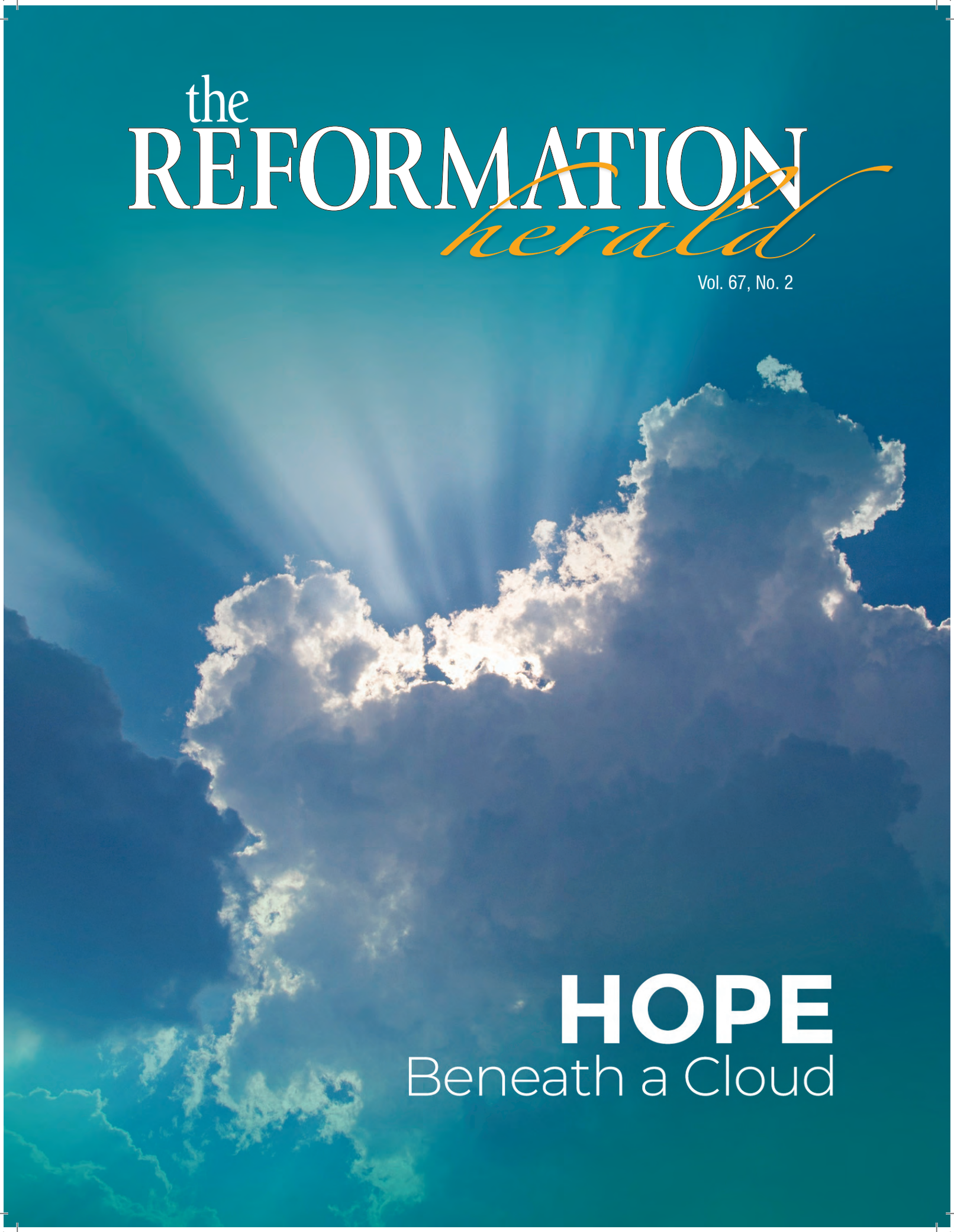
the REFORMATION herald

Vol. 67, No. 2



HOPE
Beneath a Cloud

the REFORMATION herald

Volume 67, Number 2

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial – The Silver Lining
The focus of our thoughts can make a big difference even in the same circumstances 3

Is it a Storm or a Cloud?
Darkness we see is only blocking the light of God's goodness on the other side. 4

The Latter Rain and the Shaking of Adventism
The testing message to Laodicea is to purify a people to be fit for the latter rain 8

That Other Angel
The angel of Revelation 18 may seem overlooked now, but its influence is soon to swell 12

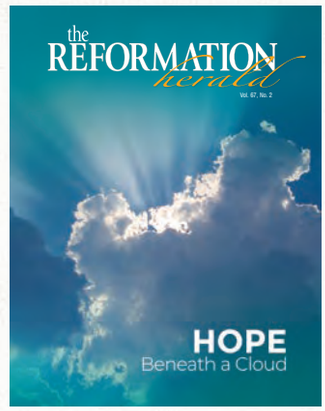
A Quiet Jealousy
We all will be judged by what is in our hearts and are warned to bear no grudges 16

The Family: A Safeguard and an Agency
In guiding the family, how important it is for parents to exercise wisdom and patience! 20

K(no)w Hope
Part 2 in this series brings examples of how Bible heroes succeeded through trust in God 23

Accepted in the Beloved: My Journey to Faith
No pains or hurdles in this world are too hard for the merciful hand of God to overcome 27

Children's Corner – Growing Up Happily
Life is not always easy, but Jesus is willing to strengthen us at every step of the way 32



Have you ever thought of distributing *The Reformation Herald* among those you meet or already know?

More and more, this magazine is being designed to answer the real spiritual hunger of people in today's society, tapping into the exact train of thought being triggered by current events.

As Bible prophecy unfolds before our eyes, why not keep some of these magazines on hand in a large ziplock bag, ready to share with honest, thinking people who fear God and are eager to know what in the world is going on?

Official Church Publication of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement

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

Editor B. Montrose
Layout and Design D. Conceição

Web: http://www.sdarm.org; **E-mail:** info@sdarm.org

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

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

Subscription rates:
United States: $18.00; Foreign countries: $16.00 plus shipping;
Single issue: $4.00 plus shipping
www.subscriptions.reformationherald.com

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Reformation Herald, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.
Vol. 67, No. 2; Copyright © 2025 July–September issue.

Illustrations: Freepik on the front cover; Freepik on pp. 1, 3, 23, 32; Adobe Stock on pp. 4, 8,16, 20, 27; Midjourney on pp. 12; Creative Commons on pp. 15.

THE SILVER LINING



There's an old saying, "Every cloud has a silver lining." In a deeper sense, that silver lining reflects the strength gained by trial. While the unbeliever grumbles about clouds blocking sunlight, the believer is encouraged by the determination of golden rays that manage to peek past the gloom.

In the spiritual sense, "The cross which every Christian must bear if he follows Christ, gives increased spiritual strength. In lifting the burdens of Christ, heavier burdens are removed. To all who are willing and obedient, to all who are reaching out to feel the guiding hand of God, the moment of the greatest discouragement and difficulty is the time when divine help is nearest. When the path of duty is obstructed by difficulties the most formidable, when it seems that the soul must give up in despair, the glory hidden behind the cloud that has darkened the way shines forth in all its brightness.

"Those who press on in the path of duty will look back with joy and thankfulness upon the darkest part of the way, where trials and difficulties seemed like a heavy cloud to hide every ray of God's sunshine. The Lord conceals Himself from us in the cloudy pillar, as from ancient Israel. His ways are past finding out. Yet all that He makes known of Himself, all that he can reveal to the most elevated mind, only convinces us of an infinity beyond, of wisdom, purity, and love."[1]

"Our devised plans often fail that God's plans for us may be a complete success. Oh, it is in the future life we shall see the tangles and mysteries of life, that have so annoyed and disappointed our fond hopes, explained. We will see that the prayers and hopes for certain things which have been withheld have been among our greatest blessings.

"We need not expect all sunshine in this world. Clouds and storms will cluster about us, and we must be prepared to keep our eyes directed where we saw the light last. Its rays may be hidden but they still live, still shine beyond the cloud. It is our work to wait, to watch, to pray, and to believe. We shall prize the light of the sun more highly after the clouds disappear. We shall see the salvation of God if we trust in God in the darkness as well as in the light."[2]

In the context of the great time of trouble, we are reminded that "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."[3]

In the poetry of William Cowper,

"God moves in a mysterious way
His wonders to perform;
He plants His footsteps in the sea,
And rides upon the storm.

"Ye fearful saints, fresh courage take;
The clouds ye so much dread
Are big with mercy, and shall break
In blessings on your head.

"His purposes will ripen fast,
Unfolding every hour;
The bud may have a bitter taste,
But sweet will be the flower.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err,
And scan His work in vain;
God is His own interpreter,
And He will make it plain."[4] ℟

References:

1 *The Signs of the Times*, October 21, 1880.
2 *Our High Calling*, p. 318.
3. *The Great Controversy*, p. 621.
4 *Reformation Hymnal*, #152.



By Hudson Gessner

SALVATION THROUGH THE SAVIOUR

IS IT A STORM OR A CLOUD?

When looking at the news, the political and social movements, nature, and everything around us, can you see the storm that is brewing on the horizon?

Based on the things just mentioned, what kind of storm are you expecting? One of the first prophecies that comes to mind is the one in Luke when Jesus mentioned some of the signs to take place before His coming: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25, 26). Not to our surprise, these are exactly the things that are happening or have already happened. In the same context, Mark also recorded an interesting fact when Jesus was relating the prophecy. "And when ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars, be ye not troubled: for such things must needs be; but the end shall not be yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be earthquakes in divers places, and there shall be famines and troubles: these are the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13:7, 8). After mentioning all the signs, Jesus declares that all these things are just the beginning of sorrows. This is surely a statement that leaves us on the edge of our seats. How much worse can it get? Who is going to be affected? Many questions like these are most definitely in our minds.

Besides natural disasters, wars, etc., what else is also prophesied? Continuing with the reference we just read in Mark, there is another important revelation. "Take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be beaten: and ye shall be brought before rulers and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them" (Mark 13:9). Of all the things predicted to happen towards the end of the world's history, the thing that we might tend to worry the most about is **persecution**. Especially among believers in the three angels' messages, persecution is one of the most talked-about topics, and one that, depending on how it is presented, can either encourage or cause much distress.



I believe persecution is one of the greatest testers of faith. We know it! Because even if we don't say it, we are most likely thinking: Am I going to stay firm? We certainly don't want to have the same experience as the rocky soil hearer in the parable of the sower related in Matthew chapter 13. That person heard the word and received it with joy. But as soon as tribulation and persecution arose, they couldn't withstand the pressure because they had no root, so they fell away (Matthew 13:5, 6, 20, 21).

What causes persecution?

This should be common knowledge, but it's also easy to forget. The cause for persecution is clearly given in the Word of God. In his second letter to Timothy, Paul declared that all who desire to live a godly life in Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12). We are persecuted if we are reflecting the light we have received from God.

If we don't share what we believe, if we behave and react like the world does, we won't be persecuted. If there is simply no contrast or conflict between our life or behavior and that of the world, the world is thus not bothered. But if we share and live the life of Christ, then the hatred of the world will come upon us (John 15:19).

The hardest form of persecution

When we speak of persecution, we mostly think of persecution outside our social circle. Immediately, we think of soldiers coming through our doors and throwing us in jail or even giving us the death sentence. We imagine people in the streets with guns and machetes marching towards our residences. It is true, those things might happen to many Christian believers, and it is already happening in some parts of the world. It is not necessarily broadcast in our news but in the past few months and even years, thousands of Christians have been killed in African countries and other parts of the world. We can only imagine such suffering, and we constantly think that this kind of persecution is the ultimate test. But I believe it is making us forget what is actually testing us today. **One of the hardest forms of persecution is that which occurs from within our closest circles**—the small amounts of peer pressure throughout our day.

Resisting temptations can result in stirring up micro-persecution from peers. When we are asked at school or at work to do something that is wrong—to share answers to a test, to do someone's homework, to exaggerate a report—what do we do? When someone invites us to a place where we know God won't be able to be with us, what answer do we give?

When we are invited to an environment where we know the angels stay at the door and don't dare enter, what answer do we give? Do we give a clear answer and reason or do we find some excuse just so we don't sound like an extremist? "Oh, I am really busy that day and I won't be able to make it." Or do we say: "I am not able to do this, it doesn't feel right," or "Sorry, but I don't go to those kinds of places?" Why are we sometimes not clear with our answers? When one of our friends from church invites us to do something questionable, what do we say? Do we say: "I don't think we should be doing this, so I can't take part in this?" Or do we just say: "Oh, man, I have so much to do: I'll let you know if I can make it?" Or even worse, do we give in and say, "Sure, let's do it," hoping that it will be only one time?

> "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

Why so much hate?

Jesus was very clear that even the closest friends and family members could come to hate those that who reflect His character. "And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends; and some of you shall they cause to be put to death. And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake" (Luke 21:16, 17). What causes so much hate? People naturally cannot stand when someone's actions reveals their true condition. "For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved" (John 3:20). We do not like it when someone makes us feel like we are doing something wrong. We want to sin, and we

want to sin in peace. It's even better if we have others sinning with us. Unfortunately, that's the reality of human nature.

If we are not experiencing persecution today, specifically micro-persecutions, I am afraid that we aren't living the life that Christ lived.

The Word of God does not lie: "Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12). In the face of such persecution, how do we handle it? If we aren't experiencing it yet, how do we think we are going to handle it later? In our *Sabbath Bible Lessons,* we recently studied the early experiences of the apostle Peter. How confident was Peter that he was going to stay firm? "And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death" (Luke 22:33).

A few hours later, we saw a different Peter. What caused Peter to deny the Lord 3 times that night? There are at least 2 reasons. First is the lack of communion with God. Communion with God keeps our focus on Him and off of ourselves. The moment we disconnect from God, we quickly change our focus to ourselves—and since we are weak, we fail. The second reason for Peter's failure was a lack of knowledge of his true self, along with too much self-confidence. "The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?" (Jeremiah 17:9). Peter didn't realize he cared for this life as much as he did. We are too often caught by surprise just as Peter was.

The God above the storm

When we find ourselves in the same situation as Peter, many times our focus changes to the storm instead of turning to the God that is above the storm. But our God is gracious, loving, and merciful. Fortunately, Peter realized what he was missing. His confidence then changed from relying on his own abilities and on what he could do, to God's abilities and what He can do. As the Bible says, persecution started very quickly. As soon as the preaching of the name of Jesus started, many were put into prison; some were even killed. The faith of Peter was being tested even more now.

Herod's violence to the church

In the time of the early church (the period of Ephesus from A.D. 31–100), the vast majority of believers were very faithful to God.

"Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison: but prayer was made without ceasing of the church unto God for him" (Acts 12:1–5). The persecution had intensified and many were suffering. James, one of the apostles, had been cruelly killed. And now, due to the overwhelming acceptance from the people, Herod wanted to make Peter's execution a spectacle for everyone to see. For that purpose, Peter was in prison for days, waiting till the day of his execution. Unlike the previous incident when his Master was persecuted at the crucifixion, on this occasion, Peter was not afraid.

Sleeping in the storm

"And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison" (Acts 12:6). How was Peter able to sleep that night? How can we sleep in such a predicament? Our personal experience in such a situation would most likely be one of anxiety and inability to sleep. Perhaps we would toss and turn in bed, hoping that our brains would stop racing with so many scenarios, wishing that by closing our eyes we could at least forget about everything. But that is hardly the case when we are anxious. When looking at Peter's experience in prison, we have some sort of hindsight blinding us from what was truly happening. Because we know he ended up being released, some of us may say: "Oh, but Peter was confident that he was going to be released!" Not so, because at that time, there was no indication that Peter was going to be released.

Earlier on, Stephen had been killed. And a few days prior, James had also just been killed. Two major pillars in the faith had been killed. And now, Peter was surrounded by strong gates while 16 soldiers guarded him. And the next day, his execution was going to take place. Peter had every reason to believe that he was indeed going to be killed. And yet he was sleeping!

Inspiration tells us that Peter was ready to die. "He believed the time had now come when he was to yield up his life for Christ's sake."[1]

Peter was ready to suffer even death! He was ready for whatever would come. How was he able to do that? He had learned from personal experience to trust in God and not to look to himself for strength or power. "Cast thy burden upon the Lord, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved" (Psalms 55:22).

Many times we are afraid, but we feel like we can't let go of the burden.

In the book of Jeremiah we have the description of a man that trusts in the Lord: "Blessed is the man that trusteth in the Lord, and whose hope the Lord is. For he shall be as a tree planted by the waters, and that spreadeth out her roots by the river, and shall not see when heat cometh, but her leaf shall be green; and shall not be careful in the year of drought, neither shall cease from yielding fruit" (Jeremiah 17:7, 8). No matter what, if we are rooted in Christ, our source of strength, we shall not fail, and we shall not fear. Nothing can separate us from the love of Christ. "Who shall separate us from the

love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:35–39).

Thank the Lord for such amazing encouragement! And it was this way—the only way—that Peter was able to be at peace.

"And, behold, the angel of the Lord came upon him, and a light shined in the prison: and he smote Peter on the side, and raised him up, saying, Arise up quickly. And his chains fell off from his hands" (Acts 12:7). Peter was sleeping so deeply that the angel had to strike him for him to wake up. The light was not enough to wake him up. This shows that Peter was not at all concerned with the situation. He was sleeping just as if it were simply another night. But the angel was on a mission and Peter needed to be quick. "And the angel said unto him, Gird thyself, and bind on thy sandals. And so he did. And he saith unto him, Cast thy garment about thee, and follow me. And he went out, and followed him; and wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision. When they were past the first and the second ward, they came unto the iron gate that leadeth unto the city; which opened to them of his own accord: and they went out, and passed on through one street; and forthwith the angel departed from him. And when Peter was come to himself, he said, Now I know of a surety, that the Lord hath sent his angel, and hath delivered me out of the hand of Herod, and from all the expectation of the people of the Jews" (Acts 12:8–11). What an amazing God we serve! Sadly, too often we forget that. We don't realize that God uses these seemly impossible situations to remind us that we can do even more than we have ever imagined possible. "Man's extremity is God's opportunity."[2]

Peter's perspective

Based on Peter's behavior, we can indeed conclude that Peter was not afraid. Furthermore, in his epistle, Peter actually reveals to us what he was thinking and how he was dealing with all of these situations. "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy" (1 Peter 4:12, 13).

Peter is instructing us to look past the current sufferings and to look toward the future, to look for what God has prepared for us.

A change of perspective

Remember at the beginning when we asked about seeing a storm coming? Let us read again one of the opening scripture: "And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; Men's hearts failing them for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth: for the powers of heaven shall be shaken" (Luke 21:25, 26).

Thankfully, the Bible passage does not stop here, but rather continues with an amazing promise: "And then shall they see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. And when these things begin to come to pass, then look up, and lift up your heads; for your redemption draweth nigh" (Luke 21:27, 28). We have now a different perspective. Instead of looking to the storm, the troubles and persecution, let us look past the storm instead, to that little cloud that is approaching, the cloud that is half the size of a man's hand.

"Soon our eyes were drawn to the east, for a small black cloud had appeared, about half as large as a man's hand, which we all knew was the sign of the Son of man. In solemn silence we all gazed on the cloud as it drew nearer, and became lighter, glorious, and still more glorious, till it was a great white cloud. The bottom appeared like fire; a rainbow was over the cloud, while around it were ten thousand angels, singing a most lovely song; and upon it sat the Son of man."[3]

This cloud doesn't just mark the end of our lives here on this earth, but more importantly, the beginning of our everlasting lives—our salvation. Instead of focusing on the sufferings, which may overwhelm us, let us, like Paul, look to Jesus, our Redeemer: "For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us" (Romans 8:18).

Let us look for the day in which the sufferings of the earth will be forgotten and we will forever rejoice.

May we take the time to review our lives and ask God to reveal to us our true condition. Let us come to the foot of the cross repentant and ready to live godly lives, and go through sufferings and persecution with gladness—looking beyond what is before our eyes.

So, the question for us today is: What do we see coming? A storm or a cloud? ℟

References:

[1] *The Spirit of Prophecy,* vol. 3, pp. 337, 338.
[2] Ibid., p. 337.
[3] *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 1, p. 60.



By Peter D. Lausevic

[Emphasis added throughout.]

THE PROPHETIC WORD

THE LATTER RAIN AND THE SHAKING OF ADVENTISM

Part 2 of 2

Introduction

In the first part of this series we learned that we really need the power of the Holy Spirit in order to carry out the work of God successfully. There are some key points to remember:

a. Before receiving the Latter Rain, we must have been sealed—completely pure.

b. The church of God as a whole must be completely pure before the Latter Rain.

c. The Latter Rain gives power to the Third Angel's Message to finish the work.

d. This presentation of the Third Angel's Message in greatest power infuriates the enemy and results in the Universal Sunday Law.

How does the church become pure?

The Spirit of Prophecy actually shows that there are two separations in Adventism.

Purifying the church

When does the first separation come? "***As the storm approaches*, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, *abandon their position* and join the ranks of the opposition.**"[1]

When does this separation take place? "***As the storm approaches. . . .***"

What does "approaches" mean? "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).

It means that it has not yet arrived. It is before the actual storm.

At what point in time can we say that the storm is approaching? "The youth should seek God more earnestly. **The tempest is coming**, and we must get ready for its fury by having repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ."[2]

Anywhere from 1890 to the close of probation we can expect a majority of Seventh-day Adventists to abandon their position and join the opposition in fulfillment of *The Great Controversy*, p. 608:2, as we just read: "***As the storm approaches*, a *large class* who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, *abandon their position* and join the ranks of the opposition.**"[1]

What causes this separation? The servant of the Lord relates: "I asked the meaning of the **shaking** I had



seen and was shown that it would be ***caused*** **by the straight testimony called forth by the counsel of the True Witness to the Laodiceans."**[3]

What is the essence of the Message to Laodicea? "The message given us by A. T. Jones, and E. J. Waggoner **is the message of God to the Laodicean church**, and woe be unto anyone who professes to believe the truth and yet does not reflect to others the God-given rays."[4]

What happens as a result of the message to Laodicea, which is the message of Christ's Righteousness? "This will have its effect upon the heart of the receiver, and will lead him to ***exalt the standard*** and pour forth the straight truth."[5]

What is the standard? "When you have a congregation before you for only two weeks, do not defer the presentation of the Sabbath question until everything else is presented, supposing that you thus pave the way for it. **Lift up the standard—the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus."**[6]

What is the connection between the law of God and reformation? "**The *great reformatory movement* must begin in presenting to fathers and mothers and children the principles of the law of God."**[7]

This is impossible without the correct understanding of Christ's righteousness.

What happens if the church wavers on the principle of the law of God?

"At this time the church is to put on her beautiful garments—'Christ our righteousness.' There are clear, decided distinctions to be restored and exemplified to the world **in holding aloft the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. . . . *However specious the pretext, if the church waver here, there is written against her in the books of heaven a betrayal of the most sacred trusts, and treachery to the kingdom of Christ.***"[8]

What is the actual thing that causes the separation?

"Some will not bear this straight testimony. **They will rise up against it, and this is what will cause a shaking among God's people**."[9]

Does the initial separation create a pure church immediately? "My attention was then turned to the company I had seen, who were **mightily shaken.** I was shown those whom I had before seen weeping and praying in agony of spirit. . . . The **numbers of this company had lessened.** Some had been shaken out and left by the way. The careless and indifferent, who did not join with those who prized victory and salvation enough to perseveringly plead and agonize for it, did not obtain it, and they were left behind in darkness, and their places were immediately filled by others taking hold of the truth and coming into the ranks."[10]

What happens when the test finally arrives? "By uniting with the world and partaking of its spirit, they have come to view matters in nearly the same light; and when the **test is brought,** they are prepared to choose the easy, popular side. Men of talent and pleasing address, who once rejoiced in the truth, employ their powers to deceive and mislead souls. They become the ***most bitter enemies of their former brethren***."[11]

They are no longer together in this separation because they are now former brethren.

Does the large class that becomes the former brethren leave the church? Again, as we have read, "***As the storm approaches*****, a *large class* who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, *abandon their position* and join the ranks of the opposition."**[1]

> "Today you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. Today you are to have your vessel purified that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, ready for the showers of the latter rain."

The time comes for the final test

"The time is not far distant when the **test will come to every soul.** The **mark of the beast will be urged upon us**. Those who have step by step yielded to worldly demands and conformed to worldly customs will not find it a hard matter to yield to the powers that be, rather than subject themselves to derision,

insult, threatened imprisonment, and death. The contest is between the commandments of God and the commandments of men."[12]

This has to be after the Latter Rain experience because the test cannot come until all have had the light. This is the final test and it comes at the close of human probation.

What happens in the church at this time? "In this time the **gold will be separated from the dross in the church.**"[13]

The title of this chapter is *The Testimonies Slighted.* This cannot be other than an Adventist church as they are the only ones that have received the Testimonies.

What remains in this church—the gold or the dross? Keep in mind this is at the close of probation when it is too late to change.

They are still called "the church." Does this reference make them the actual church of God? Let us look at an illustration from Scripture: "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" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4).

Although this passage uses the phrase, "the temple of God," it is clearly **not** referring to the true church of God!

Now going back to our previous train of thought: What happens to this church because only the dross remains in it? "Here we see that the church—the Lord's sanctuary—was the **first to feel the stroke of the wrath of God.** The ancient men, those to whom God had given great light and who had stood as guardians of the spiritual interests of the people, had betrayed their trust."[14]

The chapter title is *The Seal of God,* so we know this is a Sabbathkeeping Adventist Church.

What is meant by "the wrath of God?"

"Then I saw that Jesus would not leave the most holy place until every case was decided either for salvation or destruction, and that **the wrath of God** could not come until **Jesus had finished His work in the most holy place,** laid off His priestly attire, and clothed Himself with the garments of vengeance."[15]

This is clearly the seven last plagues. "Satan was trying his every art to hold them where they were, until the sealing was past, until the covering was drawn over God's people, and they left without a shelter from the burning **wrath of God,** in the **seven last plagues."**[16]

Can this be the same church as the final remnant church?

"Zechariah's vision of Joshua and the Angel applies with peculiar force to the experience of God's people in the **closing up of the great day of atonement.** The **remnant church** will be brought into great trial and distress. Those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus will feel the **ire of the dragon** and his hosts. Satan numbers the world as his subjects, he has gained control of the apostate churches; but here is a little company that are resisting his supremacy."[17]

This is during the same time period. Does this mean there are two different groups of Adventists at the end?

In an article entitled, *A Message to the Churches,* we read: "In this representation of the prophet, we see that Satan is at work not only with worldlings, who have not the fear and love of God before them, but also with those who **profess faith in Christ.** Here are plainly represented **two distinct parties,** ***formed from a company that was once united.***"[18]

Aren't we warned against any "new organization?"

"We cannot now enter **into any new organization,** for this would mean **apostasy from the truth."**[19]

This statement is also famously quoted in *Last Day Events,* p. 55. But let us carefully examine this in its proper context to understand what it is actually saying. This statement written in 1905 is clearly written in defending truth—not structure. **"Every truth** that He has given for these last days is to be proclaimed to the world. **Every pillar** that He has established is to be strengthened. We **cannot now step off the foundation** that God has established. We cannot now **enter into any new organization;** for this would mean **apostasy from the truth."**[20]

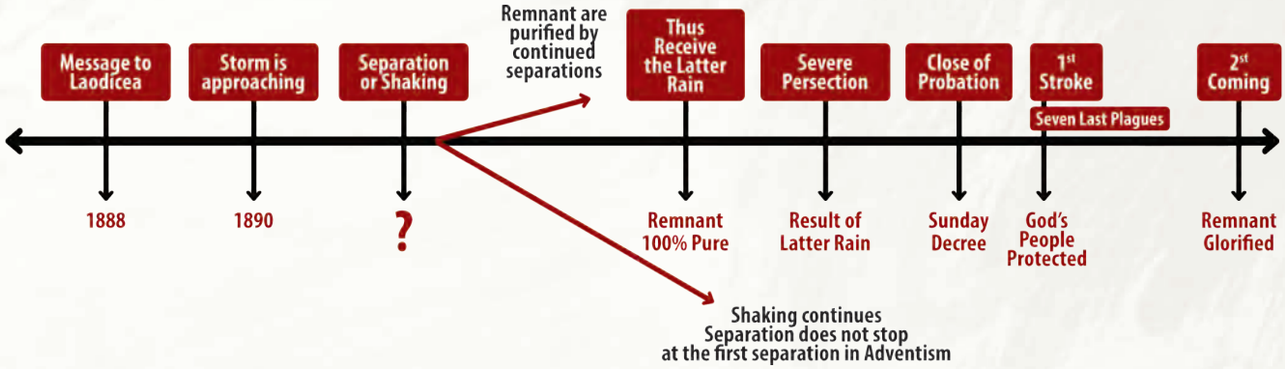
What is the foundation? The truth.

What was published a year earlier to clarify what is this new organization into which we are not to enter into? "The enemy of souls has sought to bring in the supposition that a great reformation was to take place among Seventh-day Adventists, and that this reformation would consist in **giving up the doctrines** which stand as the pillars of our faith, and engaging in a process of **reorganization.**"[21]

This reorganization—or new organization—would consist in giving up our doctrines. What would happen if this NEW ORGANIZATION would come into being?

"Were this reformation to take place, what would result? The principles of truth that God in His wisdom has given to the remnant church, would be **discarded.** Our **religion** would be **changed.** The **fundamental principles** that have sustained the work for the last fifty years would be accounted as error. **A new organization** would be established. Books of a new order would be written. A system of intellectual philosophy would be introduced. The founders of this system would go into the cities, and do a wonderful work. The **Sabbath** of course, would be **lightly regarded,** as also the God who created it. Nothing would be allowed to stand in the way of the **new movement.** The leaders would teach that virtue is better than vice, but God being removed, they would place their dependence on human power, which, without God, is worthless. Their foundation would be built on the sand, and storm and tempest would sweep away the structure."[22]

What will remove it? We just read: "Their foundation would be built on the sand, and **storm and tempest** would sweep away the structure."



Conclusion

We need the Latter Rain to finish the work.

a. The Latter Rain can only be poured out upon sealed people who will not sin again.

b. This is not only individually but as a church.

c. For this reason, the first separation in Adventism takes place to purify the church and prepare it for the Latter Rain.

d. The presentation of the truth to every soul incurs the wrath of Satan, which will result in bringing about the Sunday Decree.

e. The universal Sunday Decree causes the final separation in Adventism.

f. **The church that waits until the Sunday Decree for purification receives the first stroke of the wrath of God in the seven last plagues**.

We need Jesus now more than ever!

"Their **only hope is in the mercy of God;** their only defense will be **prayer.** As Joshua was pleading before the Angel, so the **remnant church,** with brokenness of heart and earnest faith, will plead for pardon and deliverance through Jesus their Advocate. They are fully conscious of the sinfulness of their lives, they see their weakness and unworthiness, and as they look upon themselves they are ready to despair. The tempter stands by to accuse them, as he stood by to resist Joshua. He points to their filthy garments, their defective characters. He presents their weakness and folly, their sins of ingratitude, their unlikeness to Christ, which has dishonored their Redeemer. He endeavors to affright the soul with the thought that their case is hopeless, that the stain of their defilement will never be washed away. He hopes to so destroy their faith that they will yield to his temptations, turn from their allegiance to God, and receive the mark of the beast."[23]

Why are the sinners referred to here different than the others? "But while the followers of Christ have sinned, they have **not given themselves to the control of evil.** They have **put away their sins,** and have sought the Lord in humility and contrition, and the divine Advocate pleads in their behalf. He who has been most abused by their ingratitude, who knows their sin, and also their repentance, declares: 'The Lord rebuke thee, O Satan.' I gave My life for these souls. They are graven upon the palms of My hands.' "[24]

What must we do today?

"The third angel's message is swelling into a loud cry, and you must not feel at liberty to neglect the present duty, and still entertain the idea that at some future time you will be the recipients of great blessing, when without any effort on your part a wonderful revival will take place. **Today** you are to give yourselves to God, that he may make of you vessels unto honor, and meet for his service. **Today** you are to give yourself to God, that you may be emptied of self, emptied of envy, jealousy, evil-surmising, strife, everything that shall be dishonoring to God. **Today** you are to have your vessel **purified** that it may be ready for the heavenly dew, **ready for the showers of the latter rain;** for the latter rain will come, and the blessing of God will **fill every soul that is purified from *every* defilement.** It is our work **today** to yield our souls to Christ, that we may be fitted for the time of refreshing from the presence of the Lord—fitted for the baptism of the Holy Spirit."[25] ✠

References:

[1] *The Great Controversy,* p. 608.
[2] *Messages to Young People,* pp. 89, 90.
[3] *Early Writings,* p. 270.
[4] *The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials,* p. 1052.
[5] *Early Writings,* p. 270.
[6] *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 6, p. 61.
[7] Ibid., p. 119.
[8] *Testimonies to Ministers,* pp. 16, 17.
[9] *Early Writings,* p. 270.
[10] Ibid., pp. 270, 271.
[11] *The Great Controversy,* p. 608.
[12] *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 5, p. 81.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid., p. 211.
[15] *Early Writings,* p. 36.
[16] Ibid., p. 44.
[17] *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 5, pp. 472, 473.
[18] *The Review and Herald,* July 18, 1907.
[19] *Selected Messages,* bk. 2, p. 390.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Ibid., bk. 1, pp. 204, 205.
[22] Ibid.
[23] *Testimonies for the Church,* vol. 5, p. 473.
[24] Ibid., p. 474.
[25] *The Review and Herald,* March 22, 1892.



Compiled by A. C. Sas

[Emphasis supplied throughout.]

THE PROPHETIC WORD

"THAT OTHER ANGEL" Part 1 of 2

I am not trying to convince anyone to believe what I and our church believes about the angel of Revelation 18. Only the Holy Spirit convinces every sincere soul of what the truth is. But I wish to state what I believe, and why I believe it.

Revelation 14:6–13 = Religious movements

"And the angel's flight 'in the midst of heaven,' the 'loud voice' with which the warning is uttered, and its promulgation to all 'that dwell on the earth'—'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people'—give evidence of the rapidity and world-wide extent of the movement."[1]

Revelation 18:1–3 = A religious movement

"Hence the **movement symbolized by the angel** coming down from heaven, lightening the earth with his glory and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon."[2]

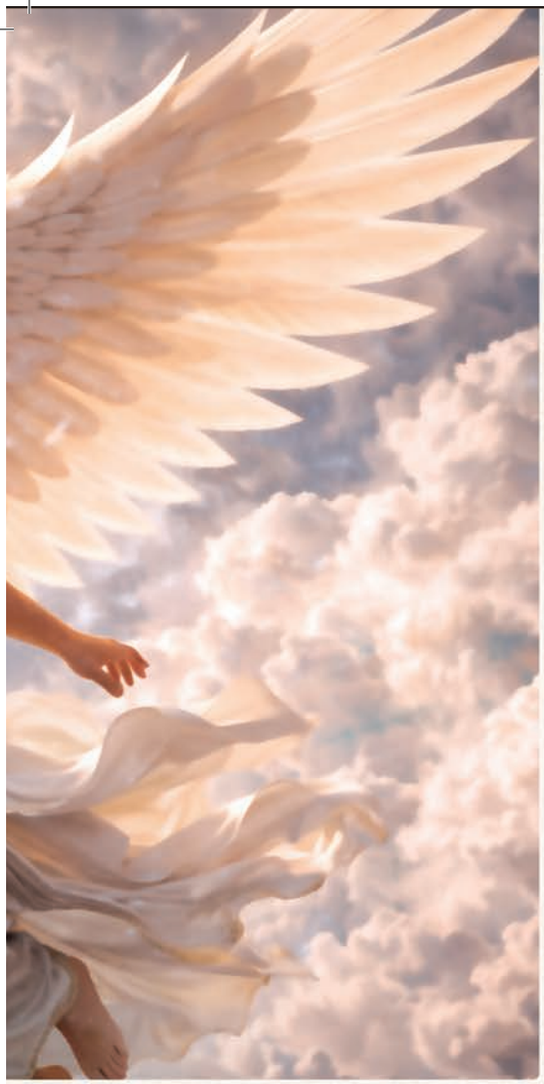
Three angels = people

"The three angels of Revelation 14 **represent the people** who accept the light of God's messages and go forth as His agents to sound the warning throughout the length and breadth of the earth."[3]

"The angels are represented as flying in the midst of heaven, proclaiming to the world a message of warning, and having a direct bearing upon the people living in the last days of this earth's history. No one hears the voice of these angels, for **they are a symbol to represent the people of God** who are working in harmony with the universe of heaven."[4]

Revelation 18 angel = people

"The third angel's message must go over the land, and awaken the people, and call their attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. **Another angel unites his voice with the third angel**, and the earth is lighted with its glory. The **light increases**, and it shines out to all the nations of the earth. It is to go forth as a light that burneth. It will be attended with great power, until its golden beams have fallen upon every tongue, every people, and every nation upon the face of the whole earth. Let me ask you, What you are doing to prepare for this work? Are you building for eternity? **You must remember that this angel represents the people that have this message to give to the world**. **Are you among that people**? Do you really believe that



this work in which we are engaged is truly the third angel's message? If so, then you understand that we have a mighty work to do, and that we ought to be about it."[5]

Where should we join the angel of Revelation 18:1–4? If we read the preceding chapter, Revelation 17, we find there a description of Babylon, and the various forms of its government. In chapter 16, we read about the outpouring of the seven last plagues. That other angel must come before the plagues are poured out. In chapter 15 we read in the first few verses about the saints already on the sea of glass. In chapter 14 verse 14 we read about Jesus' coming in the clouds of heaven. Therefore, we must connect the coming of the angel of Revelation 18 to the third angel of Revelation 14. The Spirit of Prophecy confirms this, as we can read:

"In the Revelation John says of the **heavenly messenger who unites with the third angel**: 'I saw **another angel** come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice.' Revelation 18:1, 2."[6]

"I saw **another mighty angel** commissioned to descend to the earth, to **unite his voice with the third angel, and give power and force to his message**."[7]

That "other angel" of Revelation 18 is NOT the third angel, because he "unites with the third angel," and unites "his voice with the third angel." The third angel cannot just unite with himself and still be called "another angel."

The angel of Revelation 18 comes down from heaven during the proclamation of the third angel's message, not when it is already closing:

"The prophecies in the eighteenth of Revelation will soon be fulfilled. **During the proclamation of the third angel's message, 'another angel' is to 'come down from heaven**, having great power,' and the earth is **to be** 'lightened with his glory.' "[8]

We need to understand clearly that the angel of Revelation 18 does not have a new message. He gives power to the third angel's message. This is the first work of that other angel. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us:

"Then I saw **another mighty angel** commissioned to descend to the earth, to **unite his voice with the third angel**, and **give power and force** to his message."[9]

"**The work of this angel comes in at the right time to join in the last great work of the third angel's message as it swells to a loud cry**."[10]

Notice carefully that the message swells to a loud cry.

That "other angel" of Revelation 18 is NOT the third angel, because he "unites with the third angel," and unites "his voice with the third angel." The third angel cannot just unite with himself and still be called "another angel." The angel of Revelation 18 comes down from heaven during the proclamation of the third angel's message, not when it is already closing.

Why needed?

The message of the third angel which should be proclaimed "with a loud voice" by the people who represented the third angel, became "tame and voiceless." We read:

"So many other interests are brought in that the very message which should be proclaimed with power becomes **tame and voiceless**. At our camp meetings a mistake has been made. The **Sabbath** question has been touched upon, but has not been presented as the **great test for this time**."[11]

"As foretold in the **eighteenth of Revelation**, the third angel's message is to be proclaimed with great power **by those who give the final warning** against the beast and his image: (Revelation 18:1-6 is quoted).

"This is the message given by God **to be sounded forth in the loud cry of the third angel**. . . .

"It is a solemn and terrible truth that **many** who have been **zealous in proclaiming the third angel's message** are now becoming **listless and indifferent**! The line of demarcation between worldlings and many professed Christians is almost indistinguishable. **Many who once were earnest Adventists** are conforming to the world—to its practices, its customs, its selfishness. Instead of leading

the world to render obedience to God's law, **the church is uniting more and more closely with the world in transgression**. **Daily the church is becoming converted to the world**. How many professing Christians are slaves of mammon! Their indulgence of appetite, their extravagant expenditure of money for selfish gratification, greatly dishonors God."[12]

"I am filled with sadness when I think of our condition as a people. The Lord has not closed heaven to us, but our own course of **continual backsliding** has separated us from God. Pride, covetousness, and love of the world have lived in the heart without fear of banishment or condemnation. **Grievous and presumptuous sins have dwelt among us**. And yet the general opinion is that the church is flourishing and that peace and spiritual prosperity are in all her borders.

"**The church has turned back from following Christ** her Leader and **is steadily retreating toward Egypt**. Yet few are alarmed or astonished at their want of spiritual power. **Doubt, and even disbelief of the testimonies** of the Spirit of God, is **leavening our churches** everywhere. Satan would have it thus. Ministers who preach self instead of Christ would have it thus. The **testimonies are unread and unappreciated**. God has spoken to you. **Light has been shining from His word and from the testimonies**, and **both have been slighted and disregarded**. The result is apparent in the lack of purity and devotion and earnest faith among us."[13]

"**We are as a people in danger** of giving the third angel's message in such an **indefinite manner** that it does not impress the people. . . . Our message is a **life-and-death message**, and we must let this message appear as it is—the great power of God. Then the Lord will make it effectual. We are to present it in **all its telling force**.

"**Satan has devised** a state of things whereby the **proclamation of the third angel's message shall be bound about**. We must beware of his plans and methods. There must be **no toning down of the truth**, no muffling of the message for this time. The **third angel's message must be strengthened and confirmed**. The **eighteenth chapter of Revelation** reveals the importance of presenting the truth in no measured terms but with boldness and power. . . . There has been too much beating about the bush in the proclamation of the third angel's message. **The message has not been given as clearly and distinctly as it should have been**."[14]

These conditions mentioned in the Testimonies above required the coming of that other angel to give power to the third angel's message.

The angel's first work

The angel of Revelation 18, which is a movement, and also represent a people, has to do a special work in behalf of God's people. This is his first work. The work of this angel has two phases: The first phase is to give the message to Laodicea, and prepare a people for the latter rain. The message of Christ Our Righteousness is the message to Laodicea (See Revelation 3:18) where the counsel is given to buy white raiment. This message to Laodicea must be given. Who will give this message, and to whom? We read about this as follows:

"What disposition will these make of the **message** of the True Witness **to the Laodiceans**? There can be no deception here. **This message must be borne to a lukewarm church by God's servants**. **It must arouse His people from their security and dangerous deception in regard to their real standing before God**."[15]

"God's servants" mentioned above cannot be the leadership of the lukewarm church. These "God's servants" are in fact the representatives of that other angel. The Spirit of Prophecy says that the leading men of the lukewarm church need more light to unite with God's messengers:

"A great work is to be done, and God sees that **our leading men have need of more light**, that they may **unite with the messengers** whom He sends to accomplish the work that He designs shall be done."[16]

The message to Laodicea must be given to the lukewarm church for a specific purpose:

"I was shown that the testimony to the Laodiceans applies to God's people at the present time, and the reason it has not accomplished a greater work is because of the hardness of their hearts. But **God has given the message time to do its work**. The heart must be purified from sins which have so long shut out Jesus. This fearful message will do its work. When it was first presented, it led to close examination of heart. Sins were confessed, and the people of God were stirred everywhere. **Nearly all believed that this message would end in the loud cry of the third angel**. But as they failed to see the powerful work accomplished in a short time, many lost the effect of the message. I saw that this message would **not accomplish its work in a few short months**. It is designed to arouse the people of God, to **discover to them their backslidings**, and to **lead to zealous repentance**, that they may be favored with the presence of Jesus, and **be fitted for the loud cry of the third angel**. . . . If the message had been of as short duration as many of us supposed, there would have been no time for them to develop character."[17]

A work already begun

The light of the angel of Revelation 18 already began in 1888 at the time of the General Conference held at Minneapolis, in the presentation of the message of Christ Our Righteousness. We read about this in the Spirit of Prophecy:

"The time of test is just upon us, for the **loud cry** of the third angel has **already begun** in the revelation of the **righteousness of Christ**, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the **beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth**."[18]

How could the light of the angel of Revelation 18 be present, if the

> "Our message is a life-and-death message, and we must let this message appear as it is—the great power of God. Then the Lord will make it effectual. We are to present it in all its telling force."

angel had not come? The following year, in 1889, this is what the servant of the Lord has written:

"We thank the Lord with all the heart that **we have precious light** to present before the people, and we rejoice that we have a message for this time which is present truth. The tidings that **Christ is our righteousness** has brought relief to many, many souls, and God says to his people, 'Go forward.' The **message to the Laodicean church** is applicable to our condition. How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives. The fervor of the love of God is wanting in their hearts, but it is this very fervor of love that makes God's people the light of the world. . . .

"In every meeting **since the General Conference**, **souls** have eagerly accepted the precious **message of the righteousness of Christ**. We thank God that there are souls who realize that they are in need of something which they do not possess—gold of faith and love, **white raiment of Christ's righteousness**, eyesalve of spiritual discernment. If you possess these precious gifts, the temple of the human soul will not be like a desecrated shrine. Brethren and sisters, I call upon you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, to work where God works. Now is the day of gracious opportunity and privilege."[19]

A few years later, in 1896, it was stated that the light of the angel was already lightening the earth:

"All who are laborers together with God will contend most earnestly for the faith once delivered to the saints. They will not be turned from the **present message**, which **is already lightening the earth** with its glory."[20]



1888 General Conference, Minneapolis

When the message to Laodicea, (the counsel to buy white raiment, which is the righteousness of Christ), was presented to the church in 1888, there was resistence against the message:

"An unwillingness to yield up preconceived opinions, and to accept this truth, lay at the foundation of a large share of the **opposition manifested at Minneapolis** against the Lord's message through Brethren [E. J.] Waggoner and [A. T.] Jones. By exciting that opposition Satan succeeded in shutting away from our people, in a great measure, the special power of the Holy Spirit that God longed to impart to them. The enemy prevented them from obtaining that efficiency which might have been theirs in carrying the truth to the world, as the apostles proclaimed it after the day of Pentecost. The **light that is to lighten the whole earth with its glory was resisted**, and by the action of our own brethren has been in a great degree kept away from the world."[21] *(To be concluded in next issue.)* ✠

References:

1 *The Great Controversy*, p. 355.
2 Ibid., p. 604.
3 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 455, 456.
4 *Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 387.
5 *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885.
6 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 60.
7 *Early Writings*, p. 277.
8 *The SDA Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 984.
9 *Early Writings*, p. 277.
10 Ibid., p. 277.
11 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 60.
12 Ibid., vol. 8, pp. 118, 119.
13 Ibid., vol. 5, p. 217.
14 *Evangelism*, p. 230.
15 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 259.
16 *Gospel Workers*, p. 304.
17 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 186, 187.
18 *The Review and Herald*, November 22, 1892.
19 Ibid., July 23, 1889.
20 *Christ Triumphant*, p. 343.
21 *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 234, 235.



By Marco Alonso

PRACTICAL FAITH

A QUIET JEALOUSY

Part 2

Leadership transitions rarely begin with conflict. More often, they begin with change—quiet change. A redistribution of trust, roles, and responsibilities. A new assignment. A decision that makes sense on paper, but unsettles something unspoken in the room.

The story in Daniel chapter 6 opens in such a moment.

The Medo-Persian administration is orderly. Roles are defined. Oversight is in place. Nothing in the opening verses suggests dysfunction or chaos. And yet, within this well-structured system, Daniel is elevated with remarkable speed and confidence. One might say King Darius recognized talent when he saw it. Daniel, however, is not a Persian noble, nor part of the inner circle by birth or culture. Still, he is entrusted above many who have served longer and know the system more intimately.

From a human perspective, this matters. Leadership teams do not experience change only intellectually; they experience it emotionally. When trust is redistributed—especially quickly—it tests more than competence. It tests identity, belonging, and one's sense of significance within the group. Christian counselors often observe that moments like these are not dangerous because of ill will, as some might imagine, but because of what they bring to the surface—questions no one is quite sure how to voice.

What does this mean for my current role? Am I still needed? Why wasn't I considered for advancement—or for staying where I am?

Daniel's story does not suggest that these questions were ever spoken aloud. Scripture records no protest, no appeal, no moment where discomfort is expressed. Instead, the narrative moves forward in an atmosphere where decisions are made, consensus is reached, and a plan begins to form—without any indication that open conversation ever took place.

This absence is worth noticing.

Over time, I've observed that silence in leadership settings is rarely empty. It often signals restraint, caution, or a desire to preserve stability. Sometimes it reflects wisdom. Other times, it reflects uncertainty about whether it is safe—or appropriate—to speak honestly about what one is experiencing. When silence becomes the default response to internal strain, unresolved emotion does not disappear; it simply looks for another outlet.

Daniel 6 shows how easily this can happen even among capable leaders. The system continues to function. Policy is developed. Agreement is reached. And yet, something important has already been missed: the opportunity to address the human experience beneath the decision.

Most leadership breakdowns do not begin with rebellion or disorder. They begin with what goes unnamed. This is not an argument against structure, but a reflection on stewardship. Healthy leadership

teams are not those without tension; they are those who know how to name tension before it turns into something else. Silence does not immediately divide a team—but it often determines how future decisions will be made, and the emotional ground on which they will stand.

Daniel 6 invites us to reflect on this quietly. Not to assign blame, but to ask a necessary question for anyone entrusted with leadership:

What begins to take shape in a team when questions like these remain unanswered?

The emotional weight of being newly favored

Jealousy rarely begins as hostility. More often, it begins as pressure.

"The honors bestowed upon Daniel excited the jealousy of the leading men of the kingdom."[1]

Daniel's sudden elevation places him in a position that is both visible and vulnerable. Scripture tells us that "an excellent spirit was in him," and that the king considered setting him over the whole realm. Excellence, however, has a way of drawing attention—not only admiration, but comparison. And comparison, when left unattended, quietly reshapes relationships.

For Daniel, being newly trusted means stepping into influence without the safety of shared history. He is not advancing alongside peers who have grown together; he is moving ahead of men who have served longer, know the system well, and understand its dynamics. Even when promotion is earned, it can still isolate. Being favored does not automatically feel secure—especially when one senses that trust has shifted faster than relationships can adjust.

At the same time, those who are long established in a system experience their own internal tension. Their discomfort does not necessarily stem from laziness or resentment, but from something more fragile: the fear of becoming less relevant. When identity has been quietly tied to role, responsibility, or proximity to leadership, any change in structure can feel like a change in personal worth.

Christian counselors often note that jealousy frequently emerges not because someone wants what another has, but because they fear losing what they believed they already held—respect, usefulness, or voice. This kind of jealousy does not announce itself loudly. It hides behind professionalism. It maintains outward compliance. But inwardly, it asks questions that **feel** too risky to speak: ***Am I still needed here?***

In healthy environments, such questions are not dangerous. They are part of growth. But when teams lack language—or safety—to process them together, those questions do not disappear. They turn inward. And when they turn inward, they begin to harden.

Daniel 6 offers no indication that anyone paused to acknowledge this emotional weight. There is no recorded effort to integrate Daniel relationally into leadership. **No indication exists that long-serving officials were invited into conversation about how trust was being redistributed. Instead, the narrative moves quickly from promotion to scrutiny, from excellence to threat.**

This progression matters. Jealousy does not require cruelty to take root. It requires distance. When people feel unseen, unheard, or quietly bypassed, even good decisions can begin to feel personal. And once decisions feel personal, motives are questioned, intentions are reinterpreted, and trust erodes—not through open conflict, but through silent recalibration.

Daniel himself does not seem to participate in this emotional recalibration. He does not adjust his behavior to manage perception. He does not attempt to secure approval. **He continues faithfully in the work he has been given. His steadiness highlights the contrast: while the system shifts around him, his inner life remains anchored.**

For leadership teams, this moment in Daniel 6 raises an important, often overlooked consideration. Promotions and reassignments do not merely change organizational charts; they reshape emotional landscapes. And when those landscapes are ignored, the pressure does not vanish—it seeks expression elsewhere.

Jealousy, at this stage, is still quiet. It has not yet become accusation or action. But it is beginning to form—fed not by malice, but by unanswered questions and unacknowledged loss.

What happens next in Daniel 6 shows where that formation can lead.

When jealousy seeks certainty

Jealousy rarely moves straight to confrontation. Before it becomes accusation, it looks for clarity.

When questions remain unanswered and emotions remain unspoken, the human instinct is not immediately to rebel, but to stabilize. People look for something firm—something that feels objective, defensible, and shared. **In leadership environments, that "something" is often structure.**

"It was these satanic agencies who had stirred the princes to envy and jealousy; it was they who had inspired the plan for Daniel's destruction; and the princes, yielding themselves as instruments of evil, carried it into effect."[2]

From a psychological perspective, this move makes sense. Ambiguity is emotionally uncomfortable. Uncertainty about one' s role, relevance, or standing creates inner tension, and tension naturally seeks relief. Structure offers that relief. Rules define boundaries. Policies provide language. Procedures replace interpretation with certainty. **What could not be said personally can now be addressed impersonally.**

Daniel 6 captures this shift with striking clarity. The officials do not begin by attacking Daniel directly. Instead, they search for a fault and find none. His conduct is irreproachable. His work is consistent. His integrity leaves no room for accusation. **At this point, the story turns—not toward personal confrontation, but toward the construction of a rule.** This turn is significant.

When jealousy cannot attach itself to character, it often attaches

itself to principle. When it cannot accuse behavior, it appeals to policy. What appears, on the surface, as loyalty to structure can sometimes mask an unresolved emotional struggle beneath it.

Scripture records other moments where political authority crosses into religious demand, often under the language of unity or loyalty. The decree in Daniel 6 is unique in its wording, but not in its logic. **In pagan kingdoms, governance and devotion were frequently intertwined, and outward religious acts were used as visible signs of allegiance to the state. Laws such as these are well documented in history. In the Roman world, for example, citizens could be required to perform public acts of loyalty—such as offering incense before the emperor' s image—not necessarily as a confession of personal belief, but as a demonstration of civic compliance.**

What makes Daniel 6 striking, then, is not the extremity of the law, but how reasonable it would have sounded within its cultural assumptions. Biblically, however, the problem is not procedural; it is moral. The decree demands what no earthly authority may claim, turning obedience into coercion and loyalty into a test of conscience.

And this is where jealousy quietly reveals itself—not in open hostility, but in the willingness to let a rule accomplish what a conversation never addressed.

This distinction matters for leadership teams. Policies are necessary. Structure protects mission. Clear rules prevent chaos. But when structure is asked to resolve what is fundamentally relational or emotional, it is carrying weight it was never designed to bear. Policy can clarify expectations; it cannot heal insecurity. It can regulate behavior; it cannot address fear.

Daniel 6 shows how easily capable leaders can confuse these categories. The system continues to function. Authority is respected. Consensus is achieved. Yet the deeper issue—the silent fear of displacement, the unspoken question of relevance—remains untouched.

At this stage, jealousy still wears a respectable face. It does not yet appear vindictive. It presents itself as principled, orderly, and compliant. But it has already crossed an important line: it has chosen certainty over conversation.

And once that choice is made, the distance between people grows wider—even as agreement appears stronger.

What follows in Daniel 6 reveals the cost of that distance, not only for the one targeted, but for the entire leadership environment that allows structure to substitute for honesty.

The cost of not speaking up

Silence is rarely chosen because people do not care. More often, it is chosen because people care deeply about preserving stability.

In leadership environments, speaking up carries risk. Questions can be misunderstood. Motives can be misread. Genuine concerns can sound like resistance, even when they are not intended that way. And so, when uncertainty arises, silence often feels like the most responsible option. Wait. Observe. Don't disrupt what appears to be working. Daniel 6 unfolds in precisely this kind of atmosphere.

The text emphasizes unanimity. The officials approach the king together. There is no recorded hesitation, no dissenting voice, no one stepping back to ask whether the decree itself crosses an unseen line. Agreement appears strong. Order is maintained. And yet, the very unanimity that signals cohesion also conceals something else: the absence of moral interruption.

This is one of the most subtle dangers in group dynamics**. When no one speaks, responsibility dissolves.** Each individual can tell themselves that the issue is already settled, that others have surely considered the implications, that silence is simply respect for process. Over time, restraint hardens into disengagement.

This is not rebellion. It is abdication.

Silence does not create jealousy, but it allows jealousy to organize itself. When concerns are not voiced early, they do not remain neutral. They shape perception. They color interpretation. They quietly justify decisions that would otherwise invite pause.

Daniel's story gives no indication that anyone attempted to slow the moment down. No one is portrayed as malicious. No one is described as overtly cruel. But the absence of a dissenting voice allows a morally compromised decree to move forward without resistance. What might have been addressed through conversation is now enforced through law.

Healthy teams do not require constant agreement, but they do require courage at critical moments. Silence may preserve short-term harmony, but it often undermines long-term trust. When people learn that certain questions are unwelcome—or unsafe—they stop bringing their full discernment into the room. Over time, the team may function efficiently, but it no longer functions honestly.

Daniel 6 shows the cost of that kind of silence. A decision made without interruption becomes irreversible. A law passed without reflection becomes a trap. And those who remained quiet find themselves bound by the very process they did not question.

The tragedy is not that no one objected loud enough.
It is that no one objected at all.

Jealousy does not need permission to grow. **It needs space—and silence provides optimal growing conditions.**

Daniel's stability under pressure

By the time Daniel becomes aware of the decree, the situation has already hardened. The law is signed. The consequences are clear. What follows is one of the most revealing moments in the chapter—not because of what Daniel resists, but because of what he refuses to change.

Scripture tells us that when Daniel knew the writing was signed, he went to his house, opened his windows, and prayed as he had done before. There is no panic recorded. No negotiation. No change of course. Daniel does not attempt to reinterpret his habits in light of new pressure. He simply continues.

The illusion of losing when others rise

At the heart of Daniel 6 lies an assumption that quietly shapes

much of human behavior: the belief that trust, influence, and significance are scarce.

Daniel's rise is experienced by others as loss. His elevation is interpreted not as addition, but as subtraction. More trust for him must mean less trust for them. More visibility for Daniel must mean less relevance for those who have served longer. This assumption is never stated outright, but it drives everything that follows.

This is one of the most common distortions in group life. When worth is measured comparatively, growth elsewhere feels threatening. Advancement becomes competitive. Change feels personal. And leadership environments slowly drift into a zero-sum mindset—where one person' s success is assumed to come at another' s expense. Scripture does not support this view.

Daniel's excellence does not diminish the value of others. His integrity does not disqualify their contribution. The Daniel story gives no indication that his promotion required someone else' s failure. Yet jealousy reframes the moment as a contest. What could have been shared leadership becomes perceived displacement.

Healthy leadership teams function differently. They recognize that people contribute at different levels, in different ways, and in different seasons. Influence is not uniform. Visibility is not equal. But dignity is not diminished by these differences. A person can step into a new role without invalidating the roles of others. Another can remain where they are without being sidelined or forgotten.

In emotionally healthy teams, leadership is not a ladder where only one person can stand at the top. It is a landscape, where different strengths matter in different places. Experience, insight, execution, discernment, and care all carry weight—even when they are not recognized in the same way or at the same time. ***When your contribution is not needed in one place, it does not mean it has no value. It means it belongs somewhere else.***

Daniel's presence could have expanded the leadership environment rather than constricted it. His excellence could have relieved pressure, strengthened trust, and redistributed responsibility. But jealousy narrows perspective. It interprets expansion as threat and collaboration as competition.

This is why jealousy is so destructive to leadership cultures. It does not merely distort how we see others; it distorts how we see ourselves. It convinces capable people that they must defend their relevance rather than deepen their contribution.

For teams that wish to remain healthy, this distinction is critical. Leadership does not require everyone to rise in the same way. It requires everyone to be valued for what they bring. When that vision is absent, jealousy fills the gap. When it is present, jealousy loses its power.

A quiet appeal

Daniel 6 is not only a story about leadership. It is a story about what happens inside people when change touches something tender.

Jealousy does not begin with malice. It often begins with hurt—with the quiet realization that something has shifted, and the fear that one's place, voice, or value may have shifted with it. Many who struggle with jealousy are not trying to take what belongs to someone else; they are trying to hold on to what once felt secure.

That is why this story matters.

Most of us will never be asked to face a lions' den. But many of us have faced moments when we wondered whether we still mattered—when we felt passed over, quietly repositioned, or left out without explanation. Moments when we chose silence, not because we lacked conviction, but because speaking felt risky, and staying quiet felt safer.

Daniel 6 invites us to pause in those moments—to slow down before our unanswered questions turn inward.

It invites those who feel overlooked to resist the quiet drift toward suspicion. It invites those who carry influence to notice when others grow quiet, not as a threat, but as a signal. And it invites all of us to remember that faithfulness is not measured by position, but by integrity.

The appeal of this chapter is not to eliminate jealousy through better systems. It is to meet it earlier—with honesty, humility, and care.

If you are in leadership, the appeal is gentle but serious: attend to the silences. Ask the questions that feel uncomfortable but necessary. Create space where fears can be named before they begin to shape decisions.

If you find yourself quietly wrestling with jealousy, the appeal is equally tender: you are not less valuable because a role has changed. You are not invisible because recognition has shifted. Your worth was never meant to be negotiated through comparison.

Daniel 6 reminds us that God sees clearly what human systems sometimes miss. He sees faithfulness long before it is rewarded. He honors integrity even when it is misunderstood. And He remains near to those who choose quiet trust over quiet resentment.

The story closes not with vindication, but with perspective. Power shifts. Laws change. Positions rise and fall. But character endures.

And perhaps that is the invitation for us as well—not to harden when change disrupts us, not to retreat into silence when clarity is needed, and not to measure ourselves against one another, but to remain faithful, open, and anchored in the One who truly sees and understands us.

That kind of faithfulness may or may not be noticed. In fact, it may never draw the attention we expected.

But I promise you it will draw this response:

"Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matthew 25:21). ℟

References:

[1] *Prophets and Kings,* p. 539.
[2] Ibid., p. 540.



By Nancy Fountain

THE FAMILY
A FORTRESS

THE FAMILY: A SAFEGUARD AND AN AGENCY

In the beginning, God created man and woman to be united, to help one another, and to cherish each other's companionship. He himself declared that it was not good for man to be alone. God loved Adam deeply and desired to bestow upon him the complete joy of life, knowing that this joy was found in shared experiences and companionship.

"Man was not made to dwell in solitude; he was to be a social being. Without companionship, the beautiful scenes and delightful employments of Eden would have failed to yield perfect happiness. Even communion with angels could not have satisfied his desire for sympathy and companionship. There was none of the same nature to love and to be loved."[1]

"When the divine principles are recognized and obeyed in this relation, marriage is a blessing; it guards the purity and happiness of the race, it provides for man's social needs, it elevates the physical, the intellectual, and the moral nature."[2]

God created Eve perfectly to complement Adam, allowing them to share their life of joy together. Thus, the family unit was established and blessed by God. This happy couple lived in perfect harmony in a garden designed specifically for them, finding delight in their communion with the Infinite. "They were visited by angels and were granted communion with their Maker, with no obscuring veil between."[3] Their love was to flourish as they multiplied, bringing forth children and enriching their bond as a family focused on God. This was perfection. This is what God wanted for all humanity, the way he purposed it to be.

However, we are all too aware of the grave implications of sin that led humanity into despair. Perfection was broken and a different life awaited them, one of darkness in the soul. So, the family unit established at the beginning became even more important and crucial after the fall. It served and continues to serve as a shield, rightly utilized, to guide us back to Him who is eager to forgive and embrace us once more. God has shown His boundless love, as we read in Scripture: "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Romans 5:8). What an honor and privilege it is to be chosen for redemption! The God of the universe—the One who created everything that exists—calls us to be with Him once again, to restore that perfection, joy, and personal communion.

God yearns to commune with us once again as He did in the beginning with our first parents, but He will not force His love upon us. We must choose to follow Him. There is a battle to overcome. "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Ephesians 6:12). The surrounding evil will overpower us unless we submit fully to God's will and His protection. The Lord has already achieved victory and extends His hand toward us; we must reach for it firmly and not let go. At the same time, we should likewise extend our hand to our family, friends, and acquaintances to follow the only way to salvation from this sinful state in which we find ourselves. Now more than ever, it is imperative that we stand united and support one another through these trying times. Now is the time for families to unite for this battle. God gives us the victory.

The Christian family: A shield for salvation

The Christian family must be a beacon of salvation, not just for those outside its confines but especially for its own members. A Christ-centered family working together can become a profound blessing in rescuing souls ensnared in hopelessness. On one occasion, my husband and I had the privilege of helping a young person who was

trapped in a life of vice. We opened our home to her for some time. It was a challenging transition, as she was accustomed to a different lifestyle, often staying out until late at night. We established boundaries, including a curfew, understanding that force would not yield positive results. As we navigated these difficulties, we prayed earnestly, especially as we had four small children observing her every action. Gradually, she chose to remain at home rather than go out, shifting her mindset. I believe she yearned for the love and connection of a family; we showed her that we genuinely cared and sought to direct her toward a better life, while our children provided her with the unconditional love that is innate to childhood. Later, she confided that her time with us was the most valuable rehabilitation she could have experienced, and she was very grateful.

Opening our home to others is not always easy, but with earnest prayer, God reveals the when and how of helping others. This process does not only assist those in need but also fortifies the family unit, knowing that together they can make a difference. Family members are called to uplift one another, encouraging each other to stand steadfast in righteousness. Mutual prayer, working together, and perseverance create a bond that the enemy cannot break.

When Christ dwells in a family's heart, each member looks out for the others, learning how to uplift and support one another. What a blessing it is to have loved ones to rely upon during our most challenging moments and to be able to offer support in return! Even if some family members do not share our beliefs, our love and respect for them can serve as a testament to God's love. Only our wise and divine God could design the intricate depths of the family circle, revealing its remarkable beauty.

"God Himself established the family relations. His word is the only safe guide in the management of children. Human philosophy has not discovered more than God knows, nor has devised a wiser plan of dealing with children than that given by our Lord. Who can better understand all the needs of children than their Creator? Who can feel a deeper interest in their welfare than He who bought them with His own blood?"[4]

Relations among family members

Being supported by a family member is a gift, but we must remember our calling to support others as well. Christ instructs us to prioritize the well-being of others above our own. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3, 4). The home should be a sanctuary where we learn that giving is better than receiving. We should not wait for others to do for us but be ready to do for others. The home is where we reveal our true selves; therefore how important it is to learn this at home.

It is vital for a family's well-being to make time for each other, whether it be a mother-daughter, father-son, or sibling relationship. Building these connections is crucial to fostering understanding and cooperation. But how can we nurture these relationships? This begins at an early age when parents model and instill the values of respect and relationship-building.

If we are fortunate enough to share meals together regularly; this routine can be an essential time for connection. One of the most treasured moments in my family occurs during our Friday evening worships. The Sabbath provides a blessed opportunity to set aside worldly cares and focus our attention on God, allowing for joyful communion with Him and each other. Sharing the week's challenges and victories strengthens us, fostering empathy and unity.

Parents should also make an effort to spend one-on-one time with each child. While it may not happen frequently, these special moments foster deep connections of love. In addition, it is essential for parents to avoid showing favoritism toward any one child, as this can sow seeds of bitterness that may carry into adulthood.

Respecting free will

While it is comforting to assume our ideas are always right, we must acknowledge that God has granted us all a free will. Just as God respects our choices, we must extend that same respect to others, including our children. At first, when they are very young, yes, they should obey without question, but as they grow and mature, we should be able to listen to them more and give them a voice to express themselves respectfully.

Think of the parent-child relationship as reflective of God's relationship with us. We approach God in prayer, presenting our needs, and He listens. In the same manner, when a child communicates their needs or desires, we should respond with an open heart. For example, when God knows something is not to our benefit, He gently steers us in a better direction. We as parents must also be willing to wisely guide our children toward the right path—knowing their preferences but not being led by them.

In moments of disagreement, it is crucial to seek divine wisdom. It is often through deep prayer that we find the insight necessary to handle these challenging situations. When we commit our burdens to God in earnest supplication, He grants us wisdom and the patience to persevere. As our children grow, they will eventually recognize and appreciate the watchful care we provided them in their early years. During my teenage years, for about two or three years, I gave my mother a hard time, but she was faithful and led by God. She prayed earnestly and even asked others to pray. I knew she only wanted what was best for me, and I am so thankful God heard her prayers. In the same manner, I prayed to God to help me lead my children into His arms because I knew I couldn't do it alone. Now as my own children have families of their own, they ask me how I did it. My answer to them always is only by God's guidance and many times on my knees. He truly gives wisdom!

Knowing when to let go

As time passes, children grow into adulthood, making their own choices and taking their own paths, often with less reliance on their parents. Yes, we sometimes forget that they will grow up, but before you know it, they do! They may marry or relocate for career or educational opportunities, shifting their focus to their work, spouses and new families. However, our roles as parents are far from over. Yes, they change, but the bond of family remains, and if our children continue in faith, we

continue to support one another on that journey. The transformation into adult-to-adult friendship with mutual respect becomes a very strong relationship, one that is both enjoyable and motivational, knowing that God's love constrains us to good works.

Should an adult child choose a different path, we should respect their choice but remain devoted to their spiritual well-being, demonstrating God's love through our words and actions. Our prayers for them should intensify, echoing the sentiment found in James 5:16, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." Again, God doesn't force and neither should we. We must know when to let go and let Jesus take control believing that when we "Train up a child in the way he should go: when he is old, he will not depart from it" (Proverbs 22:6).

The power of prayer

Prayer is our lifeline, a means through which we convey all our concerns to God, who hears and answers our supplications. "Then shall ye call upon me, and ye shall go and pray unto me, and I will hearken unto you" (Jeremiah 29:12). Regular prayer keeps us connected and dependent on Him.

At Whispering Pines Christian School, we witness this truth repeatedly. In times of need—be it financial, spiritual, or otherwise—we have seen the miraculous ways in which God intervenes. Unexpected donations, transformed hearts, and guidance in challenging situations affirm His promise to be with us. Maintaining our lifeline through prayer empowers us and reassures us of His abiding presence.

Reading the Bible

Prayer must be complemented by the reading of God's Word. The Christian family should prioritize Scripture as the foundation of their home, embracing its transformative power and taking time to read, not only individually but together as a family. The Bible serves not only as a guide but also as a direct path to knowing our Creator. It is one of the means in which God communicates to us. We should be well familiar with its sacred pages so that in moments of need, we can be strengthened by His promises.

"The teaching of the Bible has a vital bearing upon man's prosperity in all the relations of this life. It unfolds the principles that are the cornerstone of a nation's prosperity—principles intimately tied to the well-being of society, and which serve as a safeguard for the family. Without these principles, no man can attain usefulness, happiness, and honor in this life or secure the promise of eternal life. There is no phase of human experience for which the teachings of the Bible do not provide essential preparation."[5]

Every person is a precious soul in Christ's eyes

God walked more than three years alongside twelve men, teaching them of His kingdom and salvation. He recognized their potential and left no stone unturned in His work for each of them, even laboring with Judas in an effort to guide him towards righteousness. Every soul holds immeasurable value in His sight, and until they seal their fate, we must continue working for their salvation.

This is why Christian families are so important and so needed. Our world is in need of restoration. We need restoration. Satan has attacked the family unit because he understands its profound power; yet, God desires for families to return to their original purpose, safeguarding one another and reaching out to save others from darkness. He envisions each family member strengthened and engaged in spiritual warfare, paving the way for eternal fellowship with Him.

Conclusion: Family as a safeguard

What immense joy awaits us when we finally meet Jesus face to face! To experience the unity that once existed between Adam, Eve, and Christ is indeed a glorious thought. We have only heard of their communion with God, but the promise of such a relationship extends to each of us.

"The home of our first parents was to be a pattern for other homes as their children should go forth to occupy the earth. That home, beautified by the hand of God Himself, was not a gorgeous palace. Men, in their pride, delight in magnificent and costly edifices and glory in the works of their own hands; but God placed Adam in a garden. This was his dwelling. The blue heavens were its dome; the earth, with its delicate flowers and carpet of living green, was its floor; and the leafy branches of the goodly trees were its canopy. Its walls were hung with the most magnificent adornings—the handiwork of the great Master Artist. In the surroundings of the holy pair was a lesson for all time—that true happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works. If men would give less attention to the artificial, and would cultivate greater simplicity, they would come far nearer to answering the purpose of God in their creation. Pride and ambition are never satisfied, but those who are truly wise will find substantial and elevating pleasure in the sources of enjoyment that God has placed within the reach of all."[6]

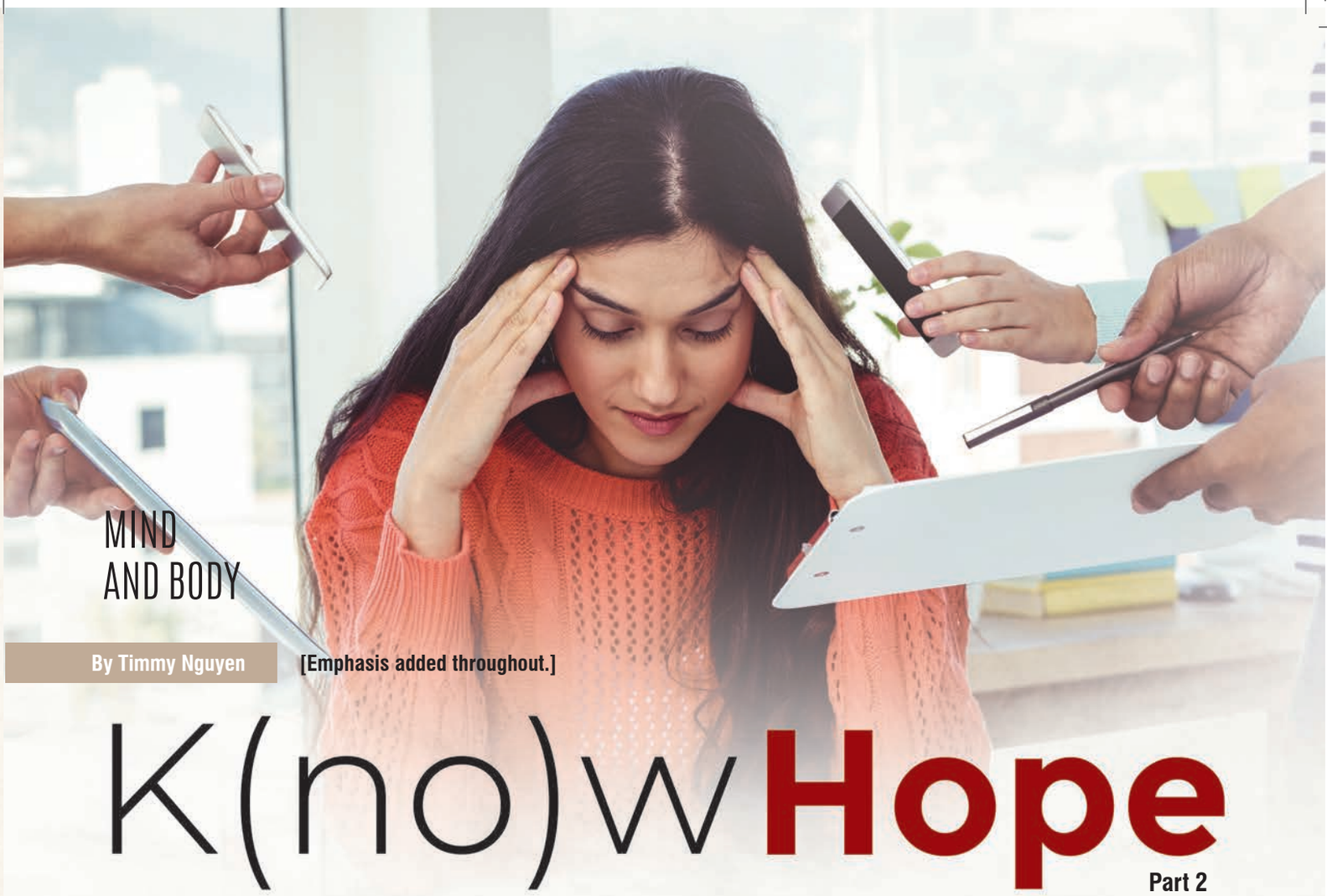
I want to be restored to God's original plan. I want to hear the stories of my loved ones and many others, but most importantly, I want to see the face of my Redeemer, who risked everything for me, a wretched soul. The Christian family is an agency to do a work for each other and for others. It should be a strength that is bound by the divine cords of love. When we approach family relationships as God intended, we foster closer connections, working collaboratively to strengthen the unbreakable bond He has established among us to fulfill in His final work.

Family serves as both a safeguard and a source of strength. In a world that often lacks Christ-centered families, cultivating such a family requires dedication, commitment, and divine guidance. As Abraham was led by faith and recognized God's voice, may we also be guided, as individuals, as families, and as a church, moving closer to Him and sharing His love with all whom we encounter.

May we know His voice, and may our families glorify God in all things. ✠

References:

1 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 46.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., p. 50.
4 *The Adventist Home*, p. 306.
5 *Child Guidance*, p. 507.
6 *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 49.



MIND
AND BODY

By Timmy Nguyen

[Emphasis added throughout.]

K(no)w Hope

Part 2

In Part 1 of this article, we discussed the toll that anxiety and depression have on us as individuals and how it can lead us to become suicidal. Practical ways were provided to facilitate in handling such conditions—including exercise, being outside, deep reflection and gratitude, and trusting in God.

Now, let us examine a few characters in the Bible who struggled with these mental health conditions. Some were hopeless, some were suicidal. Some overcame, and some did not. Why? Why did some survive, but some not?

We will explore the key ideas from each character's story which either led to disaster or triumph over anxiety and depression, and I pray there will be something for you to learn, dear reader. Is there *NO* HOPE for those who are suffering from these conditions? Or, can they find a way to *KNOW* HOPE instead?

Saul – The result of disobedience

Saul was the first king of Israel. Coming from the tribe of Benjamin, he was chosen by God and anointed by the prophet Samuel. Unfortunately, his is not the most cheerful of stories. Saul suffered mental anguish largely due to his spiritual weakness as manifested in jealousy, and fear in his stressful position as a king of a great nation. What ultimately led to Saul's poor mental health and subsequent suicide? It was his disobedience to God's commands which led to spiritual decline.

One example is found in 1 Samuel 13 when, instead of waiting for the prophet Samuel to perform a burnt offering, he took it upon himself to do so, resulting in God seeking a different man—a man after His own heart to lead His people (King David). Then there was also Saul's failure in destroying all of the wicked Amalekites and their livestock when commanded to by God (1 Samuel 15).

After being rejected by God, and under pressure from the Philistines threatening to attack him, Saul sought counsel for his upcoming battle with the Philistines from a spiritist medium known as the Witch of Endor (1 Samuel 28). Speaking to spirits, however, is **strictly forbidden by God's law**, as we see in His Word, "There shall not be found among you any one that maketh his son or his daughter to pass through the fire, **or that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch**, Or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer [**one who inquires of the dead**]. For **all that do these things are an abomination unto the Lord**" (Deuteronomy 18:10–12, emphasis added). As a result, the spirit pretending to be Samuel

Jesus gives the assurance, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27). . . . He also explained that we WILL have tribulation, but in that same verse He also says, "be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world" (John 17:33).

predicted Saul's doom in the coming battle against the Philistines (1 Samuel 28:16–19). In response, "then Saul fell straightway all along on the earth, and was sore afraid, because of the words of Samuel: and there was no strength in him" (1 Samuel 28:20).

All of Saul's stress and anxiety was at a climax. As the Philistines cornered him and killed his sons, Saul was wounded by the archers. Rather than wait to be killed, in desperation, he took his own sword and fell upon it.

What can we learn from Saul's story?

Firstly, **sin** *(the transgression of God's law)* **is a very grave matter**. It is NOT to be taken lightly, and can have severe consequences. Once David became Saul's servant, it is written that "the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul" (1 Samuel 16:14). He was then open to the onslaught of tormenting demons. So it can be with us, too. If we continually sin, evil spirits and influences can torment and ruin our own lives, too. Every action has a consequence.

Secondly, **immediate, TRUE repentance is essential**, or else **the soul slowly degrades**, despairs, and **risks falling away from the Holy Spirit**. Saul's repentance in 1 Samuel 15, when speaking with Samuel, was not truly penitent and **did not express a desire for transformation by God**. We read in 1 Samuel 15:24 that "Saul said unto Samuel, I have sinned: for I have transgressed the commandment of the Lord, and thy words: **because I feared the people, and obeyed their voice**." [Emphasis added.] The qualifier shows how Saul wanted to do things his own way and was not truly sorry for sparing some of the Amalekites and saving their best possessions as offerings and gifts for his people.

Lastly, his life teaches us not to be misguided by naysayers, negative influences, or peer pressure. Saul was negatively influenced by peer pressure from the Israelites. Even if God does not provide direct answers for us when we have tribulation in our lives or need to make difficult decisions, **we need to have a firm, unshakeable faith aligned with God's will**.

Some might ask, is Saul going to be in Heaven? The short answer is no—his last action was a sin (suicide). Even if Saul had not killed himself and allowed the Philistines to kill him instead, I still don't believe he would have made it to Heaven given the way he lived his life in continual disobedience to God. Saul never showed signs of true repentance, unlike his successor, King David.

Elijah – Power perfected in weakness

The renowned Elijah, a great prophet during the reign of King Ahab, was able to perform various miracles with God's help, including feeding the widow in Zarephath and restoring the widow's son who fell ill and died (1 Kings 17:17–23).

Elijah challenged the wicked King Ahab who was promoting Baal worship (worship of pagan gods) in the northern kingdom of Israel. Unlike the 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, Elijah was able to successfully prove who the true God is when his call for fire upon his burnt offering was immediately answered.

Despite his great faith in God, we still see he had moments of discouragement and weakness.

When Ahab told his wife Jezebel what Elijah had done (seizing the prophets of Baal and killing them), she sent a messenger threatening to have him killed. Because Jezebel had killed other prophets, her threat here was a real one.

Anxious, Elijah flees to the desert in despair. The Bible says in 1 Kings 19:4, "But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: **and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O Lord, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers."**

He felt like he was a failure since the nation of Israel was still stuck in idolatry and sin. *How many times have we felt this way in life—feeling as if we haven't done enough, as if we are unworthy to be vessels for God? Does it make us feel ashamed? When we are discouraged or depressed, we tend to fall deeper in our shame.*

Even faithful Elijah was capable of being shaken to the point of being suicidal. This is the man who was so important to God that he was translated to Heaven in a whirlwind—a fate shared only with Enoch.

What helped him recover? ***Trust in God.*** God never left Elijah to be in situations or temptations too great to bear. He provided him with food and provisions multiple times (with the widow, and when he was in the desert). With prayer and faith, he was able to demonstrate the true God on the altar, and to bring rain to the drought-stricken land. He **gave Elijah the strength to endure numerous trials**, rather than removing the threats completely. Jezebel did not simply disappear from his life. But God, in providing for him, showed His care and comfort for His child.

It's completely understandable to be caught in despair sometimes, even as Christians. Just because you are a man or woman of faith, does not mean you won't have moments of doubt, fear, or hopelessness. You may be down for days, or weeks, or months, or years. Fear is paralyzing. The enemy wants you to stay down, stay anxious, stay depressed. He wants you dead. But trust in the Lord, because He will never leave or forsake you. By trusting God, Elijah was able to be delivered from difficult situations and not be overcome.

"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, **whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee**. Trust ye in the Lord for ever: for in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength" (Isaiah 26:3, 4).

What did the apostle Paul say about God's strength when we are weak? "And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly 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).

Even when we are weak, God is strong. When we feel weak, God's power can shine even brighter in us, as it did for Elijah. **The Lord is our only way to know true hope.**

Job – Faith in every circumstance

Job is described to be "**blameless and upright**, one who **feared God** and turned away from evil" (Job 1:1, ESV). He had great possessions and was regarded as the greatest of all the people of the east. When God allowed Satan to test his servant's faith, he lost everything—possessions, livestock, servants, wealth, and children. Satan also struck Job with horribly painful sores from head to toe. How did Job react to this?

We read that "Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: **the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord**" (Job 1:20, 21).

Job had a deep understanding of God's loving character. He understood that God blesses, and that he also allows suffering. But he was not without anguish or hopelessness. For 7 days, he grieved together with his "friends" Eliphaz, Bildad, and Zophar. Then he lamented his birth, saying, "Let the day perish on which I was born. . . . Let gloom and deep darkness claim it" (Job 3:3, 5).

Have you ever considered how you would react in Job's shoes? Could you remain faithful? How upset at God would you be? Would you still believe God was a fair, just, and loving God?

Worse, it seemed like NOBODY was on Job's side! Not his wife, who told him to curse God and die. Nor were his friends. While they did mourn with him, they also implied that it was Job's actions, sins, and wickedness which caused his suffering. Their judgment does not come off as something comforting. Eliphaz asks, "Remember, I pray thee, who ever perished, being innocent? or where were the righteous cut off? Even as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow wickedness, reap the same" (Job 4:7, 8). While it is an easy and human thing to do, it is unwise to judge others for their situations.

When there was nobody else, God was there for Job. Rather than giving a direct answer to why Job had to suffer so much, God reminded Job of His great creative power. He reminded him of who created the earth, formed the sea, created animals, so on and so forth. Job's story teaches us that **we cannot fully understand God's plans and ways**. Although this can cause a lot of anxiety, depression, and hopelessness in us, especially during difficult trials, the right thing to do is to humble ourselves before God even when we cannot understand why we might have to suffer sometimes. "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways saith the Lord" (Isaiah 55:8).

"A feeling of assurance is not to be despised; we should praise God for it; but when your feelings are depressed, do not think that God has changed. Praise Him just as much, because you trust in His word, and not in feelings. **You have covenanted to walk by faith, not to be controlled by feelings. Feelings vary with circumstances**....Walk before God by faith, and rest fully upon His promises. **Jesus says, "Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.**' Matthew 28:20."[1]

Job did not allow his emotions to control his life or his fate. Rather, he walked by faith and principle. This kept him strong in his suffering.

Furthermore, Job did not suffer needlessly. Romans 5 partially explains God's plan for us in our sufferings here on earth. Suffering through trials builds character, and may be His way of pruning us to TRUST and LOVE HIM MORE. Romans 5:1 says "Therefore being justified by faith, **we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ**." ***Faith makes us justified, or righteous, before God. It helps us understand His character more—one of perfect peace and love.***

Christ is the One "by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we **glory in tribulations** also: knowing that **tribulation worketh patience**; And **patience, experience; and experience, hope**: And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us" (Romans 5:2–5).

True hope

Hope is defined as "a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen." It's a decent definition, but it comes from a worldly perspective which includes our own personal biases. *Our* hopes may not always be for the best. Unfortunately, *worldly hope* falls short. Because it leaves room for doubt and uncertainty; it is not reassuring to one who is anxious, depressed, or contemplating suicide.

In contrast, biblical hope—hope, with God at the foundation, is a confident ***assurance***—that is, a promise that WILL be, WITHOUT DOUBT, FULFILLED. **Biblical hope is not merely a feeling, it's a reality grounded in Christ.** The apostle Paul refers to "**Jesus Christ which is our hope**" (1 Timothy 1:1).

Christ, as a perfect being, cannot lie. If He promises it, it will happen. The apostle declares, "Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope" (Romans 15:13).

As we suffer, we build character, and thus, a HOPE towards eternal life. Christ is the one who enables this hope. There is no other way to find it but in Him. Often, we need to have patience and wait for Him. The Bible tells us, "The Lord is good unto them that wait for him, to the soul that seeketh him. It is good that a man should both hope and quietly

wait for the salvation of the Lord" (Lamentations 3:25, 26). Having to wait develops our faith and hope.

Stand firm, knowing that Jesus does not define us based on our sins, but rather on our repentance and our willingness to change. If we wallow in our worthlessness and sins, then we are not trusting in Christ's role as our intercessor, and our advocate before the Father.

Jesus is a Saviour, not an accuser. God has not abandoned you. Jesus's blood is the atonement for our life. It covers our sins.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE. God promises that He will never leave us nor forsake us. (Hebrews 13:5.)

Knowing hope = Following Christ's lead

The best way to know hope better, is to know Christ better. His character and example for us to follow is summarized very well: "We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves. Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification. For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me. For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:1–4).

We must build our character here on earth, to prepare for Heaven. Looking to Christ strengthens us and clears our mind of anxiety and depression so we can achieve this higher goal.

"Through the merits of Christ, through His righteousness, which by faith is imputed unto us, **we are to attain to the perfection of Christian character**. Our daily and hourly work is set forth in the words of the apostle: "Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith." While doing this **our minds become clearer and our faith stronger, and our hope is confirmed**; we are so engrossed with **the view of His purity and loveliness and the sacrifice He has made** to bring us into agreement with God that **we have no disposition to speak of doubts and discouragements**."[2]

"God looks into the tiny seed that He Himself has formed, and sees wrapped within it **the beautiful flower, the shrub, or the lofty, wide-spreading tree**. So does He see the **possibilities in every human being**. We are here for a purpose. God has given us His plan for our life, and He desires us to reach the highest standard of development.

"**He desires that we shall constantly be growing in holiness, in happiness, in usefulness.** All have capabilities which they must be taught to regard as sacred endowments, to appreciate as the Lord's gifts, and rightly to employ. He desires the youth to cultivate every power of their being, and to bring every faculty into active exercise. He desires them to **enjoy all that is useful and precious in this life, to be good and to do good, laying up a heavenly treasure for the future life**.

"It should be their ambition to excel in all things that are unselfish, high, and noble. Let them **look to Christ as the pattern** after which they are to be fashioned. The holy ambition that He revealed in His life they are to cherish—**an ambition to make the world better for their having lived in it**. This is the work to which they are called."[3]

Come to Jesus just as you are. As broken as you may feel at any moment in time, run to Him like a child who has lost their way and needs a parent to comfort them. Seek refuge in His arms. Lean on others who fear God and who genuinely care about you. Lean on your support system. Practice gratitude, daily. Pray to God often and maintain a close connection with Jesus, the Living Water.

Even though the world is filled with darkness, find the bright spots. Pray that you can also be a light for others someday, as this will help not just yourself, but others with whom you come into contact. Remember how you might have felt when someone talked to you in your darkest hour. Proverbs 4:18 explains that "the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

The gospel mission is reflecting the light of Christ—gently guiding people away from insignificant worldly matters to a life in Heaven for eternity. What does sharing light cost you?

"Let us remember that everyone has some dark spot in his experience. **Let us do all we can to bring cheerfulness and hope into the lives of others. What a blessing this will be to them**. In their turn they will speak words of good cheer to others to bring sunshine into their hearts."[4]

Are you anxious?

The apostle bids us, "Be careful [*i.e.,* full of care] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6, 7).

Are you lacking peace?

Jesus gives the assurance, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid" (John 14:27).

I pray that we do not give up. I pray that our loved ones do not give up on us. Even if we are neglected, afflicted, or abandoned by someone or some group here on earth, know that there is hope because of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, who has saved so many from darkness and despair. As Jesus overcame trial and tribulation on earth with the help of the Father, so can we. Before His death and resurrection, Jesus explained that we WILL have tribulation, but in that same verse He also says, "be of good cheer, for I have overcome the world" (John 16:33).

May the Lord help us to remain faithful and Know Hope—a hope of eternal life—which begins here and now as we grow our relationship with Jesus here on earth. ✠

References:

1 *Our High Calling*, p. 124.
2 *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 744.
3 *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 398.
4 *The Upward Look*, p. 185.



By Paul Chapman

MEET TODAY'S REFORMERS

Accepted in the Beloved: My Journey to Faith

This is a personal testimony of my journey into the Christian faith. It begins in childhood, through trauma and searching, and leads to a transformative realization of grace, acceptance, and relationship with Jesus. I share this story in the hope that others may find encouragement, hope, and the assurance that they, too, are accepted in the Beloved.

Early family life

I came from a broken home. My mum and dad divorced when I was four years old. My brother was five, and Mum was still pregnant with my sister when they first separated. Mum moved back into her parents' place and took us with her until she could get back on her feet. As a result, we came under the loving influence of my maternal grandparents from an early age.

My grandmother was a devout Christian woman. In the 1950s, she and my grandfather had been very interested in health. They were both vegetarians. I'm not sure how, but one day, my grandfather came across an advertisement for the book, *Nature Heals, Why Be Sick.* So, he wrote for a copy. The book was delivered by a couple of missionaries from a local SDA Reform Movement congregation. When they started discussing religious things, my grandmother had become very interested. After a period of Bible studies with both Adventist and Reform Bible workers, my grandmother made the decision to join the Reform Movement. My mum was eight years old at the time. Every week my grandmother would take my mum and her siblings to church. My mum loved the Lord, and was baptized at 17 years of age. She later met and married my dad.

That day was the first time I had been to church in years. Not only that, it was also the first time I went freely—not out of obligation, but because I wanted to. I was with family—my church-going aunt, uncle and cousins—and people who made me feel welcome.

Though they made a go of it, it was not a happy marriage. The pain of that family breakdown, and divorce that followed, affected us for years to come.

I'm not sure how much influence religion had on our lives during that early period, but the spiritual impact came primarily through our time with Mum at my grandmother's place. Several months after Mum's separation from Dad, there came a time when my brother and I were separated from the family altogether. Mum had suffered a nervous breakdown and wasn't well enough to care for us. We became wards of the state and my brother and I were placed in a boys' home.

I still remember the day we were taken away from our grandparents' home—the only family we had ever known. My brother and I sat in the back seat of the car, tears streaming down our faces, watching through the rear window as our family disappeared into the distance. We had no idea why we were in the car or where we were going. Though I was not yet five years old, that moment is indelibly etched in my memory.

Life in the boys' home

One of our first meals at the boys' home was a dish that had meat in it. Up until that time, we had been vegetarians—we didn't even know what meat was. It looked horrible to us, and we didn't want to eat it. But the staff in charge of our care had no sympathy. They told us, "If you don't eat your meat, you won't get dessert." We said, "That's fine—we won't have dessert." But they insisted we eat the meat anyway, and they forced us to do so.

It was a very sad and disturbing experience. I still struggle to find the right word to describe how it felt—it was a violation of something deeply personal.

I also remember a time when Mum came to visit. The staff would not let her see us. So, she passed some lollies to us over the back fence while we were playing in the yard. It was such a small gesture, but it meant the world to us. After she left, the person in charge called us over, took the lollies from us, gave one to each of the other children, and then kept the rest. We never saw them again.

I also recall the time when our grandmother visited us. We were so happy to see her, expecting her to take us home. When she left without us, our hearts sank. Unbeknown to us, there was a custody battle going on between my dad and my mum and grandparents. Dad won it. We found that out the day he came with his de facto spouse to collect us. My dad wasn't a religious man—more of an agnostic. But my maternal grandmother once told me that my dad's grandmother was a very sincere Christian woman. How much of her religiosity rubbed off on my dad is hard to say. He was not a churchgoer.

Growing up with my father

Growing up with my father was good in one sense—my brother, sister, and I were kept together. However, I don't think my father really knew how to be a father to us—probably because his own father hadn't been much of a father to him. Violence was not uncommon under my father's roof.

Still, we had a roof over our heads, food on the table, and clothes on our backs. But it wasn't a particularly happy upbringing. Most of the time, all we wanted was to go and live with our mother and her parents.

As part of the court orders, we were allowed to see Mum every other Sunday from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.—if we were good. If my siblings or I misbehaved during the two weeks prior, part of the punishment, arbitrarily declared by our stepmother, was to deny the misbehaving child access to these visits. I can't describe the feeling of watching my brother and sister leave for the day with Mum while I received my punishment—staying at home with Dad and our stepmother (more on her later). What was even more difficult to endure was when this occurred on what we deemed a full-weekend visit. Mum and Dad had a verbal arrangement, where every fourth weekend, we would stay from Friday night through to Sunday afternoon with Mum. It was especially heart-wrenching for my mum who desired nothing more than to spend a treasured weekend together with all three of her children. She was 24 years old when we were taken from her. I can't describe the devastation she felt when this happened. But with a love only a mother could possess, she secured a job and went into debt for a car, just so she could pick us up for those access visits.

During this period—from when I was about five until I was twelve—Mum lived with her parents on and off. During those full-weekend visits at my grandparents' home, Mum or my grandmother would take us to church. That's where my first memories of church come from.

Sabbath memories

I still remember waking up on Saturday mornings and feeling a wave of sadness. "Oh no," I'd think, feeling so low because it was the weekend—and I was at my father's place. But then, on that one Saturday in every four, I'd open my eyes and realize, *Oh! I'm at my grandmother's place!* And just like that, everything changed. The depression lifted, and a deep sense of relief and happiness filled my heart. My whole mood would shift.

My grandmother—and sometimes my mother—would dress us and take us to church. Sometimes it was just my grandmother, sometimes both. But every Saturday when we were with my grandmother, we went to church. Those Sabbaths left a lasting impression on me.

I remember the local pastor lived in the house next door to the church with his wife. I still recall going to Sabbath School and learning about Jesus and God's love. I remember coloring in the words *"God is love."*

Though I didn't understand quite what that meant, I still enjoyed coloring in the words and posting them up on the Sabbath School room wall. We sang the classic children's Bible songs like "Jesus Loves Me" and prayed together.

But even then, after we got back to our grandmother's place, my brother and I couldn't wait for Sabbath to be over—we just wanted to play. We were still children, after all.

Seeds of conviction

It was during those weekend visits that my grandmother would open Arthur Maxwell's *The Bible Story* books and read to us. We went through the entire 10-volume set in those early years. The impression those stories left on me was profound. Even though we only saw our grandmother once a month—and not even every month—the spiritual seeds she planted stayed with me.

From the age of eleven, and all through my teenage years, I played field hockey. I was quite good at it—good enough to make our club's second-division men's team by the time I was 18. I recall one of the games I played when I was about 14. We were losing and I found myself praying, "Please, Lord, help us win." But then I realized what day it was. Saturday. I wasn't at church. Instead, I was breaking the Sabbath. And I thought, *The Lord's not going to bless me while I'm doing this.*

Even though I didn't expect God to answer that prayer, the fact that I was praying at all—and feeling convicted—showed that something had taken root in me. I believe that conviction had grown largely because of those early years with my grandmother: taking us to church, reading us Bible stories, and always praying with us.

After Mum remarried and my maternal grandparents moved to the countryside to enjoy their retirement, Sabbath visits to church became few and far between. Still, spiritual influences quietly lingered during the occasional access visits when Mum would drive us out to see our grandparents.

One of Mum's sisters lived nearby with her young family—my SDA Reform Church-going aunt, uncle, and cousins. We would often join them for family worship during those visits. I really enjoyed those times. There was warmth, laughter, and a strong sense of belonging. I appreciated the closeness of family I felt there, but I was yet to find the worship of God a joy.

Even so, those visits left a gentle imprint. They stirred something—not yet faith, but perhaps the beginnings of longing.

Teenage years and searching

To understand the next part of my life, I need to go back a little.

When my father gained custody of me and my siblings, he was living with his de facto spouse—a woman who became our stepmother in practice. While I do appreciate the physical care she gave us, we never truly felt at home with her. We always longed to live with our mother. I used to pray in bed every night that we could go back and live with Mum.

After about ten years of living together, my father and stepmother separated. She sent my father packing. I was around 13 and rather than stay, I decided to go and live with my father, essentially looking after myself. After a year, I moved back in with my brother and sister, who were still living with our former stepmother, while my father had moved in with a new partner. It was a confusing and unstable time—we were in a kind of no-man's land.

Eventually, my brother left that home, and a year or so later, I did too. I went to live with my mum, but that didn't work out. I ended up moving back into one of my father's houses—though he wasn't living there himself. He was with his new partner, and I was living alone or with boarders to whom he had leased out bedrooms. Again, it was a very fragmented and unsettled time in my life.

During my high school years, I became more aware of a growing need for security and acceptance. My dad's place had become the party house—a magnet for my schoolmates and their friends. I felt good being part of that crowd. It gave me a sense of belonging, at least on the surface. But underneath, it didn't last. The good times faded quickly, and the emptiness returned. I remember several of my church-going cousins visiting me during that time. Looking back, I knew they were praying for me, but I did not yet know that I needed what they were praying for. Yet, something about their care and love stayed with me.

> Then came a series of Sabbath School Lessons that would change everything. At the time, our church was studying the 1888 message—Christ Our Righteousness. A couple of lessons during the third quarter of that year stood out to me in a profound way.

At 15, I joined an inter-school Christian fellowship group and went on a Christian camp they organized. I thought I had given my heart to Jesus at that time. I even decided to give up hockey, since game days conflicted with the Sabbath. But after only three weeks, I was back on the field again. My spiritual journey was still very much in progress.

A new direction

The only true happiness I had found up until that time was in playing sports—especially hockey. I loved it. For most of my teenage years, I played hockey four days a week, both at the club level and at high school, practicing two nights a week—Tuesday and Thursday—and playing games on Saturdays for my club and again on Wednesdays for school.

But then the hockey season ended. High school ended; and I was left with big questions: *What was I going to do with my life? Was I going to university? Were my scores good enough?* I didn't know where to turn or what to do.

At 15, I had chosen to become a vegetarian again—because I could. I had the freedom to make that choice for myself and I did. I also made the choice to abstain from alcohol despite the many house parties I hosted or was a part of. But then, one Friday night out on the town with friends, I ate my first hamburger in years and, regretfully, became rather ill. Eventually, I found myself sitting on

"There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion, but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith."

the steps of the church house where my aunt lived and she welcomed me in. I opened up to her about how I was feeling—the uncertainty, the confusion, the weight of not knowing what was next.

She asked me if I wanted to stay the night, and I said yes. The next morning, she invited me to church. The church building was just across the lawn from the church house. So, I went—still dressed in the clothes I'd worn the night before.

That day was the first time I had been to church in years. Not only that, it was also the first time I went freely—not out of obligation, but because I wanted to. I was with family—my church-going aunt, uncle and cousins—and people who made me feel welcome. It was a really positive experience. So much so that I decided to go back the next week. I was 18 at the time. From then on, every Friday night, I'd ride my bicycle over to the church house and spend the night with my aunt, uncle, and cousins. Then I'd cross the lawn to enter the church with them each Sabbath morning.

Choosing Jesus over hockey

It was around the month of January when I started going to church regularly. University began in February, and thankfully, I was accepted into a Bachelor of Civil Engineering program, in which I gladly enrolled.

I kept attending church every Saturday. Then the hockey season began. I played a few preseason games on Sundays, but soon the regular season was about to start—and every game was scheduled for Saturdays.

Two weeks before the season began, my father had asked me to help him dig a garden bed. I did this two Saturdays in a row, but I felt deeply convicted. I knew I should have gone to church, not stayed home digging a garden bed on the Sabbath. That conviction weighed heavily on me.

Then came the Saturday of the first official game of the season. I realized I couldn't do it anymore. It had come to a point where I had to choose: *Hockey or Jesus.* I chose Jesus.

That Tuesday night, I went down to the hockey club—not with my hockey gear, but just in jeans and a polo shirt. When I arrived, my teammates asked, "Hey Chappers, where's your gear?" I told them, "I'm not going to play anymore."

They were shocked. "You're what? You're not playing anymore?"

"No," I said. "I'm not playing anymore."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to church now."

"To church? What church?"

I told them: "The Seventh Day Adventist Reform Church."

Some of them cursed. One said, "Oh, my aunt's a Seventh-day Adventist." But that was it. That night, I walked away from the field and never looked back. I've never played a game of hockey on a Saturday since.

All I needed was that personal conviction—the clarity to say no to something that was taking me away from my walk with the Lord. Somehow, the Lord impressed me to make that decision—and I made it.

Searching for peace

From that day on, I was free to go to church and study the Bible. I began to build a foundation—a deeper understanding of the reasons for my faith.

At the same time, I found my civil engineering course at university a source of accomplishment—at least I was doing something that made my parents proud. As well intentioned in pursuing my academic studies as I was, however, I found myself spending more time studying the Bible than my engineering textbooks. Eventually, my grades began to suffer.

Just before the end of the second term, I knew I needed to make a decision. Rather than fail engineering, I thought, *I just want a job where I can be free to study the Bible and share the truth I've found—without the obligations that come with university.*

You see, my father was supporting me through university. One day, he came home and found me at the table—not with my engineering books open, but with my Bible, concordance, and reference books spread out. He was quite upset. "If I'm paying for you to go through university, then put this stuff away and study your engineering. But if you want to be a priest, you may as well leave now!"

So, I told myself, *Alright, I'll put these away and focus on engineering.* But that only lasted three weeks. I was soon back in the Word. I couldn't help myself.

After another six months, toward the end of the year, I was in a real dilemma. Should I continue with university or not? No one could tell me what to do. I remember calling my grandmother, and she said words to the effect, "You know what the Lord has taught you. Follow His voice."

So, I did. I left university and got a job. Mum and Dad were both disappointed. But I felt I was doing what I needed to do at that time in my life.

By the end of that first year of attending church, I still felt something was missing. I had learnt about and feared facing the judgment of God. So, I tried to do everything I knew to be right with God—to be accepted in His sight. I felt struggles within and without. I resolved to do my best each day, but I felt I failed miserably. I became vegan. I stopped going out with my school and Uni friends. I threw away my rock music albums only to encounter much of the same music in the youth Sabbath School program of an Adventist church I visited at the time. I was confused in my search, but I knew one thing. If I was going to ever join a church, it would be the SDA Reform Movement.

Despite all these changes, I was still struggling with the question of whether I was truly accepted by God. I then thought, *I need to get baptized, then I'll feel better inside.* So, at the end of that first year, I was baptized. I knew I was following the biblical command to be baptized in the name of Jesus, but even then, I didn't have complete peace.

Spiritual awakening

Over the next twelve months, I became an active and zealous

participant in church life. I loved opening the Bible. I loved sharing my faith. I loved going on missionary outreaches. I loved going to church.

But I had not yet fallen in love with Jesus.

You see, the inward peace I had longed for—the peace that comes from knowing I was accepted by God—still eluded me. I was still struggling to find that assurance. I began reading different books, searching for answers. I read works by various Christian authors, Adventist and non-Adventist writers. I listened to sermons and teachings, hoping something would click.

Then came a series of *Sabbath School Lessons* that would change everything. At the time, our church was studying the 1888 message—*Christ Our Righteousness*. A couple of lessons during the third quarter of that year stood out to me in a profound way.

One question asked, "What is manifested by some who think that they rely upon God entirely?" The note read:

"While they think they are committing themselves to God, there is a great deal of self-dependence. There are conscientious souls that trust partly to God and partly to themselves. They do not look to God, to be kept by His power, but depend upon watchfulness against temptation and the performance of certain duties for acceptance with Him. There are no victories in this kind of faith. Such persons toil to no purpose; their souls are in continual bondage, and they find no rest until their burdens are laid at the feet of Jesus."[1]

That same quote goes on to say:

"There is need of constant watchfulness and of earnest, loving devotion, but these will come naturally when the soul is kept by the power of God through faith."[2]

These words pierced my heart. They described exactly what I was experiencing—a life of striving, but not resting; of believing, but not trusting; of doing, but not abiding. I realized that while I had embraced the truth, I had not yet embraced the Person—Jesus Himself.

Breakthrough in faith

Then I came across another note in the same week's Sabbath School lesson—this time on Reconciliation Through Christ. It read:

"And while we cannot claim perfection of the flesh, we may have Christian perfection of the soul. Through the sacrifice made in our behalf, sins may be perfectly forgiven. Our dependence is not in what man can do; it is in what God can do for man through Christ. When we surrender ourselves wholly to God, and fully believe, the blood of Christ cleanses from all sin. The conscience can be freed from condemnation. Through faith in His blood, all may be made perfect in Christ Jesus. Thank God that we are not dealing with impossibilities. We may claim sanctification. We may enjoy the favor of God. We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. *Ye are accepted in the Beloved.* The Lord shows, to the repenting, believing one, that Christ accepts the surrender of the soul, to be molded and fashioned after His own likeness."[3]

That Bible quote—*"Ye are accepted in the Beloved"*—struck me deeply. It was the answer I had been searching for all along. I didn't need to earn God's acceptance. I didn't need to prove myself worthy. I simply needed to surrender my heart and believe that I *was* accepted by God—that He had already accepted me in Christ, the Beloved, because of the cross.

Freedom in Christ

The lesson note had also said we are not to be anxious about what God thinks of *us*, but about what God thinks of *Jesus*, our Substitute. As I reflected on that, I asked myself, *Well, what does God think of Jesus?*

I knew what I thought God thought of me—I didn't feel accepted. I felt unworthy. But what did God think of Jesus?

Then it hit me: God said of Jesus, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* Jesus is fully accepted before the Father—perfect and complete.

And then I realized—*if I am in Christ, if I am in the Beloved, then what the Father thinks of Jesus . . . is what He thinks of me.*

That truth dawned on me during a bus ride back from interstate. I was looking out the window, thinking about these things, when it suddenly became clear: *Do you mean*

"We are not to be anxious about what Christ and God think of us, but about what God thinks of Christ, our Substitute. Ye are accepted in the Beloved. The Lord shows, to the repenting, believing one, that Christ accepts the surrender of the soul, to be molded and fashioned after His own likeness."

I'm fully accepted in God's sight simply by faith in Jesus now?

And the answer was, yes!

It was like the moment Christian stood at the wicker gate in *Pilgrim's Progress*—the burden rolled off my back. A whole new experience opened before me. I was no longer living *for* Jesus in order to be saved. I was living *with* Jesus because he had already forgiven and accepted me.

This experience brought a new joy and freedom to my Christian Walk.

I remember talking to a young sister in the church around that time. She looked at me and said, "Something's come over you, Paul. Have you found a girlfriend?"

I smiled and said, "No—but let me tell you what I *have* found." And I shared with her my experience of finding full acceptance in Jesus—not just intellectually, but spiritually and personally. I had finally found peace within.

Since that day, it's been a journey of learning to trust, not in my performance, but in His promises. My life hasn't been perfect—far from it. In those times of defeat, all I can do is remember the words from a Scripture verse that my grandmother used to quote from Proverbs 24:16, *"A just [righteous] man falleth seven times,"* but by God's grace, *"and riseth up again"*—he repents, gets back up and keeps walking forward in faith. Braced by those words of encouragement, I've learnt that I am not walking alone. Jesus is right by my side, and so long as I keep my trust in Him, I know He will carry me home. ✠

References:

1 *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 353.
2 Ibid.
3 Ibid., bk. 2, p. 32.

the Reformation Herald®

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

MOVING? Please let us know.

Periodical Postage PAID
Roanoke, VA 24022

GROWING UP HAPPILY



Have you ever watched a baby learning to crawl? The tiny person makes a lot of grunting noises and works very hard work to try to move. You may not remember doing all that hard work, but if you are walking today, it's because you practiced hard to learn how to do it. You learned to lift your head and chest from off the bed. As you moved the muscles of your arms and legs, they got stronger and stronger. But it was very hard work.

Before you learned to talk, you practiced making little sounds with your voice. You practiced many hours, making play words to find out how to form those sounds into real words. You may not remember, but it was very hard work. Aren't you glad you kept practicing?

Now you are older and can remember things—and you still have work to do. It is just a different kind of work. But if you keep at the work you are taught to do now, you'll be able to do more and more things in life. That will make you glad.

The psalmist prayed, "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me" (Psalm 131:1). What does this mean? It's talking about not being proud and thinking we are greater and more important than everyone else. A proud person gets fussy when things don't go as they like because they think they are the boss of the world. So, the next Bible verse says, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child" (Psalm 131:2).

A child that is weaned is one who is big enough to live on solid food. He doesn't cry like a little baby who needs milk very often to live.

So, the work that a child has is not to be "babyish"—but instead, sweet-tempered, patient, and calm. As we work on all the things we need to learn at every stage of life, we are happy. We trust in God's plan for us every step of the way. Even when it seems hard, it always turns out to be better!—*BHM.*