (John 8:32.)

THE GREATEST CRISIS— STRAIGHT AHEAD!

“Rulers and statesmen, thinking men who occupy positions of trust and authority, men and women of all classes . . . recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a **stupendous crisis**.”¹

“The conflict that is right upon us will be the most terrible ever witnessed.”²

"The 'time of trouble such as never was,' is soon to open upon us; and we shall need an experience which we do not now possess, and which many are too indolent to obtain. It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but **this is not true of the crisis before us.** The most vivid presentation cannot reach **the magnitude of the ordeal.** In that time of trial, every soul must stand for himself before God."³

The good news is that God promised and paid our salvation: "Alas! for that day is great, so that none is like it: it is even the time of Jacob's trouble; but he shall be saved out of it" (Jeremiah 30:7). As Jacob prevailed against that terrible trouble, we are also to prevail!

"Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded."⁴

Although God made ample provision for our salvation and paid an infinite price for it, not all His children will be saved. What about you? What about me?

"Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for His blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God."⁵

A terrible warning! May the Lord help us today to wake up and get ready!

THE PRECIOUS TRUTH

The truth is precious if we understand and accept it. It brings life, the life of God, freely given to us through the plan of salvation, "for the life was manifested, and we . . . shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was

manifested unto us" (1 John 1:2). Knowing the truth puts us in a privileged position; we are enabled to see the whole picture, to understand the causes, project the outcomes, make the right choices—and at the end—enjoy the pleasant, desirable results.

"What is truth?" Pilate asked 2,000 years ago, and today the question is more pertinent than ever! What if he had taken the time to listen? Maybe he would have heard, like Nicodemus, a straight, shocking, but life-changing answer, revealing to him the salvation of his soul! But he didn't . . .

Now is our time! Let us ask ourselves: Do I really want to know the truth about myself, about my soul? If we truly hunger for the truth, we shall be satisfied; it will be more for us than the right knowledge about things or principles involved. The truth is the precious Person of Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man. He not only has the truth about everything, **He IS the Truth.** And more than that, if we accept Him, He is the Gospel, He is the solution for any crisis, He is the Salvation, offering Himself to us: "I am the way, the truth, and the life" (John 14:6)!

THE LIE

Ever since the time of the tree of knowledge of good and evil, deception has been interlaced with truth. What yesterday was labeled as "fake news" tomorrow may be found as "proven science" and vice versa; the "truth has fallen in the public squares" (Isaiah 59:14, RSV).

From the beginning of his rebellion, Satan brought falsehood mingled with some truth. "He is a liar and the father of lies." He lies boldly that God doesn't punish sin (Genesis 3:4) and "in a loud voice" that the Lord cannot save! (2 Kings 18.) By accepting his deceptions, human nature has been corrupted and made incompatible with the truth.

We "have eyes to see, and see not" (Ezekiel 12:2). In a time of crisis, this blindness is even greater. In a crisis, we're stressed and tend to react instead of acting wisely and thoughtfully. We're prone to be

deceived by our fears and feelings which distort reality. We see only "giants" and we are "in our own sight as grasshoppers" (Numbers 13:33). The stress of the crisis cuts short the time needed for calm consideration. We're pushed to resolve matters quickly, get things done—to escape! And in the process, truth can be lost. . . . Only at the end, after we cool down and the crisis has past, can we discern the mistakes and deceptions, and see the truth more clearly. Sometimes this scrutiny is painful and saddening. We discover that the truth was other than where we thought and that we have acted foolishly. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it" (Jeremiah 17:9)?

Therefore, we don't have to look to ourselves for solutions to the crises. We have to go to the fountain of truth! Starting at the beginning, the first truth—the most important—is:

WHO IS GOD?

In the beginning, "the God of their fathers" named "I AM THAT I AM" (Exodus 3:14) was not known by the Israelites. But at the Red Sea they began to know Him! They now saw the residue of Egypt's pride and glory: the corpses of their oppressors, brought by the waves along the shore. They saw the Hand of God erasing the land of Egypt due to its stubborn opposition; they had seen the Pillar of cloud and fire, they had seen the huge walls of water obeying the Creator's voice! They had seen His mighty Hand miraculously working for them! That was the Truth revealed for them: the Great "I AM" was in their midst, a loving Father, eager to help, omnipotent! By faith they had reached out to know the Lord. "By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land" (Hebrews 11:29).

This is even more precious! The Lord is "the Truth," He is "the Life" (John 14:6)! He is the Source of life itself, all creation. He is the solution for any imaginable trouble, He is "the Way" of escape as well as the way of righteousness. He declares, "No man cometh unto the Father,

but by me" (John 14:6). He is in perfect control and cannot be surprised. By knowing Him, receiving Him, His children receive life and salvation, because to know Him is life eternal (John 17:3). "He that hath the Son hath life" (1 John 5:12). This is the truth!

"To know God is to love Him."⁶ In times of trouble we see Him clearer; His love and saving power prove themselves real. The Lord says, "Call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me" (Psalm 50:15).

WHO AM I?

The second important truth in a crisis is about who we are.

"It is in a crisis that character is revealed."⁷ Peter thought he knew himself, but in the crisis of Christ being arrested, he discovered himself. While the words of denial were still fresh on his lips, he looked to Jesus. There He saw Jesus as never before—full of forgiveness with no shadow of reproach. "A tide of memories rushed over him. The Saviour's tender mercy, His kindness and long-suffering, His gentleness and patience toward His erring disciples—all was remembered. . . . [Peter] reflected with horror upon his own ingratitude, his falsehood, his perjury."⁸ Like Peter, in mirroring Jesus we may understand our total impotence and the cruel malice of our hearts. A painful but saving experience! It is this discovery that brings us, as it did for Peter, to repentance and conversion. Like him, we become a new creature, but only as we fully understand our desperate condition and abhor ourselves.

Daniel confessed: "O Lord, righteousness belongeth unto thee, but unto us confusion of faces . . ." "because we have sinned against thee. To the Lord . . . belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against him" (Daniel 9:7–9). The apostle Paul acknowledged: "For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh" (Romans 7:18, RSV). Precious, saving understanding!

In the light of God's character, we admit our true condition: "O

wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death" (Romans 7:24)?

"Then shalt thou call, and the Lord shall answer; thou shalt cry, and he shall say, Here I am" (Isaiah 58:9).

THE LORD IS HERE TO SAVE

"Where is the Lord God?" (2 Kings 2:14.) Any time a soul in his impotence and despair seeks the Lord, He answers, "Here I am!" He wants to be with us any time and even more so in time of crisis. He is there to save "with healing in his wings." This is the very essence of God's life. "I AM" means He is everywhere (Psalm 139); He is with every child of His in need. "Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not" (Genesis 28:16), is the truth for us.

Six centuries before Christ, in Babylon, in front of the burning furnace, the three young Jews said confidently: "Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king" (Daniel 3:17). That was the truth! Not the rage of the king, nor the burning flames, but the dear Person of Jesus, who **was there**, walking freely with them in that fire. The apostle Paul confirms: "He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him" (Hebrews 7:25). Do we need more than that?

WE HAVE THE MAJORITY!

In the crisis of Dothan, surrounded by Syrian armies, Elisha, the man of God, explained to his servant: "Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). What was the truth in that crisis? Here they were besieged by the Syrians with no apparent way of escape. But in reality they were encircled by the mighty protecting armies of heavenly angels. Not they, but the Syrians were in danger!

GOD CANNOT SAVE OPPOSERS

Another solemn truth is that "the cloud that was a wall of darkness to

the Egyptians was to the Hebrews a great flood of light . . . shedding brightness upon the path before them."⁹ "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble" (James 4:6). He wants to help all; He paid the salvation for all; but He can only save those who accept Him and His grace!

It would be a terrible deceit to willfully continue in opposition with God, to scoff His grace and in the time of crisis to assume that He is with us! Remember the last crisis in the life of King Saul—(1 Samuel 15:22, 23), and in the life of Judas Iscariot (Matthew 27:3–5). It is true that the Lord, in His longsuffering, often delays the execution of justice determined by our choices, but that path of opposition, of rebellion, of spiritual indolence, if insistently followed, will surely bring us to destruction! "Because I have called, and ye refused . . . ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof: I also will laugh at your calamity. . . . Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me" (Proverbs 1:24–28).

ONLY A FEW WILL PREVAIL

"But a small portion of those who now profess the truth will be sanctified by it and be saved,"¹⁰ "for many be called, but few chosen" (Matthew 20:16). Only "two of the adults of the vast army that left Egypt entered the land of Canaan. Their dead bodies were strewn in the wilderness because of their transgressions."¹¹

"Those who delay a preparation for the day of God cannot obtain it in the time of trouble, or at any subsequent time. The case of all such is hopeless."¹² This should be the most painful truth to the heart of our dear Saviour! For many, His infinite sacrifice will be in vain!

OUR PART: BELIEVE! (seeing "the Invisible")

The apostle Paul, whose life was a never-ending crisis (see 2 Corinthians 11:23–29) has given us the key: "because we look not to the things

that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18, RSV).

"By faith [Moses] forsook Egypt, . . . for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). In other words, "to see" Him means to believe in Him, in everything He is and does! "The just shall live by faith" (Hebrews 10:38). The faith is "the substance" (concrete reality, the assurance) of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1). By faith we receive Him (John 1:12), by faith we obtain His righteousness (Philippians 3:9), by faith we are transformed (2 Corinthians 3:18), and by faith we are saved (Ephesians 2:8)!

Let us turn our eyes from all that the enemy puts before us! Let people say whatever they want. We have a far brighter vision to contemplate: let us see dear Jesus—THE TRUTH, the unseen Mighty Commander of the Universe, with all creation at His feet, ready to heal and save! "Once the gaze is fixed upon Him, the life finds its center. . . . Duty becomes a delight and sacrifice a pleasure. To honor Christ, to become like Him, to work for Him, is the life's highest ambition and its greatest joy."¹³

Just as in the crisis at the Red Sea, "often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, 'Go forward.' We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet."¹⁴

By faith in Him we are made able to obey. "Faith works by love and purifies the soul, and with faith there will be corresponding obedience, a faithful doing of the words of Christ."¹⁵

So then, look to Him, "the chiefest among ten thousand"!

IT IS WRITTEN

It is in the written Word of God that we "see" and "know" our

Saviour, and the reality of our own frailty as well. Christ conquered by "it is written" (Matthew 4:4, 7, 10). He did not debate with the enemy; "He would not parley with temptation."¹⁶ May the Lord help us do the same. "When assailed by temptation, look not to circumstances or to the weakness of self, but to the power of the word. All its strength is yours."¹⁷

"'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.' Often the follower of Christ is brought where he cannot serve God and carry forward his worldly enterprises. Perhaps it appears that obedience to some plain requirement of God will cut off his means of support. . . . But the only thing in our world upon which we can rely is the word of God. . . . When we learn the power of His word, we shall not follow the suggestions of Satan in order to obtain food or to save our lives. Our only questions will be, What is God's command? and what His promise? Knowing these, we shall obey the one, and trust the other."¹⁸

BE STILL

Surrounded by mountains, blocked by the sea ahead and pressed from behind by the Egyptian armies, the Israelites, without weapons, could see nothing but imminent death. By faith, Moses seeing the Lord in their midst, said: "The Lord will fight for you, and you have only to be still" (Exodus 14:14, RSV). "The victory belongs to the Lord" (Proverbs 21:31). "Be still"—for them and for us, this is indeed one of the most difficult exercises of faith! Let us honor the Lord by completely trusting Him, as true people of rest (*shabbath* in Hebrew) and get ready!

NO ROOM FOR DISCOURAGEMENT

Jesus says, "In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). Christ did not fail, neither was He discouraged. As He prevailed, we may prevail, too. His grace is sufficient for us and

"All who will lay hold of God's promises, as [Jacob] did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded."

His power is made perfect in weakness. Let us say with Paul: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Trusting in Him, we are made "more than conquerors through him that loved us" (Romans 8:37).

CLING TO HIM AND SUCCEED!

Victory is assured by the Mighty Conqueror! We have only to submit to His will—and "if God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31).

In the night of the last fierce crisis, the Sun of Righteousness shall rise, and His people shall be raised with Him to glory, purified, shining, reflecting the beauty of their Redeemer! The greatest truth that "God is love" shall resound in all of God's creation! May the Lord help us to cooperate with Him, to allow Him to save us fully, to walk with Him daily until faith shall fade in glory, when He shall receive us in the courts above! Amen. *R*

References:

¹ *Education*, p. 179. [Emphasis added.]

² *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 407.

³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 622. [Emphasis added.]

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 621.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

⁷ *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 412.

⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 713.

⁹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

¹⁰ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 608.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 609.

¹² *The Great Controversy*, p. 620.

¹³ *Education*, p. 296.

¹⁴ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

¹⁵ *Messages to Young People*, p. 200.

¹⁶ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 121.



FRIDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2022

By Manuel Henda

5

A DECAYING WORLD

In what time period are we living today?

“In the days of Martin Luther, there were those that came to him and said, ‘We do not want your Bible, we want the Spirit.’ Martin Luther said to them, ‘I will rap your spirit on the snoot.’ However great their pretences, they are not the children of God.”¹

In times past, the righteous felt it was impossible to be connected with Rome, and although antagonism against this system of error was maintained only at the risk of life and property, many still had the courage to remain separate, fighting for the truth. Biblical truth was more precious to them than wealth, honor, or even life itself. They could

not bear to see the truth buried under a mass of superstition and lying sophistry.

The Reformers took the Word of God in their hands and raised the standard of truth before the people, courageously declaring what the Lord had revealed to them through careful examination of the Bible. They suffered the cruelest of deaths for their fidelity to God, but by the blood of Christ they acquired for us freedoms and privileges—which sadly, are now being readily handed over to the power of evil by many who claim to be Protestants.

Let us recall the 95 Theses of Martin Luther which once echoed through mountains and valleys and shook Europe as with an earth-

quake. This one courageous man called forth a spiritual army of noble followers of Christ—and the truth they defended could not be silenced by flames, torture, imprisonment, or death. And even today, the remnant voices of that noble army of martyrs unveils the Roman power and the apostasy—the mystery of iniquity that Paul foresaw—that would intensify in the last days.

“Now we beseech you, brethren, by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him, that ye be not soon shaken in mind, or be troubled, neither by spirit, nor by word, nor by letter as from us, as that the day of Christ is at hand. Let no man deceive you by any means: for that day

shall not come, except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition; who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he as God sitteth in the temple of God, shewing himself that he is God. Remember ye not, that, when I was yet with you, I told you these things? And now ye know what withholdeth that he might be revealed in his time. For the mystery of iniquity doth already work" (2 Thessalonians 2:1-7).

THE TRUTH WATERED DOWN

When the early church was corrupted, moving away from the simplicity of the gospel and accepting paid rites and customs, it lost the Spirit and power of God—and in order to govern the conscience of the people, it sought the support of secular power. This resulted in the papacy, a church that directed the power of the state and employed it to favor its own ends, especially in the punishment of so-called "heresy."

"Whenever the church has obtained secular power, she has employed it to punish dissent from her doctrines. Protestant churches that have followed in the steps of Rome by forming alliance with worldly powers, have manifested a similar desire to restrict liberty of conscience. An example of this is given in the long-continued persecution of dissenters by the Church of England. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, thousands of non-conformist ministers were forced to leave their churches, and many, both of pastors and people, were subjected to fine, imprisonment, torture, and martyrdom.

"It was apostasy that led the early church to seek the aid of the civil government, and this prepared the way for the development of the papacy—the beast. Said Paul, There shall 'come a falling away . . . and that man of sin be revealed.' [2 Thessalonians 2:3.] So apostasy in the church will prepare the way for the image to the beast. And the Bible declares that before the coming of

the Lord there will exist a state of religious declension similar to that in the first centuries. '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.' [2 Timothy 3:1-5.] 'Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils.' [1 Timothy 4:1.] Satan will work 'with all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness.' And all that 'received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved,' will be left to accept 'strong delusion, that they should believe a lie.' [2 Thessalonians 2:9-11.] When this state of ungodliness shall be reached, the same results will follow as in the first centuries.

"The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed—however important they might be from a Bible standpoint—must necessarily be waived."²

THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST

John the Revelator describes: "I beheld another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spake as a dragon. And he exerciseth all the power of the first beast before him, and causeth the earth and them which dwell therein to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. And he doeth great wonders, so that he maketh

fire come down from heaven on the earth in the sight of men, and deceiveth them that dwell on the earth by the means of those miracles which he had power to do in the sight of the beast; saying to them that dwell on the earth, that they should make an image to the beast, which had the wound by a sword, and did live. And he had power to give life unto the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak, and cause that as many as would not worship the image of the beast should be killed" (Revelation 13:11-15).

The image of the beast is formed before the door of probation closes. This second beast in Revelation 13 exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence and causes the Earth and its inhabitants to worship the first beast, whose deadly wound was healed. "And he causeth all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and bond, to receive a mark in their right hand, or in their foreheads: and that no man might buy or sell, save he that had the mark, or the name of the beast, or the number of his name" (Revelation 13:16, 17).

This is the final test through which God's people called out of Babylon (confusion) will pass before they are sealed. All who show their loyalty to God by observing His law and refusing to accept a false Sabbath, place themselves under the banner of the Lord God Jehovah, and receive the seal of the living God. In contrast, those who renounce the truth of heavenly origin and instead accept Sunday (the first day of the week of the pagan sun-god) rather than Saturday (the seventh day—God's holy rest day established at creation) will receive the sign of the beast.

A THREEFOLD UNION

The Revelator further describes: "And I saw three unclean spirits like frogs come out of the mouth of the dragon, and out of the mouth of the beast, and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of devils, working miracles, which go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world,

Now is no time to seek out the customs and practices of the world; our focus instead should be to search out the will of God to see what the scriptures say, and then walk according to the light that God has given us. Our inclinations, habits, and practices should not have the preeminence. The Word of God is to be our norm.

to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty" (Revelation 16:13, 14).

"The teachings of religious leaders have opened the door to infidelity, to spiritualism, and to contempt for God's holy law; and upon these; leaders rests a fearful responsibility for the iniquity that exists in the Christian world.

"Yet this very class put forth the claim that the fast-spreading corruption is largely attributable to the desecration of the so-called 'Christian Sabbath,' and that the enforcement of Sunday observance would greatly improve the morals of society. This claim is especially urged in America, where the doctrine of the true Sabbath has been most widely preached. Here the temperance work, one of the most prominent and important of moral reforms, is often combined with the Sunday movement, and the advocates of the latter represent themselves as laboring to promote the highest interest of society; and those who refuse to unite with them are denounced as the enemies of temperance and reform. But the fact that a movement to establish error is connected with a work which is in itself good, is not an argument in favor of the error. We may disguise poison by mingling it with wholesome food, but we do not change its nature. On the contrary, it is rendered more dangerous, as it is more likely to be taken unawares. It is one of Satan's devices to combine with falsehood just enough truth to give it plausibility. The leaders of the Sunday movement may advocate reforms which the people need, principles which are in harmony with the Bible; yet

while there is with these a requirement which is contrary to God's law, His servants cannot unite with them. Nothing can justify them in setting aside the commandments of God for the precepts of men.

"Through the two great errors, the immortality of the soul, and Sunday sacredness, Satan will bring the people under his deceptions. While the former lays the foundation of spiritualism, the latter creates a bond of sympathy with Rome. The Protestants of the United States will be foremost in stretching their hands across the gulf to grasp the hand of spiritualism; they will reach over the abyss to clasp hands with the Roman power; and under the influence of this threefold union, this country will follow in the steps of Rome in trampling on the rights of conscience."³

By a decree aimed at imposing a papal institution in opposition to the law of God, the unclean spirit of apostate Protestantism clasps with one hand the Roman power and the other with spiritism. Under the influence of this alliance, the United States is induced to repudiate all the principles of its Constitution which had made it a Protestant and republican government, and instead adopts measures for the propagation of the errors and falsehoods of the papacy. As this takes place, we can know that the hour of Satan's mesmerizing power is at hand and the end is near.

Romanists, Protestants and worldlings together will accept the form of godliness without the power and will see in this alliance a grand ushering in of the long-awaited millennium.

THE FOCUS OF PERSECUTION BY BOTH PROTESTANTS AND CATHOLICS

Jesus forewarned His followers: "Beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you. And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 10:17-22).

Protestant persecutions on behalf of Romanism—for which the religion of Christ was almost annihilated—will come into full force when Protestantism and popery are united.

When the main churches of the United States, uniting on those points of doctrine common to them, influence the state to impose their decrees and support their institutions, Protestant America will then have formed an image of the Roman hierarchy, and the inflicting of civil penalties against dissidents will be inevitable. "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).



OUR DEEP NEED FOR REFORM

We are approaching the end of earth's history, and now is no time to seek out the customs and practices of the world; our focus instead should be to search out the will of God to see what the Scriptures say, and then walk according to the light that God has given us. Our inclinations, habits, and practices should not have the preeminence. The Word of God is to be our norm.

"Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? by taking heed thereto according to thy word. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments. Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee" (Psalm 119:9-11).

There is no need to be spiritual dwarfs if we continually exercise our spiritual faculties. By merely praying for this and that does not meet the needs of the case. We need to accustom our mind to focusing intensively on spiritual matters.

"There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit

the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be. So then they that are in the flesh cannot please God.

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his. And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you. Therefore, brethren, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live after the flesh. For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live" (Romans 8:1-13).

Exercise builds strength and vigor. Many professed Christians find themselves on their way to losing both worlds. Being a halfhearted and half-worldly Christian makes one not partly saved, but entirely lost.

CONCLUSION

Everything that takes you away from God has got to be renounced.

"Mammon is the idol of many. The love of money, the desire for wealth, is the golden chain that binds them to Satan. Reputation and worldly honor are worshiped by another class. The life of selfish ease and freedom from responsibility is

the idol of others. But these slavish bands must be broken. We cannot be half the Lord's and half the world's. We are not God's children unless we are such entirely."⁴

"Desires for goodness and holiness are right as far as they go; but if you stop here, they will avail nothing. Many will be lost while hoping and desiring to be Christians. They do not come to the point of yielding the will to God. They do not now choose to be Christians."⁵

Let us redeem the time while the door of probation is still open! We have not a moment to waste. The end is near. Soon the thoroughfares of travel available in order to convey the truth will be surrounded by dangers on the right and on the left. This is done to obstruct the path of the Lord's messengers so they cannot accomplish what they can still do now. We must press forward with our work. The powers of darkness are working with intense energy that proceeds from beneath, and the stealthy steps of the evil one are seeking to overtake those who are now asleep.

We now have warnings that are possible to give, a work we are granted to do quickly. Soon it will be more difficult than we can imagine. May the Lord help us to stay on the side of right, to work with our eyes fixed on Jesus, our Leader, and, patiently and perseveringly, advance to victory! *R*

References:

- ¹ *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, p. 22.
- ² *The Great Controversy* [1888 edition], pp. 443, 444. [Italics by Author.]
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 587, 588.
- ⁴ *Steps to Christ*, p. 44.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 47, 48.



SABBATH, DECEMBER 10, 2022

By Peter D. Lausevic

[Emphasis added throughout.]

6

FAITH OVER FEAR

Whenever we think of the gathering storm, we often place it in the context of the second coming of Christ. Our desires, our hopes, our inspirations are all centered in that blessed hope of the coming of our Lord and Saviour. But what are we asking when we speak of the coming of Jesus? When we say that we are to be hastening the coming of the true Messiah the second time, it includes some events that are not so glorious as the second advent. The Bible reminds us of the tough times that happen before that day. "Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light. As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand

on the wall, and a serpent bit him" (Amos 5:18, 19).

The final storm is not something to be taken lightly. Jesus describes terrible things that will take place, something that is beyond our comprehension until those events actually take place. "Then said he unto them, Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and great earthquakes shall be in divers places, and famines, and pestilences; and fearful sights and great signs shall there be from heaven. But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name's sake" (Luke 21:10–12).

In spite of the most diligent preparation, what will happen when these scenes actually take place? "It is often the case that trouble is greater in anticipation than in reality; but this is not true of the crisis before us. The most vivid presentation cannot reach the magnitude of the ordeal."¹ We have had a little taste of what it will be like then during this time of Covid. By the time you are reading this, it is possible that the Covid crisis will be over. On the other hand, it has already been raging for over two years and showing no sign of abating—but rather is constantly mutating. It is like fleeing from a dangerous lion just to run into a bear. And just as we are escaping in the nick of time, we close the door of a nearby house and rest our hands

What is more ominous is that, according to the Centers for Disease Control in the United States, the total deaths have been steadily increasing since the year 2000 when it started at approximately 2.4 million and by 2019 before Covid came, it was nearly at 2.9 million.

It is true that the population has also grown during that time and from 2000–2009 the percentage of the population that were dying has actually been decreasing from about .85% down to about .79%. Then something happened in 2010 and it has been steadily increasing again until by 2019 it had reached .87%. For the year 2020 the total number of deaths had reached an astounding 3.4 million or 1% of the population.

on the mantelpiece just to be bitten by a snake.

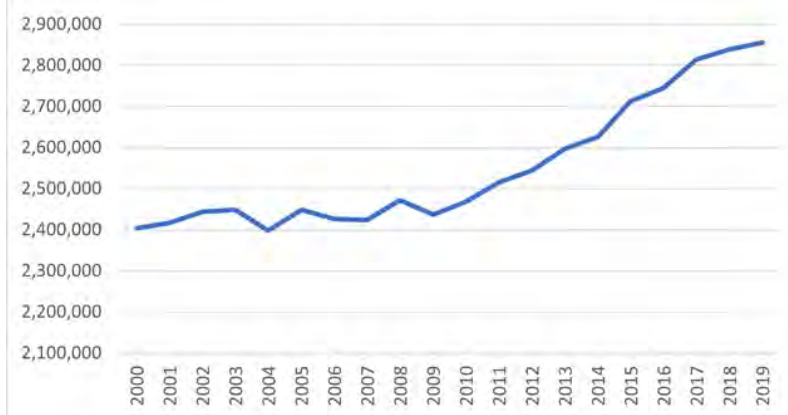
As of the beginning of February this year, there have been nearly 390 million confirmed cases of Covid worldwide with nearly 1.5% dying from the disease (although I personally know of a few cases where the person was already dying and we were expecting their death at any moment and then they caught Covid and they were counted in that statistic). But that still shows the seriousness of this disease and it becomes more personal when one of your immediate family or friends passes away.

If you are living in a place that is affected by disease, you become absorbed by the news surrounding that disease. If you are living in a place that is torn by war—and there are many places like that on this planet at this time—you are not so worried about plagues as you are about military action. When you live in a place where a disaster has just taken place, you are worried about finding shelter. And if you are in a place that is affected by drought, you are worried about what to eat. So the question for us really is: How are we to treat all this data on a personal level?

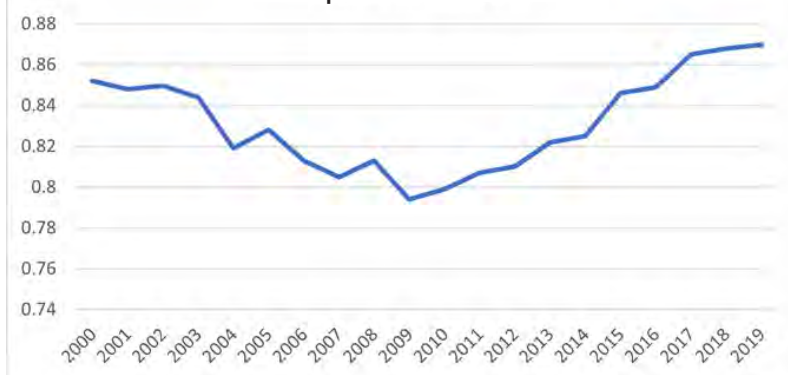
LIVING IN A FEARFUL TIME

What actually is happening all around us? What is happening to

Total Deaths in the U.S.A.



Percentage of Population Died



this world as we know it? “Fear, and the pit, and the snare, are upon thee, O inhabitant of the earth. And it shall come to pass, that he who fleeth from the noise of the fear shall fall into the pit; and he that cometh up out of the midst of the pit shall be taken in the snare: for the windows from on high are open, and the foundations of the earth do shake” (Isaiah 24:17, 18).

The real question from a prophetic viewpoint is not why this is all happening but why are these events so mild in comparison to the destruction that we see portrayed in the Bible as destroying winds and treacherous whirlwinds. We know

that all this must happen and even worse before the coming of the day of the Lord. What is holding everything back? “Saying, Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees, till we have sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads” (Revelation 7:3). Sadly, God’s professed people are not ready and our Creator in His mercy is giving us a bit more time to prepare by mitigating the disasters from their full fury.

Scientists are doing their best to explain what is happening and trying to find a solution to all these events—from pandemics to climate change. Yet if God is not in the picture they cannot identify the true

cause nor find the real solution. "The restraining **Spirit of God is even now being withdrawn from the world.** Hurricanes, storms, tempests, fire and flood, disasters by sea and land, follow each other in quick succession. **Science seeks to explain all these.** The signs thickening around us, telling of the near approach of the Son of God, are attributed to any other than the true cause. Men cannot discern the sentinel angels restraining the four winds that they shall not blow until the servants of God are sealed; but when God shall bid His angels loose the winds, there will be such a scene of strife as no pen can picture."²

During this fearful time, every church member is going to be tested personally like never before. Our fundamental beliefs will be brought into question both from without and sadly from within. "The faith of individual members of the church will be tested as though there were not another person in the world."³ This is not speaking only of the final storm that involves the universal Sunday decree. Clearly there are leadup issues. The final test is just that—the final test. The issue has always been and always will be the will of God verses the will of man. "Howbeit in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Mark 7:7).

Are we really awake to the real issues at hand? Or are we thinking that we can compromise on every issue and then when the Sunday decree comes we will suddenly be found faithful? "The crisis is now upon us. The battle is to be waged between the **Christianity of the Bible** and the **Christianity of human tradition.** Is there not a criminal neglect in our present sleepy condition?"⁴

VICTORY IN CRISIS

What is God trying to accomplish in giving us preliminary tests as we see the gathering storm? The big issue has always been the surrender of the human will to the caring will of our heavenly Father. "Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you" (James 4:7). Submission has to do with the will, with the mind. This is why it all has to do with the con-

trol of our very thoughts. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity **every thought to the obedience of Christ**" (2 Corinthians 10:5). Satan's purpose has always been to control the way we think. "Although Satan rejoiced because of the sufferings of the saints, yet he was not satisfied. He wanted **control of the mind** as well as the body."⁵

As we see wars, plagues, and disasters—manmade as well as natural—mingled with persecution, what has God designed to help us individually to withstand all of these? "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25). As we see that day approaching, it means as we experience the literal fulfillment of all these prophecies we are to find ways to continue meeting together in order to exhort one another the same way that our forefathers had done when such meetings were forbidden.

This is why the United States was established—granting the God-given right to meet in fellowship with one another without interference from the government. Without this right, the United States Constitution would have been derailed so they had to attach a Bill of Rights that declared in part at the very onset: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof."⁶ That very first amendment continues to make it clear that the freedom of exercising your religion includes "the right of the people peaceably to assemble" which includes protesting what the government is doing in a peaceful way. While we are living in relative peace we need to make use of the privilege of meeting together to exhort one another—because a time is coming when we will regret having missed all the neglected opportunities we may have failed to appreciate. Instead of meeting together, we may have chosen to stay at home or tried to find other ways to miss or neglect fellowship one with another. We will then sadly realize that this was often due to simply minor reasons.

WHO IS AFRAID?

As we approach the culmination of all our hopes, what can we expect on the part of the world as we see the prophesied events unfold before our very eyes? "Go not forth into the field, nor walk by the way; for the sword of the enemy and **fear is on every side**" (Jeremiah 6:25). And who exacerbates this fear to an unnerving level? "For I heard the defaming of many, fear on every side. **Report, say they, and we will report it**" (Jeremiah 20:10). I have read headlines that make a person terrified but then when you look up the actual story it is not as bad as the headline. And this is not just news reports. Recently while reading an article from the *British Medical Journal* I read a shocking headline. But reading the details it gave a different picture. And so many people just read the headlines and are living in constant fear.

What are people willing to do when they are afraid? Benjamin Franklin, one of the leading founding fathers in America who helped draft the Declaration of Independence, once said: "Those who would give up essential Liberty, to purchase a little temporary Safety, deserve neither Liberty nor Safety." Once a person becomes afraid, they are willing to give up anything. And what is the driving force behind fear? "And deliver them who through **fear of death** were all their **lifetime subject to bondage**" (Hebrews 2:15). The moment we are afraid to die, we become a slave and are willing to give up anything so that we can have some security of being alive. When a person is no longer afraid to die, they are no longer a slave.

If a person continues in this type of fear, where will they eventually end up? "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death" (Revelation 21:8). This clearly shows that the redeemed will overcome such fear.

FAITH, NOT FEAR

Do God's people sometimes struggle with fear? The patriarch Jacob pleaded with God: "Deliver me, I pray thee, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau: for I fear him, lest he will come and smite me, and the mother with the children" (Genesis 32:11). It is true that much of what he was facing had been self-inflicted, but it nevertheless did cause fear. The solution was to take it to the Lord in prayer and when he did, Jacob came out a different man—a man with no fear at all.

When we look at the circumstances around us and we begin to fear, what is the best solution that God gives? When the children of Israel saw the Egyptian army closing in, a steep cliff forbidding escape on the one side and the sea in front of them, what message does God give His people? "And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they **go forward**" (Exodus 14:15). Yes, in the midst of all that, it is time to move forward and not retreat. "There are times when it seems to the servant of God impossible to do the work necessary to be done, because of the lack of means to carry on a strong, solid work. Some are fearful that with the facilities at their command they cannot do all that they feel it their duty to do. But **if they advance in faith**, the salvation of God will be revealed, and prosperity will attend their efforts."⁷ In other words, "If we humbly do our work with fidelity, the Lord will take care of the results. Have faith in God."⁸

As we look at world events—including Covid or any other catastrophic plague or disaster—how should we relate to them? "Say ye not, A confederacy, to all them to whom this people shall say, A confederacy; **neither fear ye their fear, nor be afraid**" (Isaiah 8:12). If we truly believe that we are in the will of God, then whether we live or die is no matter to us. "For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:8).

HOW TO OVERCOME FEAR

The first thing we need to resolve is: What are we looking for? Our

Master bids us, "**Seek ye first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Is the heavenly kingdom Number 1 with us? If so, then how long we live in this sinful world is of no consequence to us as long as we fulfill the purpose for which God has placed us in this world. Stephen's life was cut short at the very beginning of his work and John's was prolonged to a very ripe old age. Each had accomplished their work and neither was afraid of death. But their will was completely submerged into the will of God and they trusted in Him fully for the accomplishment of His purposes.

The thing that causes in us a fear of dying is when we're not doing the will of God. "If thou prepare thine heart, and stretch out thine hands toward him; if iniquity be in thine hand, put it far away, and let not wickedness dwell in thy tabernacles. For then shalt thou lift up thy face without spot; yea, thou shalt be stedfast, **and shalt not fear**" (Job 11:13–15).

This can only happen once we are born again and we have a heavenly driving force directing our life. "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For **ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:14, 15). Remember that it was fear of death that led people to be subject to bondage all their life. That means that once we are born again and become the sons of God, we are no longer afraid to die. Yes, we love our heavenly Father so much that it changes our entire perspective on life. "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18).

Fear of death is the driving force for slavery. Fear to die in war, of some kind of disaster, of a pandemic, of hunger, of persecution—they are all no different. It is true that we are not to go into persecution unnecessarily. We are told to flee when there is a war. We are to use all the remedies available—especially the natural ones—when sickness

comes. But if we somehow become trapped in a dangerous situation, what should we be our concern? "And I say unto you my friends, Be not afraid of them that kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will forewarn you whom ye shall fear: Fear him, which after he hath killed hath power to cast into hell; yea, I say unto you, Fear him" (Luke 12:4, 5).

What will happen when we are prepared? "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4). In God's infinite wisdom and mercy He may allow us to suffer but never with fear. "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days: be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

How can we live in times of calamities and never be afraid again? "For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though it tarry, wait for it; because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in him: but **the just shall live by his faith**" (Habakkuk 2:3, 4).

This faith is more than simple belief. "Belief may exist without trust, but confidence born of trust cannot exist without faith. Every sinner brought to a knowledge of the saving power of Christ, will make manifest this trust in greater degree as he advances in experience."⁹

Do we individually and as a people have this kind of faith that will take us through all the challenging times ahead? May the Lord answer the prayer of the disciples in our lives today: "The apostles said unto the Lord, **Increase our faith**" (Luke 17:5). *R*

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- ¹ *The Great Controversy*, p. 622.
- ² *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 408.
- ³ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 983.
- ⁴ *The Review and Herald*, January 1, 1889.
- ⁵ *Early Writings*, p. 210.
- ⁶ *The Great Controversy*, pp. 295, 442.
- ⁷ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 357.
- ⁸ *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 71.
- ⁹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 192.



SUNDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2022

By Davi Paes Silva

7

PREPARE YE THE WAY

In ancient times, whenever a king or person of similar high authority had an important trip to another country, usually a team of trustworthy persons were sent in advance to the region to be visited—to check the conditions of the roads and the security of the environment where their king would be going in order to grant safety and success to him and his counselors.

Today the authorities follow the same method, although with more sophisticated resources. Before kings or president hold their meetings, they already have all the information necessary regarding the country where they will be going.

Before the King of the Universe, Jesus, was about to be incarnated

as our King of grace, a heavenly company of angels came in advance to see what preparation was being made to receive their beloved King. They suffered a tremendous disappointment. In Jerusalem, the capital city of Israel, there was no visible sign that the people and their leaders were rejoicing over the anticipated birth of their true King. Although the priests and religious leaders had in their hands all the rolls of prophecy, they were totally ignorant of that wonderful event.

The angels were almost ready to return to Heaven with the sad news, when they found a small group of shepherds in a field of Bethlehem, discussing the prophecies regarding the coming of the Messiah. To them,

the angels gave the good news that the King had been born in a very humble place.

Immediately, the truehearted shepherds visited the place where they found Jesus in a manger and they began to spread the good news to the people.

Another team of faithful students of the stars and the prophecies, coming from a faraway pagan land, concluded that the heavenly king was already born. They had access to the prophecies of Balaam concerning the coming Messiah: "I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **there shall come a Star out of Jacob**, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and

destroy all the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17).

That was not a common star. It was formed by a distant group of bright angels, the same who appeared to the shepherds in Bethlehem.

The noble travelers from the East made a long trip to see the newborn King. Finally, they arrived in Jerusalem. These also expected to encounter a joyful atmosphere due to the arrival of the divine King; and they, too, became tremendously disappointed. Arriving in Jerusalem, they were invited by king Herod who pretended to receive them in a friendly manner, requesting for them to give him precise information about the details as soon as they would find Jesus.

Herod demanded of the Jewish priests to find the prophecy in question. As a result of their research, they informed the king that Christ would be born in Bethlehem, as per the prophecy of Micah, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2).

With very few exceptions, the entire nation was unprepared to welcome Jesus. We only find the shepherds, the wise men from the east, Elisabeth, Zachariahs, Simeon and a very few others. The leaders interpreted the Messianic prophecies according to their national pride. And when Christ came to His people, they rejected Him.

THE FORERUNNER

A prophecy of Isaiah had made clear that a forerunner would come to warn the people regarding their coming Deliverer and prepare the way for Him. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3).

Another prophecy is found in Malachi regarding the divine agent who would come to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord:

"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: and he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse" (Malachi 4:5, 6).

The fulfillment of this prophecy was clearly revealed in the New Testament.

When preaching in the wilderness of Judea, John the Baptist declared regarding his own mission: "The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins; as it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God" (Luke 3:2-6).

THE ELIJAH MESSAGE

God sent a special messenger to prepare the way for the first coming of Jesus, in the person of John the Baptist. He represented Elijah and he faithfully fulfilled his mission. Likewise today, the Lord is sending another warning through His messengers representing Elijah, to prepare a people not for the first coming—but now for the second coming of Jesus.

"John was called to do a special work; he was to prepare the way of the Lord, to make straight His paths. The Lord did not send him to the school of the prophets and rabbis. He took him away from the assemblies of men to the desert, that he might learn of nature and nature's God. God did not desire him to have the mold of the priests and rulers. He was called to do a special work. The Lord gave him his message. Did he go to the priests and rulers and ask if he might proclaim this message?—No, God put him

away from them that he might not be influenced by their spirit and teaching. He was the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain; and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it' (Isaiah 40:3-5). This is the very message that must be given to our people; we are near the end of time, and the message is, Clear the King's highway; gather out the stones; raise up a standard for the people. The people must be awakened. It is no time now to cry peace and safety. We are exhorted to 'cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins' (Isaiah 5:1)."¹

WHAT EXACTLY IS OUR MISSION?

"In this age, just prior to the second coming of Christ in the clouds of heaven, God calls for men who will prepare a people to stand in the great day of the Lord. Just such a work as that which John did, is to be carried on in these last days. The Lord is giving messages to His people, through the instruments He has chosen, and He would have all heed the admonitions and warning He sends. The message preceding the public ministry of Christ was, Repent, publican and sinners, repent, Pharisees and Sadducees, 'for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.' Our message is not to be one of peace and safety. As a people who believe in Christ's soon appearing, we have a definite message to bear, 'Prepare to meet thy God.'

"Our message must be as direct as was that of John. He rebuked kings for their iniquity. Notwithstanding the peril his life was in, he never allowed truth to languish on his lips. Our work in this age must be as faithfully done. . . .

"In this time of well-nigh universal apostasy, God calls upon His messengers to proclaim His law in the spirit and power of Elias. As John the Baptist, in preparing a people for Christ's first advent, called their attention to the Ten Commandments, so we are to give, with no uncertain sound, the message: 'Fear God, and give glory to Him; for the hour of His judgment is come.' With the earnestness that characterized Elijah the prophet and John the Baptist, we are to strive to prepare the way for Christ's second advent."²

"The day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless. . . . Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Christ" (2 Peter 3:10-14, 18).

"It is the Lord's desire that His followers shall grow in grace, that their love shall abound more and more, that they shall be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the praise and glory of God."³

HOW IS THIS WORK TO BE CARRIED OUT?

In the Isaiah passage depicting the preparation of the way of the Lord, the Scripture continues by describing the exaltation of the humble and the humbling of the exalted:

"Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be



made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain' (Isaiah 40:4). Every obstacle to the redemption of God's people is to be removed by the opening of His word and the presentation of a plain 'Thus saith the Lord.' The true light is to shine forth; for darkness covers the earth, and gross darkness the people. The truth of the living God is to appear in contrast with error. Proclaim the glad tidings. We have a Saviour who has given His life that those who believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

"Obstacles to the advancement of the work of God will appear; but fear not. To the omnipotence of the King of kings, our covenant-keeping God unites the gentleness and care of a tender shepherd. Nothing can stand in His way. His power is absolute, and it is the pledge of the sure fulfillment of His promises to His people. He can remove all obstructions to the advancement of His work. He has means for the removal of every difficulty, that those who serve Him and respect the means He employs may be delivered. His goodness and love are infinite, and His covenant is unalterable.

"The plans of the enemies of His

work may seem to be firm and well established, but He can overthrow the strongest of these plans, and in His own time and way He will do this, when He sees that our faith has been sufficiently tested and that we are drawing near to Him and making Him our counselor.

"In the darkest days, when appearances seem so forbidding, fear not. Have faith in God. He is working out His will, doing all things well in behalf of His people. The strength of those who love and serve Him will be renewed day by day. His understanding will be placed at their service, that they may not err in the carrying out of His purposes.

"There is to be no despondency in God's service. Our faith is to endure the pressure brought to bear upon it. God is able and willing to bestow upon His servants all the strength they need. He will more than fulfill the highest expectations of those who put their trust in Him. He will give them the wisdom that their varied necessities demand.

"Said the tried apostle Paul: 'He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for My strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly

“Clear the King’s highway; gather out the stones; raise up a standard for the people. The people must be awakened. It is no time now to cry peace and safety. We are exhorted to ‘cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.’”



therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.’² Corinthians 12:9, 10.

“Oh, my brethren, hold the beginning of your confidence firm unto the end. The light of God’s truth is not to be dimmed. It is to shine amidst the darkness of error that enshrouds our world. The word of God is to be opened to those in the high places of the earth, as well as to those in the more lowly.

“The church of Christ is God’s agency for the proclamation of truth; she is empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to God, obedient to His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellence of divine power. If she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her. If she will be true to her allegiance, the forces of the enemy will be no more able to overpower her than is the chaff to resist the whirlwind.

“There is before the church the dawn of a bright, glorious day, if she will put on the robe of Christ’s righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance to the world.

“The members of the church need now to confess their backslidings and press together. My brethren, allow nothing to come in that will separate you from one another or from God. Talk not of differences of opinion, but unite in the love of the truth as it is in Jesus. Come before God, and plead the shed blood of the Saviour as a reason why you should receive help in the warfare against evil. You will not plead in vain. As you draw near to God, with heartfelt contrition and in full assurance of faith, the enemy

who seeks to destroy you will be overcome.

“Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. From Christ is flowing the living stream of salvation. He is the Fountain of life, the Source of all power. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name.

“God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless. May the Lord help us to help one another and to prove Him by living faith.”⁴

THE CALL OF THE HOUR

“The Lord calls for a renewal of the straight testimony borne in years past. He calls for a renewal of spiritual life. The spiritual energies of His people have long been torpid, but there is to be a resurrection from apparent death.

“By prayer and confession of sin we must clear the King’s highway. As we do this, the power of the Spirit will come to us. We need the Pentecostal energy. This will come, for the Lord has promised to send His Spirit as the all-conquering power.

“Perilous times are before us. Everyone who has a knowledge of the truth should awake and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken

to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?”⁵

“Clear the King’s highway; take out the stumbling-blocks; remove the rubbish; clear away the stones, that the Spirit of God may go through our midst, and that we may see the salvation of God as a lamp that burneth. That is what we need. We can not afford to cover up one sin. We want the richest blessing here; for trial is coming right upon us. Only a little while, only a short time, and every one will be severely tried. We want a daily renewal of the grace of God in our hearts, that we may climb the ladder of perfection step by step, rising higher and higher in the way that leads to heaven, to holiness, and to God.

“May the Spirit of God come into our meetings. May we see of His salvation, and may His glory be revealed here. Let every voice be raised to glorify God, not to pick flaws in one another.”⁶

“May the Lord graciously bless His people during this week of prayer. May all wrongs be righted, all sins confessed, and pardon be written over against your names in the books of heaven. Let the members of every church, of every household, seek the Lord, and humble their souls before Him. Let us, so far as possible, clear the King’s highway of all the rubbish wherewith we have blocked it.”⁷ R

References:

¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 410.

² *The Southern Watchman*, March 21, 1905.

³ *The Signs of the Times*, June 12, 1901.

⁴ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 10–12.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 297, 298.

⁶ *The Review and Herald*, May 18, 1905.

⁷ *Ibid.*, December 9, 1890.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

THE GATHERING STORM

*Hot with anger is this world; pure love is waxing cold.
The only peace that we can find is in the paths of old.*

*The Scriptures show the way of life; mere human thoughts are vain.
Philosophies and men's ideas bring sorrow, want, and pain.*

*Now's the time to seek the Lord for hearts made pure and clean.
The clouds ahead are soon to burst in storm as never seen.*

*We need the mind of Christ within and His redeeming love,
For as we go through life ahead, we need "hold from above!"*

*Every sin must be confessed—and facing every trial,
We must be strong to stand for Christ; within our mouth no guile.*

*When faced with hostile forces strong, one's spirit tends to chafe.
The main concern then often is to make sure "I" am safe.*

*Instead, we need God's grace right now, to not betray our Lord—
To face with peace the angry mob and never draw a sword.*

*Beholding those who've hurt us much no matter what they've done;
And loving them as Jesus does, forgiving every one.*

*The storm is not about our pain; the storm shows who we are—
Reflecting Christlike faith within—to all, both near and far.*

*The light that shines in darkest night amid the crowd of woes
Will radiate from those of Christ who love both friends and foes.*

*So, when we think "the gath'ring storm," my greatest fear should be
That I may never grieve the One who gave His life for me.*

*For when we see His life and death and all that He has done,
Our heart should soar in joyous hope: The victory is won!*

—B. Montrose