

SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



LESSONS FROM THE
Epistles of Peter (II)

Vol. 100, No. 3

July–September 2024

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Sabbath Bible Lessons, a daily study program, is based solely on the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy without additional comments. The quotations are as brief as possible to provide concise, direct thoughts. Brackets [] are supplied in some cases to ensure clarity, proper context, and smooth readability. Further study in the source materials is strongly recommended.

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Foreword

Are you seeking victory in your Christian life? Then you have come to the right place:

“In the second letter addressed by Peter to those who had obtained ‘like precious faith’ with himself, the apostle sets forth the divine plan for the development of Christian character.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 529.

“The first chapter of Second Peter is full of instruction, and strikes the keynote of victory. The truth is impressively forced upon the mind by the way it is presented in this chapter. Let us more abundantly recommend the study of these words, and the practicing of these precepts.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 942.

How essential it is to develop truly Christian characters at a time in history when we soon must stand without a Mediator pleading in our behalf in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary! With these solemn thoughts in mind, Sabbath school students around the world will be concentrating on *Lessons from the Epistles of Peter* (II).

“Never was there a time when it was more important that we should deny ourselves and take up the cross daily than now. How much self-denial are we willing to practice?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 186.

“We are to become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. . . .

“There is no such thing in the Word of God as unconditional election—once in grace, always in grace. In the second chapter of Second Peter the subject is made plain and distinct. . . .

“The Scriptures make it plain that those who once knew the way of life and rejoiced in the truth are in danger of falling through apostasy, and being lost. Therefore there is need of a decided, daily conversion to God.

“All who seek to sustain the doctrine of election, once in grace, always in grace, do this against a plain, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ . . .

“Those who have been truly converted have been buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, and raised from the watery grave in the likeness of His resurrection, to walk in newness of life. By faithful obedience to the truth they are to make their calling and election sure.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1114, 1115.

“By beholding and imitating [Christ’s] life we shall become renewed in His image. The glory of heaven will shine in our lives and be reflected upon others. At the throne of grace we are to find the help we need to enable us to live thus. This is genuine sanctification, and what more exalted position can mortals desire than to be connected with Christ as a branch is joined to the vine?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 306. Amen!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a Chapel, School, and Office in Liberia

Sometimes referred to as one of Africa's last frontiers, Liberia is a tropical rainforest country on the west coast of the African continent, bordered by Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast, Guinea, and the Atlantic Ocean. Among the population of over 5 million, 85.3% profess the Christian faith (mostly Protestants, including Seventh-day Adventists), 12.6% profess Islam, 1.5% claim no religion, and 0.6% adhere to tribal religions.



The oldest republic in Africa, Liberia is still trying to recover from 14 years of devastating civil war (1989–2003) that destroyed the fabric of this nation, considered one of the 10 poorest in the world. Agriculture was decimated, and the infrastructure and industries were left in shambles.

Amid the hardship, in 2011, brethren in Liberia were drawn to the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement doctrines through the SDARM GC website, www.sdarm.org, and the work was organized here in 2012. Since then, it has progressed from the capital city of Monrovia to three of Liberia's 15 counties.

Although the civil crisis is over, the scars of its wounds can still be seen all over the country. The economy is broken, and it is often hard to get a job here if one does not pledge allegiance to a political party. The circumstances are crippling, yet our faith presses onward.

To develop the work in Liberia, there is an immediate need for headquarters as well as a place for worship and to enhance our medical missionary activities. It is also necessary to provide a primary school for our children who face challenges because they must miss exams and extra classes scheduled on the Sabbath.

In 2019, a brother (who since died) graciously donated some land dedicated to the construction of a school, sanitarium, and office space. To begin the chapel and these necessary projects, we are blessed with an acre parcel in Nyanforla (Collins Farm) in lower Bong County, as well as another parcel of approximately 1/4 acre in Monrovia.

In this light, we are kindly asking all the brothers and sisters around the world to help us with the First Sabbath Offering to enable us to achieve the goals needed to develop the Lord's work in Liberia. We thank you in advance!

Your brothers and sisters from Liberia

The Miraculous Escape

MEMORY TEXT: “Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:4).

“Oh, that those who have so little spiritual life would realize that eternal life can be granted only to those who become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust!”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 155.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 737–746; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 76–78.

Sunday

June 30

1. AN EPISTLE WITH A PURPOSE

- a. To whom—and why—is this epistle addressed, and how is it all made possible? 2 Peter 1:1.

“What a grand theme this is for contemplation—the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. Contemplating Christ and His righteousness leaves no room for self-righteousness, for the glorifying of self. In this chapter there is no standstill. There is continual advancement in every stage of the knowledge of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 942.

- b. As we genuinely, fervently seek God in His Word, what rewards abundantly flow into our hearts? 2 Peter 1:2.

“If man lays hold of the divine nature, working upon the plan of addition, adding grace to grace in perfecting a Christian character, God will work upon the plan of multiplication. He says in His word: ‘Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 148.

2. THE BLESSING OF KNOWING GOD

- a. **What blessed assurance comes to every one of us—and is especially welcome in hard times? Jeremiah 24:7; Job 22:21–23, 29.**
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“Our hope is to be constantly strengthened by the knowledge that Christ is our righteousness. Let our faith rest upon this foundation, for it will stand fast forever. Instead of dwelling upon the darkness of Satan and fearing his power, we should open our hearts to receive light from Christ and to let it shine forth to the world, declaring that He is above all the power of Satan, that His sustaining arm will support all who trust in Him.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 742.

- b. **As we become more and more acquainted with Jesus, what are the results? Hosea 13:4; Ephesians 3:17–19.**
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“The meager views which so many have had of the exalted character and office of Christ have narrowed their religious experience and have greatly hindered their progress in the divine life. Personal religion among us as a people is at a low ebb. There is much form, much machinery, much tongue religion; but something deeper and more solid must be brought into our religious experience.”—*Ibid.*, p. 743.

“Said Jesus: ‘The Father Himself loveth you.’ If our faith is fixed upon God, through Christ, it will prove ‘as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered.’ It is true that disappointments will come; tribulation we must expect; but we are to commit everything, great and small, to God. He does not become perplexed by the multiplicity of our grievances nor overpowered by the weight of our burdens. His watchcare extends to every household and encircles every individual; He is concerned in all our business and our sorrows. He marks every tear; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. All the afflictions and trials that befall us here are permitted, to work out His purposes of love toward us, ‘that we might be partakers of His holiness’ and thus become participants in that fullness of joy which is found in His presence.

“‘The God of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.’ But the Bible in strongest terms sets before us the importance of obtaining a knowledge of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 742

3. SEEKING AND FINDING

- a. Describe the state of today's world. 1 John 5:19. Nonetheless, how much has God given in His word? 2 Peter 1:3.
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“It is Satan’s constant study to keep the minds of men occupied with those things which will prevent them from obtaining the knowledge of God. He seeks to keep them dwelling upon what will darken the understanding and discourage the soul. We are in a world of sin and corruption, surrounded by influences that tend to allure or dishearten the followers of Christ. The Saviour said: ‘Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.’ Many fix their eyes upon the terrible wickedness existing around them, the apostasy and weakness on every side, and they talk of these things until their hearts are filled with sadness and doubt. They keep uppermost before the mind the masterly working of the archdeceiver and dwell upon the discouraging features of their experience, while they seem to lose sight of the heavenly Father’s power and His matchless love. All this is as Satan would have it. It is a mistake to think of the enemy of righteousness as clothed with so great power, when we dwell so little upon the love of God and His might. We must talk of the mightiness of Christ. We are utterly powerless to rescue ourselves from the grasp of Satan; but God has appointed a way of escape. The Son of the Highest has strength to fight the battle for us, and ‘through Him that loved us’ we may come off ‘more than conquerors.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 740, 741.

- b. How does spiritual victory directly relate to an earnest seeking of greater knowledge of God? Proverbs 9:10; 15:14 (first part).
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“A knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation. It is this alone that can make us like God in character.

“This is the knowledge needed by all who are working for the uplifting of their fellow men. Transformation of character, purity of life, efficiency in service, adherence to correct principles, all depend upon a right knowledge of God. This knowledge is the essential preparation both for this life and for the life to come.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 409.

4. EXCEEDINGLY GREAT AND PRECIOUS PROMISES

- a. **What might we be sadly underestimating in our Christian life? 2 Peter 1:4.**

“If we would escape having a sickly experience, we must begin in earnest without delay to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. There are many who give no decided evidence that they are true to their baptismal vows. Their zeal is chilled by formality, worldly ambition, pride, and love of self. Occasionally their feelings are stirred, but they do not fall on the Rock, Christ Jesus. They do not come to God with hearts that are broken in repentance and confession. Those who experience the work of true conversion in their hearts will reveal the fruits of the Spirit in their lives.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 155.

“When we are securely anchored in Christ, we have a power that no human being can take from us. Why is this? Because we are partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust, partakers of the nature of Him who came to this earth clothed with the habiliments of humanity, that He might stand at the head of the human race and develop a character that was without spot or stain of sin.

“Why are many of us so weak and inefficient? It is because we look to self, studying our own temperaments and wondering how we can make a place for ourselves, our individuality, and our peculiarities, in the place of studying Christ and His character.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 9, p. 187.

- b. **What change occurs in us when we really grasp these promises? Romans 3:31; 8:14.**

“As Christians we have pledged ourselves to realize and fulfill our responsibilities, and to show to the world that we have a close connection with God. Thus through the godly words and works of His disciples, Christ is to be represented.

“God demands of us perfect obedience to His law—the expression of His character. . . . This law is the echo of God’s voice, saying to us, Holier, yes holier still. Desire the fullness of the grace of Christ; yea, long—hunger and thirst—after righteousness. The promise is, ‘Ye shall be filled.’ Let your heart be filled with an intense longing for this righteousness, the work of which God’s Word declares is peace, and its effect quietness and assurance forever.

“It is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.”—*Bible Training School*, February 1, 1904.

5. AMAZINGLY SET APART

- a. Explain God's will for every child of humanity. John 17:17; Psalm 119:151.

"God requires of us conformity to His image. Holiness is the reflection from His people of the bright rays of His glory. But in order to reflect this glory we must work with God. The heart and mind must be emptied of all that leads to wrong. The Word of God must be read and studied, with an earnest desire to gain from it spiritual power. The bread of heaven must be eaten and digested, that it may become a part of the life. Thus we gain eternal life. Then is answered the prayer of the Saviour, 'Sanctify them through Thy truth; Thy Word is truth.'

"The angels can not take our places; but they stand ready to cooperate with us in drawing souls to Christ; and they are soliciting us to work in fellowship with them."—*Bible Training School*, February 1, 1904.

"God has plainly stated that He requires us to be perfect; and because He requires this, He has made provision that we may be partakers of the divine nature. Only thus can we gain success in our striving for eternal life. The power is given by Christ."—*Ibid*.

- b. What is God's call to us right now? 2 Corinthians 6:15–18; 7:1.

"The Creator of the universe addresses you as an affectionate Father. If you separate from the world in your affections, and remain free from its contamination, escaping the corruption that is in the world through lust, God will be your Father, He will adopt you into His family, and you will be His heir. In place of the world, He will give you, for a life of obedience, the kingdom under the whole heavens. He will give you an eternal weight of glory and a life that is as enduring as eternity."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 44.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. From where does greater faith come?
2. What may I have failed to fully appreciate about God's love for me?
3. How have today's "trees of knowledge of good and evil" distracted me?
4. What will happen if I am securely anchored in Christ as never before?
5. According to this lesson, how can my flawed character be perfected?

Diligently Ascending the Ladder

MEMORY TEXT: “And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness” (2 Peter 1:5, 6).

“Peter presents to us the ladder of true sanctification, the base of which rests upon the earth, while the topmost round reaches to the throne of the Infinite. We cannot with one effort reach the topmost round of this ladder. We must climb round after round. It is in this struggle that we are in danger of becoming dizzy, and fainting and falling, unless we keep our eyes upward, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith.”—*The Review and Herald*, December 1, 1885.

Suggested Reading: *The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 497–502.

Sunday

July 7

1. AN ESSENTIAL CHRISTIAN QUALITY

- a. What step follows when diligently building our faith? 2 Peter 1:5 (first part).

“After receiving the faith of the gospel, our first work is to seek to add virtuous and pure principles, and thus cleanse the mind and heart for the reception of true knowledge.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 552.

“It is a continual struggle to be always on the alert to resist evil; but it pays to obtain one victory after another over self and the powers of darkness. . . .

“Without pure, unsullied virtue, none can ever rise to any honorable eminence. But noble aspirations and the love of righteousness are not inherited. Character cannot be bought; it must be formed by stern efforts to resist temptation. The formation of a right character is the work of a lifetime, and is the outgrowth of prayerful meditation united with a grand purpose. The excellence of character that you possess must be the result of your own effort. Friends may encourage you, but they cannot do the work for you. Wishing, sighing, dreaming, will never make you great or good. You must climb. Gird up the loins of your mind, and go to work with all the strong powers of your will.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 87.

2. THE KNOWLEDGE NECESSARY FOR SALVATION

- a. Describe the type of knowledge we are called to attain in ascending Peter's ladder. 2 Peter 1:5 (last part); John 17:3.

"The apostle presents before the believers the ladder of Christian perfection, every step of which represents continual advancement in the knowledge of God, and in the climbing of which there is to be no standstill. . . .

"Having received the faith of the gospel, the next work of the believer is to add to his character virtue, and thus cleanse the heart and prepare the mind for the reception of the knowledge of God. This knowledge is the foundation of all true education and of all true service. It is the only real safeguard against temptation; and it is this alone that can make one like God in character. Through the knowledge of God and of His Son Jesus Christ, are given to the believer 'all things that pertain unto life and godliness.' No good gift is withheld from him who sincerely desires to obtain the righteousness of God."—*The Review and Herald*, September 19, 1912.

"We must learn of Christ. We must know what He is to those He has ransomed. We must realize that through belief in Him it is our privilege to be partakers of the divine nature, and so escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. Then we are cleansed from all sin, all defects of character. We need not retain one sinful propensity. . . .

"As we partake of the divine nature, hereditary and cultivated tendencies to wrong are cut away from the character, and we are made a living power for good. Ever learning of the divine Teacher, daily partaking of His nature, we cooperate with God in overcoming Satan's temptations. God works, and man works, that man may be one with Christ as Christ is one with God."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p. 943.

- b. Name a second kind of knowledge necessary in Christian growth. Psalm 77:6; 2 Corinthians 13:5.

"In order to receive help from Christ, we must realize our need. We must have a true knowledge of ourselves. It is only he who knows himself to be a sinner that Christ can save. Only as we see our utter helplessness and renounce all self-trust, shall we lay hold on divine power."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 316.

3. SELF-CONTROLLED, NOT OUT OF CONTROL

- a. Upon what subject do inspired teachers of the Gospel dwell? Acts 24:24, 25; Philippians 4:5.
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“I spoke to the people about one hour and a half upon Peter’s ladder of sanctification consisting of eight rounds. I dwelt upon temperance and the importance of parents’ teaching their children self-denial, and self-control, guarding the appetite and taste from indulgence at the expense of mental, moral, and physical strength.

“The lessons upon self-control and self-denial are to be received by education, in childhood and youth. The appetite is to be restrained and educated, and this is the responsible work that devolves upon parents. The youth in generations past have been the index to society.

“If parents had done their duty in spreading the table with wholesome food, discarding irritating and stimulating substances, and at the same time had taught their children self-control, and educated their characters to develop moral power, we should not now have to handle the lion of intemperance. After habits of indulgence have been formed, and grown with their growth and strengthened with their strength, how hard then for those who have not been properly trained in youth to break up their wrong habits and learn to restrain themselves and their unnatural appetites. How hard to teach such ones and make them feel the necessity of Christian temperance, when they reach maturity. The temperance lessons should commence with the child rocked in the cradle.”—*The Review and Herald*, May 11, 1876.

- b. What is next in the ladder—and why? 2 Peter 1:6 (first part).
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“God gives man no permission to violate the laws of his being. But man, through yielding to Satan’s temptations to indulge intemperance, brings the higher faculties in subjection to the animal appetites and passions, and when these gain the ascendancy, man, who was created a little lower than the angels, with faculties susceptible of the highest cultivation, surrenders to the control of Satan. And he gains easy access to those who are in bondage to appetite. Through intemperance, some sacrifice one-half, and others two-thirds, of their physical, mental, and moral powers. Those who would have clear minds to discern Satan’s devices, must have their physical appetites under the control of reason and conscience. The moral and vigorous action of the higher powers of the mind is essential to the perfection of Christian character.”—*The Health Reformer*, March 1, 1878.

4. PATIENCE IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT TEMPERANCE

- a. **How does temperance lead to the next essential quality in the ladder? 2 Peter 1:6 (middle section); Luke 21:19.**
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“Any habit or practice which will weaken the nerve and brain power or the physical strength disqualifies for the exercise of the next grace which comes in after temperance—patience. . . .

“A man who is intemperate, who uses stimulating indulgences—beer, wine, strong drinks, tea and coffee, opium, tobacco, or any of these substances that are deleterious to health—cannot be a patient man. So temperance is a round of the ladder upon which we must plant our feet before we can add the grace of patience. In food, in raiment, in work, in regular hours, in healthful exercise, we must be regulated by the knowledge which it is our duty to obtain that we may, through earnest endeavor, place ourselves in right relation to life and health.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 69.

- b. **How does temperance aid in the development of patience—and why are both so important in the last days of earth’s history? Revelation 14:12.**
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“The abuses of the stomach by the gratification of appetite are the fruitful source of most church trials. Those who eat and work intemperately and irrationally, talk and act irrationally. An intemperate man cannot be a patient man. It is not necessary to drink alcoholic liquors in order to be intemperate. The sin of intemperate eating, eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food, destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting. And this is a fruitful source of church trials. Therefore in order for the people of God to be in an acceptable state with Him, where they can glorify Him in their bodies and spirits which are His, they must with interest and zeal deny the gratification of their appetites, and exercise temperance in all things. Then may they comprehend the truth in its beauty and clearness, and carry it out in their lives, and by a judicious, wise, straightforward course give the enemies of our faith no occasion to reproach the cause of truth.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 618, 619.

5. THE BEAUTIFUL RESULT OF PATIENCE

- a. What is the exercise of patience to develop in us? 2 Peter 1:6 (last part).

“Impatience brings strife and accusation and sorrow; but patience pours the balm of peace and love into the experiences of the home life. When we exercise the precious grace of patience toward others, they will reflect our spirit, and we shall gather with Christ. Patience will seek for unity in the church, in the family, and in the community. This grace must be woven into our lives. Every one should mount this round of progress, and add to faith, virtue, and temperance, the grace of patience.

“ ‘And to patience, godliness.’ Godliness is the fruit of Christian character. If we abide in the Vine, we shall bear the fruits of the Spirit. The life of the Vine will manifest itself through the branches. We must have a close and intimate connection with heaven, if we bear the grace of godliness. Jesus must be a guest in our homes, a member of our households, if we reflect His image and show that we are sons and daughters of the Most High. Religion is a beautiful thing in the home. If the Lord abides with us, we shall feel that we are members of Christ’s family in heaven. We shall realize that angels are watching us, and our manners will be gentle and forbearing. We shall be fitting up for an entrance into the courts of heaven, by cultivating courtesy and godliness. Our conversation will be holy, and our thoughts will be upon heavenly things.

“Enoch walked with God. He honored God in every affair of life. In his home and in his business, he inquired, ‘Will this be acceptable to the Lord?’ And by remembering God, and following His counsel, he was transformed in character, and became a godly man, whose ways pleased the Lord.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 21, 1888.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why do I need to cultivate active and passive Christian virtues?
2. How can I get to know God better—and why is this essential right now?
3. In what areas of life do I need to exercise greater temperance?
4. Why is patience so vital in an increasingly hostile and aggressive society?
5. Where and how is godliness manifested, as exemplified by Enoch?

In Honor Preferring Others

MEMORY TEXT: “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another” (Romans 12:10).

“Cultivate a disposition to esteem others better than yourself. Be less self-sufficient, less confident; cherish patience, forbearance, and brotherly love.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 133.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 167–177.

Sunday

July 14

1. KINDNESS

- a. What must flow forth as the natural result of a genuine relationship with God? 2 Peter 1:7 (first part); Mark 12:28–31.

“Lift up the standard, lift it up, *higher and still higher*. Point the people to the twentieth chapter of Exodus, in which the law of God is recorded. The first four of the Ten Commandments outline our duty to our Maker. He who is false to his God cannot be true to his neighbor. He who loves God supremely will love his neighbor as himself. Pride lifts itself up unto vanity, leading the human agent to make a God of himself. The gospel of Christ sanctifies the soul, expelling self-love.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 211, 212. [Author’s emphasis.]

“No one can love Christ and not love His children. When we are united to Christ, we have the mind of Christ. Purity and love shine forth in the character, meekness and truth control the life. The very expression of the countenance is changed. Christ abiding in the soul exerts a transforming power, and the outward aspect bears witness to the peace and joy that reign within. We drink in the love of Christ, as the branch draws nourishment from the vine. If we are grafted in Christ, if fiber by fiber we have been united with the Living Vine, we shall give evidence of the fact by bearing rich clusters of living fruit. If we are connected with the Light, we shall be channels of light, and in our words and works we shall reflect light to the world.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 337.

2. KINDNESS FROM THE HEART

- a. How is brotherly kindness closely connected with true faith in God—and a proper witness for Christ? 1 John 4:20, 21; James 3:17.
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“We are exhorted to add godliness, brotherly kindness. O how much we need to take this step, to add to this quality to our characters! In many of our homes there is a hard, combative spirit manifested. Critical words and unkind actions are offensive to God. Dictatorial commands and haughty, overbearing manners are not acceptable to Heaven. The reason there are so many differences existing between brethren is that they have failed to add brotherly kindness. We should have that love for others that Christ has had for us. A man is estimated at his true value by the Lord of heaven. If he is unkind in his earthly home, he is unfit for the heavenly home. If he will have his own way, no matter whom it grieves, he would not be content in heaven, unless he could rule there. The love of Christ must control our hearts, and the peace of God will abide in our homes. Seek God with a broken and contrite spirit, and you will be melted with compassion toward your brethren.”—*The Review and Herald*, February 21, 1888.

- b. Name a basic step in cultivating brotherly kindness. Matthew 6:12, 14, 15; Ephesians 4:32.
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“We ask that the mercy of God toward us may be measured by the mercy which we extend to others. Christ declares that this is the rule by which the Lord will deal with us. [Matthew 6:14, 15 quoted.] Wonderful terms! but how little are they understood or heeded. One of the most common sins, and one that is attended with most pernicious results, is the indulgence of an unforgiving spirit. How many will cherish animosity or revenge and then bow before God and ask to be forgiven as they forgive. Surely they can have no true sense of the import of this prayer or they would not dare to take it upon their lips. We are dependent upon the pardoning mercy of God every day and every hour; how then can we cherish bitterness and malice toward our fellow sinners! If, in all their daily intercourse, Christians would carry out the principles of this prayer, what a blessed change would be wrought in the church and in the world! This would be the most convincing testimony that could be given to the reality of Bible religion.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 170, 171.

3. OVERCOMING HINDRANCES TO BROTHERLY KINDNESS

- a. Describe the breadth and depth of real brotherly kindness. Romans 12:9, 10; Philippians 2:3.
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“Paul would have us distinguish between the pure, unselfish love which is prompted by the spirit of Christ, and the unmeaning, deceitful pretense with which the world abounds. This base counterfeit has misled many souls. It would blot out the distinction between right and wrong, by agreeing with the transgressor instead of faithfully showing him his errors. Such a course never springs from real friendship. The spirit by which it is prompted dwells only in the carnal heart. While the Christian will be ever kind, compassionate, and forgiving, he can feel no harmony with sin. He will abhor evil and cling to that which is good, at the sacrifice of association or friendship with the ungodly. The spirit of Christ will lead us to hate sin, while we are willing to make any sacrifice to save the sinner.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 171.

- b. What often hinders brotherly kindness—and how can we be delivered from such a snare? Luke 6:45; Hebrews 12:15.
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“Hints are thrown out and sharp criticisms of one another, but at the same time the very ones who throw out these hints and criticisms are blind to their own failings.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, p. 222.

“Evilspeaking is a twofold curse, falling more heavily upon the speaker than upon the hearer. He who scatters the seeds of dissension and strife reaps in his own soul the deadly fruits. How miserable is the talebearer, the surmiser of evil! . . .

“The sin of evilspeaking begins with the cherishing of evil thoughts. Guile includes impurity in all its forms. An impure thought tolerated, an unholy desire cherished, and the soul is contaminated, its integrity compromised. . . . If we would not commit sin, we must shun its very beginnings. Every emotion and desire must be held in subjection to reason and conscience. Every unholy thought must be instantly repelled. To your closet, followers of Christ. Pray in faith and with all the heart. Satan is watching to ensnare your feet. You must have help from above if you would escape his devices.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 176, 177.

4. SURE EVIDENCE OF DISCIPLESHIP

- a. As the love of many waxes cold, what Bible principle do we often forget? Titus 3:2. What will happen if we respect it? John 13:35.
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“Let the ‘accuser of the brethren’ gain admittance to the heart of one of these men [of the same faith], controlling the mind and the imagination, and jealousies are created, suspicion and envy are harbored; and he who supposed himself secure in the love and friendship of his brother, finds himself mistrusted and his motives misjudged. The false brother forgets his own human frailties, forgets his obligation to think and speak no evil lest he dishonor God and wound Christ in the person of His saints, and every defect that can be thought of or imagined is commented upon unmercifully, and the character of a brother is represented as dark and questionable.

“There is a betrayal of sacred trust. The things spoken in brotherly confidence are repeated and misrepresented; and every word, every action, however innocent and well-meaning, is scrutinized by the cold, jealous criticism of those who were thought too noble, too honorable to take the least advantage of friendly association or brotherly trust. Hearts are closed to mercy, judgment, and the love of God; and the cold, sneering, contemptuous spirit which Satan manifests toward his victim is revealed.

“The Saviour of the world was treated thus, and we are exposed to the influence of the same malicious spirit. The time has come when it is not safe to put confidence in a friend or a brother.

“As in the days of Christ spies were on His track, so they are on ours now. If Satan can employ professed believers to act as accusers of the brethren, he is greatly pleased; for those who do this are just as truly serving him as was Judas when he betrayed Christ, although they may be doing it ignorantly.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 3, 1884.

“If sin is plain in a brother, breathe it not to another, but with love for the brother’s soul, with a heart full of compassion, with bowels of mercy, tell him the wrong, then leave the matter with him and the Lord. You have discharged your duty. You are not to pass sentence.

“It has been made too light an affair to rein up a brother, to condemn him, and hold him under condemnation. There has been a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. If each would set his own heart in order, when the brethren meet together their testimony would be ready and come from a full soul, and the people around that believe not the truth would be moved. The manifestation of the Spirit of God would tell to their hearts that you are the children of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 165.

5. ALL THE WAY TO THE END

- a. What appeal is made to the church until the end of time? Hebrews 13:1.
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“A love and good will that exists only when our ways are acknowledged by our friends as right, is of no real value, for this is natural to the unregenerate heart. Those who profess to be children of God and walking in the light should not feel annoyed or angered when their track is crossed.

“You love the truth and are anxious for its advancement. You will be placed in various circumstances in order to try and prove you. You may develop a true Christian character if you will submit yourself to discipline. Your vital interests are at stake. What you most need is true holiness and a spirit of self-sacrifice. We may obtain a knowledge of the truth and read its most hidden mysteries, and even give our bodies to be burned for its sake; yet if we have not love and charity, we are as sounding brass and a tinkling cymbal. . . .

“How little you know of the heart trials of poor souls who have been bound in the chains of darkness and who lack resolution and moral power. Strive to understand the weakness of others. Help the needy, crucify self, and let Jesus take possession of your soul, in order that you may carry out the principles of truth in your daily life. Then will you be, as never before, a blessing to the church and to all those with whom you come in contact.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 133, 134.

“If our brethren and sisters would become missionaries for God, visiting the sick and afflicted, and laboring patiently and kindly for the erring—in short, if they would copy the Pattern—the church would have prosperity in all her borders.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 176.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Describe what others can perceive in the attitude of one who loves God.
2. How can I cultivate a stronger sense of brotherly kindness in my heart?
3. Among those I know, to whom should I show deeper kindness?
4. How can I call sin by its right name yet avoid an accusatory spirit?
5. In my thoughts, why do I tend to be harsh on some who may be weak?

The Highest Aim

MEMORY TEXT: “And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness” (Colossians 3:14).

“When consecrated believers assemble, their conversation will not be upon the imperfections of others or savor of murmuring or complaint; charity, or love, the bond of perfectness, will encircle them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 509.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 154–157, 547–549.

Sunday

July 21

1. ABOVE AND BEYOND NATURAL AFFECTION

- a. Why is charity only mentioned after brotherly kindness? 2 Peter 1:7 (last part); Romans 5:7, 8; James 3:17.

“We must love men for Christ’s sake. It is easy for the natural heart to love a few favorites, and to be partial to these special few; but Christ bids us love one another as He has loved us.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 156.

- b. What does Jesus link with perfection? Matthew 5:43–48; Luke 6:36; Colossians 3:14.

“Men were awed by the purity and moral dignity of our Saviour, while His unselfish love and gentle benignity won their hearts. He was the embodiment of perfection.”—*Gospel Workers*, p. 73. [1892 edition.]

“Cherish not a feeling of lofty supremacy, thinking yourself better than others. ‘Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.’ Peace and rest will come to you as you bring your will into subjection to the will of Christ. Then the love of Christ will rule in the heart.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 73.

2. THE HEAVENLY ATTITUDE BESTOWED

- a. Describe the depth of a true Christian's attitude toward others. Psalm 101:2; Philippians 2:1-4.
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"The hasty, easily roused temper will be soothed and subdued by the oil of Christ's grace. The sense of sins forgiven will bring that peace that passeth all understanding. There will be an earnest striving to overcome all that is opposed to Christian perfection. Variance will disappear. He who once found fault with those around him will see that far greater faults exist in his own character."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 73.

- b. How only can the type of attitude described above dwell in the heart of each of us? Philippians 2:5-8; 1 Corinthians 2:16.
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"It is the love of self that destroys our peace. While self is all alive, we stand ready continually to guard it from mortification and insult; but when we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God, we shall not take neglects or slights to heart. We shall be deaf to reproach and blind to scorn and insult. . . .

"The peace of Christ is a constant and abiding peace. It does not depend upon any circumstances in life, on the amount of worldly goods or the number of earthly friends. Christ is the fountain of living water, and happiness drawn from Him can never fail.

"The meekness of Christ, manifested in the home, will make the inmates happy; it provokes no quarrel, gives back no angry answer, but soothes the irritated temper and diffuses a gentleness that is felt by all within its charmed circle. Wherever cherished, it makes the families of earth a part of the one great family above.

"Far better would it be for us to suffer under false accusation than to inflict upon ourselves the torture of retaliation upon our enemies. The spirit of hatred and revenge originated with Satan, and can bring only evil to him who cherishes it. Lowliness of heart, that meekness which is the fruit of abiding in Christ, is the true secret of blessing. 'He will beautify the meek with salvation.' "—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 16, 17.

3. CHARITY: TRUE VS. FALSE

- a. Describe the real charity God is ready to give to all eager to take serious hold of it—deeply cherishing it. Matthew 5:6; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8.

“In order for the church to prosper there must be a studious effort on the part of its members to cherish the precious plant of love. Let it have every advantage that it may flourish in the heart. Every true Christian will develop in his life the characteristics of this divine love; he will reveal a spirit of forbearance, of beneficence, and a freedom from envy and jealousy. This character developed in word and act will not repulse, and will not be unapproachable, cold, and indifferent to the interests of others. The person who cultivates the precious plant of love will be self-denying in spirit, and will not yield self-control even under provocation. He will not impute wrong motives and evil intentions to others, but will feel deeply over sin when discovered in any of the disciples of Christ.

“Love vaunteth not itself. It is a humble element; it never prompts a man to boast, to exalt himself. Love for God and for our fellow men will not be revealed in acts of rashness nor lead us to be overbearing, faultfinding, or dictatorial. Love is not puffed up. The heart where love reigns will be guided to a gentle, courteous, compassionate course of conduct toward others, whether they suit our fancy or not, whether they respect us or treat us ill. Love is an active principle; it keeps the good of others continually before us, thus restraining us from inconsiderate actions lest we fail of our object in winning souls to Christ. Love seeks not its own. It will not prompt men to seek their own ease and indulgence of self. It is the respect we render to *I* that so often hinders the growth of love.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 123, 124.

- b. How are we warned against false charity? James 2:19; Jude 11–13.

“Elder B----t appeared to be a very holy man. Had much to say upon charity. Speaking of faith he said, ‘All we have to do is believe, then whatever we ask of God will be given.’ Bro. White answered, ‘Blessings are promised on conditions. John 15:7: If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be given unto you. Your theory of faith is empty as a flour barrel with both heads out. And as regards true charity, she is a very delicate personage, never stepping out of the path of Bible truth.’”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, pp. 46, 47.

4. A SIGNIFICANT MATTER

- a. **How important is it for us to abound in all the Christian graces listed as steps in Peter's ladder? 2 Peter 1:8.**
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"Let the Christian graces be and abound in you. Give to your Saviour your best and holiest affections. Render entire obedience to His will. He will accept nothing short of this. Be not moved from your steadfastness by the jeers and scoffs of those whose minds are given to vanity. Follow your Saviour through evil as well as good report; count it all joy, and a sacred honor, to bear the cross of Christ. Jesus loves you. He died for you. Unless you seek to serve Him with your undivided affections, you will fail to perfect holiness in His fear, and you will be compelled to hear at last the fearful word, *Depart*."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 237.

- b. **In today's stressful world, what do we often overlook? Song of Solomon 2:15.**
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"You are pressed with urgent cares, burdens, and duties; but the greater the pressure upon you, and the heavier the burdens you have to bear, the greater your need of divine aid. Jesus will be your helper. You need constantly the light of life to lighten your own pathway, and then its divine rays will reflect upon others. The work of God is a perfect whole, because perfect in all its parts. It is the conscientious attention to what the world calls little things that makes the great beauty and success of life. Little deeds of charity, little words of kindness, little acts of self-denial, a wise improvement of little opportunities, a diligent cultivation of little talents, make great men in God's sight. If those little things be faithfully attended to, if these graces be in you, and abound, they will make you perfect in every good work.

"It is not enough to be willing to give liberally of your means to the cause of God. He calls for an unreserved consecration of all your powers. Withholding yourselves has been the mistake of your life. You may think it very difficult in your position to maintain a close connection with God, but your work will be tenfold harder if you fail to do this. . . .

"God calls for complete and entire consecration, and anything short of this He will not accept. The more difficult your position the more you need Jesus."—*Ibid.*, vol. 4, pp. 543, 544.

5. DANGEROUS FORGETFULNESS = BLINDNESS

- a. If we are lacking in any one of the Christian graces, what has happened? 2 Peter 1:9; Revelation 2:4.
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“He who does not climb the ladder of progress and add grace to grace ‘is blind, and cannot see afar off,’ He fails to discern that without taking these successive steps in ascending the ladder round after round, in growing in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, he is not placing himself in a position where the light of God above the ladder is reflected upon him. As he does not add grace to grace, he has forgotten the claims of God upon him, and that he was to receive the forgiveness of sins through obedience to the requirements of God. He is in the position of a sinner before God. If he has the graces of Christ he will exercise and increase them, but if he does not bear fruit in good works to the glory of God he remains in a state of blindness and ignorance, self-indulgence, and sin. He ‘cannot see afar off.’ His eyes are fastened upon the earth, not on God above the ladder.

“This class may have earthly advantages but have no discernment of the privilege and blessings of living in the light which shines from God above the ladder. They know not the things that make for their peace. They cannot look backward with clear spiritual sight, as they do not view things in the light of heaven. They once enjoyed the love of God; they repented of their sins and enlisted to become servants of Jesus Christ, but they forgot all the vows made to God at baptism—all the solemn obligations taken upon themselves to seek for glory, honor, and immortality.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, pp. 350, 351.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why and in what type of situations am I in danger of unjust partiality?
2. Under what kinds of conditions does my charitable spirit tend to fail?
3. How can we distinguish between true vs. false charity?
4. What small, charitable gestures do I tend to neglect?
5. Why am I still falling short in the realm of charity—and why does this matter so much?

First Sabbath Offering for the GC Education Department

Education, like sanctification, is the work of a lifetime, an intrinsic part of the human experience. This Sabbath we ask for your support in making this vital part of the church expand its reach.



We are to learn to be missionaries from our earliest years. “Every true disciple is born into the kingdom of God as a missionary” (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 195). “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up” (Deuteronomy 6:7). And when the victory has been secured, and sin and sinners are no more, the work of education will continue.

Now as never before, our church must be ready to provide materials that parents can use to establish proper educational foundations for their children, youth can grow in a knowledge of God’s will, and adults can continue to be enriched.

Sadly, most educational institutions have moved away from teaching fundamentals to becoming indoctrination centers for worldliness. Realizing just how much influence schooling has on their children, many have requested materials to assist in educating them for the honor and glory of God.

Therefore, the GC Education Department is creating an entire curriculum with this very aim as its focus. Partnering with our educators and the various unions and field conferences, the work of preparing this curriculum is well underway.

Yet the project is larger than the sums available. We need your generous contributions to this offering to prepare the materials, translate them, and make them affordable. Your support makes it possible for us to prepare materials of the highest quality so that the students using them in our schools and home schools will be “qualified for usefulness in this life and for the service of God throughout eternity.”—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 495.

We understand this project is large, but it is well worth it. With your support we will produce materials to equip the youngest among us to give the gospel message to all the world effectively.

Thank you in advance and may God bless the gifts and givers.

General Conference Education Department

Making Sure

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

“Those who have been truly converted have been buried with Christ in the likeness of His death, and raised from the watery grave in the likeness of His resurrection, to walk in newness of life. By faithful obedience to the truth they are to make their calling and election sure.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1115.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 186–188, 191–194.

Sunday

July 28

1. A CALL FOR DILIGENCE

- a. What should be the most serious priority in our Christian life? 2 Peter 1:10. Why does this involve a cross in our experience? Matthew 10:38.

“God has elected a certain excellence of character; and every one who, through the grace of Christ, shall reach the standard of His requirement, will have an abundant entrance into the kingdom of glory. All who would reach this standard of character, will have to employ the means that God has provided to this end. If you would inherit the rest that remaineth for the children of God, you must become a colaborer with God. You are elected to wear the yoke of Christ—to bear His burden, to lift His cross. You are to be diligent ‘to make your calling and election sure.’ Search the Scriptures, and you will see that not a son or a daughter of Adam is elected to be saved in disobedience to God’s law. The world makes void the law of God; but Christians are chosen to sanctification through obedience to the truth. They are elected to bear the cross, if they would wear the crown.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 126.

“He who shuns the cross shuns the reward promised to the faithful.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 248.

2. WRESTLING WITH GOD

- a. As we seek to overcome our defects of character—thus making our calling and election sure—what example is given us in Jesus as the Son of man while on earth? Hebrews 5:7, 8.
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“While the city was hushed in silence, and the disciples had returned to their homes to obtain refreshment in sleep, Jesus slept not. His divine pleadings were ascending to His Father from the Mount of Olives that His disciples might be kept from the evil influences which they would daily encounter in the world, and that His own soul might be strengthened and braced for the duties and trials of the coming day. All night, while His followers were sleeping, was their divine Teacher praying. The dew and frost of night fell upon His head bowed in prayer. His example is left for His followers.

“The Majesty of heaven, while engaged in His mission, was often in earnest prayer. He did not always visit Olivet, for His disciples had learned His favorite retreat, and often followed Him. He chose the stillness of night, when there would be no interruption. Jesus could heal the sick and raise the dead. He was Himself a source of blessing and strength. He commanded even the tempests, and they obeyed Him. He was unsullied with corruption, a stranger to sin; yet He prayed, and that often with strong crying and tears. He prayed for His disciples and for Himself, thus identifying Himself with our needs, our weaknesses, and our failings, which are so common with humanity. He was a mighty petitioner, not possessing the passions of our human, fallen natures, but compassed with like infirmities, tempted in all points even as we are. Jesus endured agony which required help and support from His Father.

“Christ is our example.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 508, 509.

- b. Explain the result of this type of powerful prayer life. Acts 4:13.
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“The life of Jesus was a life of constant trust, sustained by continual communion; and His service for heaven and earth was without failure or faltering.

“As a man He supplicated the throne of God, till His humanity was charged with a heavenly current that connected humanity with divinity. Receiving life from God, He imparted life to men.”—*Education*, pp. 80, 81.

3. PERSEVERING IN FAITH

- a. **What happens whenever we fail to maintain constant diligence in making our calling and election sure? Ezekiel 33:13. Give an example.**
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“God shows His displeasure at David’s having a plurality of wives, by visiting him with judgments, and permitting evils to rise up against him from his own house. The terrible calamity that God permitted to come upon David, who, for his integrity, was once called a man after God’s own heart, is evidence to after generations that God would not justify any one in transgressing His commandments; but that He would surely punish the guilty, however righteous and favored of God they might once have been while they followed the Lord in purity of heart. When the righteous turn from their righteousness and do evil, their past righteousness will not save them from the wrath of a just and holy God.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 379.

“There is truth to be received if souls are saved. The keeping of the commandments of God is life eternal to the receiver. But the Scriptures make it plain that those who once knew the way of life and rejoiced in the truth are in danger of falling through apostasy, and being lost. Therefore there is need of a decided, daily conversion to God.

“All who seek to sustain the doctrine of election, once in grace, always in grace, do this against a plain, ‘Thus saith the Lord.’ ”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1114, 1115.

- b. **In contrast, describe what is to be our attitude—and why we must keep vital truth in remembrance. Ezekiel 18:21; 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2 (first part).**
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“Many think it a sufficient excuse for the grossest errors to plead forgetfulness. But do they not, as well as others, possess intellectual faculties? Then they should discipline their minds to be retentive. It is a sin to forget, a sin to be negligent. If you form a habit of negligence, you may neglect your own soul’s salvation and at last find that you are unready for the kingdom of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 358, 359.

“Keep your Bible with you. As you have opportunity, read it; fix the texts in your memory. Even while you are walking the streets you may read a passage and meditate upon it, thus fixing it in the mind.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 90.

4. CHOSEN BY OUR CHOICES

- a. **If we comply with the conditions upon which we make our calling and election sure, what is the result? 2 Peter 1:10 (last part), 11.**
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“God’s ideal for His children is higher than the highest human thought can reach. ‘Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.’ This command is a promise. The plan of redemption contemplates our complete recovery from the power of Satan. Christ always separates the contrite soul from sin. He came to destroy the works of the devil, and He has made provision that the Holy Spirit shall be imparted to every repentant soul, to keep him from sinning.

“The tempter’s agency is not to be accounted an excuse for one wrong act. Satan is jubilant when he hears the professed followers of Christ making excuses for their deformity of character. It is these excuses that lead to sin. There is no excuse for sinning. A holy temper, a Christlike life, is accessible to every repenting, believing child of God.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

- b. **How is the election of grace through our power of choice shown in the lives of Jacob and Esau? 1 Peter 1:2 (first part); Romans 9:10–14; 11:4, 5.**
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“Esau and Jacob had alike been instructed in the knowledge of God, and both were free to walk in His commandments and to receive His favor; but they had not both chosen to do this. The two brothers had walked in different ways, and their paths would continue to diverge more and more widely.

“There was no arbitrary choice on the part of God by which Esau was shut out from the blessings of salvation. The gifts of His grace through Christ are free to all. There is no election but one’s own by which any may perish. God has set forth in His word the conditions upon which every soul will be elected to eternal life—obedience to His commandments, through faith in Christ. God has elected a character in harmony with His law, and anyone who shall reach the standard of His requirement will have an entrance into the kingdom of glory. . . . ‘Blessed are they that do His commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.’ Revelation 22:14. As regards man’s final salvation, this is the only election brought to view in the word of God.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 207, 208.

5. CLINGING TO THE VICTOR

- a. How does the apostle Paul describe his upward walk? **Philippians 3:12–14.**
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- b. Why do we know victory is possible in Christ? **Philippians 1:6; Jude 24; 1 Corinthians 1:30.**
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“We are saved by climbing round after round of the ladder, looking to Christ, clinging to Christ, mounting step by step to the height of Christ, so that He is made unto us wisdom and righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Faith, virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and charity are the rounds of this ladder. . . .

“It is no easy matter to gain the priceless treasure of eternal life. No one can do this and drift with the current of the world. He must come out from the world and be separate and touch not the unclean. No one can act like a worldling without being carried down by the current of the world. No one will make any upward progress without persevering effort. He who would overcome must hold fast to Christ. He must not look back, but keep the eye ever upward, gaining one grace after another. Individual vigilance is the price of safety. Satan is playing the game of life for your soul. Swerve not to his side a single inch, lest he gain advantage over you.

“If we ever reach heaven, it will be by linking our souls to Christ, leaning upon Him, and cutting loose from the world, its follies and enchantments. There must be on our part a spiritual cooperation with the heavenly intelligences.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 147, 148.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does the cross have to do with my life?
2. Why is the intensity of my prayer life so vital to salvation?
3. What causes a person to fall in the face of temptation?
4. Explain why erring Jacob was accepted by God, yet Esau was rejected.
5. Recite some promises to keep in mind when striving to overcome.

Strengthened in the Present Truth

MEMORY TEXT: “Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth” (2 Peter 1:12).

“We have no doubt, neither have we had a doubt for years, that the doctrines we hold today are present truth, and that we are nearing the judgment. We are preparing to meet Him who, escorted by a retinue of holy angels, is to appear in the clouds of heaven to give the faithful and the just the finishing touch of immortality.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 355.

Suggested Reading: *Early Writings*, pp. 61–71.

Sunday

August 4

1. GROWING HERE AND NOW

- a. What did the apostle Peter emphasize to the believers? 2 Peter 1:12–15.

“There was a present truth in the days of Luther—a truth at that time of special importance; there is a present truth for the church today. He who does all things according to the counsel of His will has been pleased to place men under various circumstances and to enjoin upon them duties peculiar to the times in which they live and the conditions under which they are placed. If they would prize the light given them, broader views of truth would be opened before them.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 143, 144.

- b. Explain how we are to grow in our understanding of light from Heaven. Hebrews 5:12–14; 6:1–3.

“Every step of faith and obedience brings the soul into closer connection with the Light of the world, in whom there ‘is no darkness at all.’ ”—*Ibid.*, p. 476.

2. ACCOUNTABILITY

- a. **Why and how do we need to change our course of action when we receive more heaven-sent light? James 4:17; Proverbs 4:18; Matthew 6:23.**

“God requires of His people according to the grace and truth given them. All His righteous demands must be fully met. Accountable beings must walk in the light that shines upon them. If they fail to do this, their light becomes darkness, and their darkness is great in the same degree as their light was abundant. Accumulated light has shone upon God’s people; but many have neglected to follow the light, and for this reason they are in a state of great spiritual weakness.

“It is not for lack of knowledge that God’s people are now perishing. They will not be condemned because they do not know the way, the truth, and the life. The truth that has reached their understanding, the light which has shone on the soul, but which has been neglected or refused, will condemn them. Those who never had the light to reject will not be in condemnation. What more could have been done for God’s vineyard than has been done? Light, precious light, shines upon God’s people; but it will not save them unless they consent to be saved by it, fully live up to it, and transmit it to others in darkness. God calls upon His people to act. It is an individual work of confessing and forsaking sins and returning unto the Lord that is needed. One cannot do this work for another. Religious knowledge has accumulated, and this has increased corresponding obligations. Great light has been shining upon the church, and by it they are condemned because they refuse to walk in it. If they were blind they would be without sin. But they have seen light and have heard much truth, yet are not wise and holy. Many have for years made no advancement in knowledge and true holiness. They are spiritual dwarfs. Instead of going forward to perfection, they are going back to the darkness and bondage of Egypt. Their minds are not exercised unto godliness and true holiness.

“Will the Israel of God awake? Will all who profess godliness seek to put away every wrong, to confess to God every secret sin, and afflict the soul before Him? Will they, with great humility, investigate the motives of every action, and know that the eye of God reads all, searches out every hidden thing? Let the work be thorough, the consecration to God entire. He calls for a full surrender of all that we have and are. Ministers and people need a new conversion, a transformation of the mind, without which we are not saviors of life unto life, but of death unto death.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 123, 124.

3. PRESENT TRUTH

- a. Give examples of topics to be the focus of study, from which we should not be distracted. Daniel 7:9, 10; 8:14; Psalm 119:33–35.
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“There are many precious truths contained in the Word of God, but it is ‘*present truth*’ that the flock needs now. I have seen the danger of the messengers running off from the important points of present truth, to dwell upon subjects that are not calculated to unite the flock and sanctify the soul. Satan will here take every possible advantage to injure the cause.

“But such subjects as the sanctuary, in connection with the 2300 days, the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus, are perfectly calculated to explain the past Advent movement and show what our present position is, establish the faith of the doubting, and give certainty to the glorious future. These, I have frequently seen, were the principal subjects on which the messengers should dwell.”—*Early Writings*, p. 63. [Author’s emphasis.]

- b. For around 180 years (relatively recent in the overall scope of world history), what has been a vital aspect of present truth? Revelation 14:6–13.
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“The proclamation of the first, second, and third angels’ messages has been located by the word of Inspiration. Not a peg or pin is to be removed. No human authority has any more right to change the location of these messages than to substitute the New Testament for the Old. The Old Testament is the gospel in figures and symbols. The New Testament is the substance. One is as essential as the other. The Old Testament presents lessons from the lips of Christ, and these lessons have not lost their force in any particular. The first and second messages were given in 1843 and 1844, and we are now under the proclamation of the third; but all three of the messages are still to be proclaimed. It is just as essential now as ever before that they shall be repeated to those who are seeking for the truth. By pen and voice we are to sound the proclamation, showing their order, and the application of the prophecies that bring us to the third angel’s message. There cannot be a third without the first and second. These messages we are to give to the world in publications, in discourses, showing in the line of prophetic history the things that have been, and the things that will be.”—*Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pp. 26, 27.

4. YEARNING TO GROW

- a. Describe the attitude to enable us to embrace present truth as it unfolds, even when others reject it. Jeremiah 29:13; Matthew 18:3; John 7:17.
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“When you become as a little child, willing to be led, and when your understanding is sanctified and your will and prejudices surrendered, such a light will be shed abroad in your heart as will illumine the Scriptures and show you present truth in its beautiful harmony. It will appear like a golden chain, link joined to link in a perfect whole.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 448.

- b. How does negligence too often weaken the impact of present truth—and what is the cure? Isaiah 56:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 14:8; Revelation 3:17–19.
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“We are in danger of giving the third angel’s message in so indefinite a manner that it does not impress the people. So many other interests are brought in that the very message which should be proclaimed with power becomes tame and voiceless.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 60.

“We are certainly living in the closing days of this earth’s history. We need to devote much time to our spiritual interests, if we would experience the spiritual growth that is essential in this age. We are to make decided reforms. The Voice said: The watchmen need to awake, and give the trumpet a certain sound. The morning cometh; and also the night. Wake up, My watchmen. Voices that should now be heard presenting the truth are silent. Souls are perishing in their sins, and ministers and physicians and teachers are asleep. Wake up the watchmen!”—*The Pacific Union Recorder*, February 20, 1908.

“The True Witness declares that when you suppose you are really in a good condition of prosperity you are in need of everything. It is not enough for ministers to present theoretical subjects; they should also present those subjects which are practical. They need to study the practical lessons that Christ gave His disciples and make a close application of the same to their own souls and to the people. Because Christ bears this rebuking testimony, shall we suppose that He is destitute of tender love to His people? Oh, no! He who died to redeem man from death, loves with a divine love, and those whom He loves He rebukes.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 257, 258.

5. THE EARTH ENLIGHTENED WITH GLORY

- a. Describe how the present truth expands and accelerates before the return of Jesus to this earth. Revelation 18:1-5.
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“[Revelation 18:1, 2, 4 quoted.] This scripture points forward to a time when the announcement of the fall of Babylon, as made by the second angel of Revelation 14 (verse 8), is to be repeated, with the additional mention of the corruptions which have been entering the various organizations that constitute Babylon, since that message was first given, in the summer of 1844.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 603.

- b. How are we to behave in light of how most of the world views the present truth message as inconvenient? 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.
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“In our individual experience we are to be taught of God. When we seek Him with a sincere heart, we will confess to Him our defects of character; and He has promised to receive all who come to Him in humble dependence. The one who yields to the claims of God will have the abiding presence of Christ, and this companionship will be to him a very precious thing. Taking hold of divine wisdom, he will escape the corruptions that are in the world through lust.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 483.

“When you come to Christ you will not boast, ‘I am holy.’ Let God, alone, say that of you, for you know not your own heart. This boast is a sure evidence that you know not the Scriptures nor the power of God. Let God write in His books, if He will, that you are an obedient child, keeping His statutes with a cheerful heart, and the records will reveal it before angels and men at the day of reward.”—*The Signs of the Times*, December 22, 1887.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is the present truth for today different from times past?
2. Why I am accountable to God for living the present truth?
3. Why should I make it a point to share present truth with others?
4. How does my attitude toward brighter light affect my spiritual growth?
5. What must be my determined course of action in the face of opposition?

Prophecy for Our Benefit

MEMORY TEXT: “We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts” (2 Peter 1:19).

“In accepting the third angel’s message we have not given heed to fables, but to the ‘sure word of prophecy.’ We are now living in the full blaze of the light of Bible truth.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 592.

Suggested Reading: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 15–23.

Sunday

August 11

1. FAITH, NOT FABLES

a. Why was Peter able to affirm the deity of Jesus Christ? Matthew 17:1–7.

“Upon the mount the future kingdom of glory was represented in miniature—Christ the King, Moses a representative of the risen saints, and Elijah of the translated ones.

“The disciples do not yet comprehend the scene; but they rejoice that the patient Teacher, the meek and lowly One, who has wandered to and fro a helpless stranger, is honored by the favored ones of heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 422.

“The entire night had been passed in the mountain; and as the sun arose, Jesus and His disciples descended to the plain. Absorbed in thought, the disciples were awed and silent. Even Peter had not a word to say.”—*Ibid.*, p. 426.

b. What was Peter able to declare confidently—and how should we, by faith, echo his courageous example? 2 Peter 1:16–18.

“No lie is of the truth. If we follow cunningly devised fables, we unite with the enemy’s forces against God and Christ. . . .

“Every form of evil is waiting for an opportunity to assail us. Flattery, bribes, inducements, promises of wonderful exaltation, will be most assiduously employed.

“What are God’s servants doing to raise the barrier of a ‘Thus saith the Lord’ against this evil?”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 194.

2. THE IMPACT OF PROPHECY

- a. **When confusion abounds, for what can we be thankful, as shown in how Christ brought hope to disappointed disciples on the way to Emmaus? Luke 24:15–21, 27, 32; 2 Peter 1:19.**
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“The hearts of the disciples [on the way to Emmaus] were stirred. Faith was kindled. They were ‘begotten again into a lively hope’ even before Jesus revealed Himself to them. It was His purpose to enlighten their understanding and to fasten their faith upon the ‘sure word of prophecy.’ He wished the truth to take firm root in their minds, not merely because it was supported by His personal testimony, but because of the unquestionable evidence presented by the symbols and shadows of the typical law, and by the prophecies of the Old Testament. It was needful for the followers of Christ to have an intelligent faith, not only in their own behalf, but that they might carry the knowledge of Christ to the world. And as the very first step in imparting this knowledge, Jesus directed the disciples to ‘Moses and all the prophets.’ Such was the testimony given by the risen Saviour to the value and importance of the Old Testament Scriptures.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 349.

“It is [God’s] plan that those who are partakers of this great salvation through Jesus Christ should be His missionaries. . . . The people must be warned to prepare for the coming judgment. To those who have been listening only to fables, God will give an opportunity to hear the sure word of prophecy, whereunto they do well that they take heed as unto a light that shineth in a dark place. He will present the sure word of truth to the understanding of all who will take heed; all may contrast truth with the fables presented to them by men who claim to understand the word of God and to be qualified to instruct those in darkness.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 631, 632.

- b. **Name a warning of Paul to Timothy which is highly relevant today. 1 Timothy 6:20, 21.**
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“The very spirit of heathen idolatry is rife today, though under the influence of science and education it has assumed a more refined and attractive form. Every day adds sorrowful evidence that faith in the sure word of prophecy is fast decreasing, and that in its stead superstition and satanic witchery are captivating the minds of men.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 192.

3. AN ANCHOR TO OUR SOUL

- a. **How can we discern genuine prophecy as an anchor, a foundational pillar to Christian faith? Amos 3:7; 2 Peter 1:20, 21.**
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“Many, very many, are questioning the verity and truth of the Scriptures. Human reasoning and the imaginings of the human heart are undermining the inspiration of the Word of God, and that which should be received as granted, is surrounded with a cloud of mysticism. Nothing stands out in clear and distinct lines, upon rock bottom. This is one of the marked signs of the last days.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 15.

“There are men who strive to be original, who are wise above what is written; therefore, their wisdom is foolishness. They discover wonderful things in advance, ideas which reveal that they are far behind in the comprehension of the divine will and purposes of God. In seeking to make plain or to unravel mysteries hid from ages from mortal man, they are like a man floundering about in the mud, unable to extricate himself and yet telling others how to get out of the muddy sea they themselves are in. This is a fit representation of the men who set themselves to correct the errors of the Bible. No man can improve the Bible by suggesting what the Lord meant to say or ought to have said.

“Some look to us gravely and say, ‘Don’t you think there might have been some mistake in the copyist or in the translators?’ This is all probable, and the mind that is so narrow that it will hesitate and stumble over this possibility or probability would be just as ready to stumble over the mysteries of the Inspired Word, because their feeble minds cannot see through the purposes of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 16.

“The Lord speaks to human beings in imperfect speech, in order that the degenerate senses, the dull, earthly perception, of earthly beings may comprehend His words. Thus is shown God’s condescension. He meets fallen human beings where they are. The Bible, perfect as it is in its simplicity, does not answer to the great ideas of God; for infinite ideas cannot be perfectly embodied in finite vehicles of thought. Instead of the expressions of the Bible being exaggerated, as many people suppose, the strong expressions break down before the magnificence of the thought, though the penman selected the most expressive language through which to convey the truths of higher education.”—*Ibid.*, p. 22.

“When men venture to criticize the Word of God, they venture on sacred, holy ground, and had better fear and tremble and hide their wisdom as foolishness. God sets no man to pronounce judgment on His Word, selecting some things as inspired and discrediting others as uninspired.”—*Ibid.*, p. 23.

4. GOD’S PROVISION FOR HIS CHILDREN

- a. Describe a dire situation commonly found today—and how we should face it. 2 Peter 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:1, 2; Deuteronomy 6:24, 25.

“Never, never was there a time when the truth will suffer more from being misrepresented, belittled, demerited through the perverse disputings of men than in these last days. Men have brought themselves in with their heterogeneous mass of heresies which they represent as oracles for the people. The people are charmed with some strange, new thing, and are not wise in experience to discern the character of ideas that men may frame up as something. But to call it something of great consequence and tie it to the oracles of God does not make it truth. . . .

“We are to hear the voice of God from His revealed Word, the sure word of prophecy. Those who will magnify themselves and seek to do some wonderful thing would better come to a sound mind.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1064, 1065.

“The law of God is the foundation of all enduring reformation. We are to present to the world in clear, distinct lines the need of obeying this law. Obedience to God’s law is the greatest incentive to industry, economy, truthfulness, and just dealing between man and man. . . .

“Those who hearken diligently to the voice of the Lord and cheerfully keep His commandments will be among the number who see God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 199.

- b. What Bible examples does Peter cite to show the need—and surety—of God’s gracious deliverance for those who love and fear Him? 2 Peter 2:4-8.

“God’s people, exposed to the deceptive power and unsleeping malice of the prince of darkness, and in conflict with all the forces of evil, are assured of the unceasing guardianship of heavenly angels. Nor is such assurance given without need. If God has granted to His children promise of grace and protection, it is because there are mighty agencies of evil to be met—agencies numerous, determined, and untiring, of whose malignity and power none can safely be ignorant or unheeding.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 513.

5. CHERISHING OUR DELIVERER

- a. **What is the most valuable deliverance that God offers to us? 2 Peter 2:9 (first half); 1 Corinthians 10:13; Psalm 50:15.**
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“God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan’s ground. There we are sure to fall. The Saviour has bidden us, ‘Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ Mark 14:38. Meditation and prayer would keep us from rushing unbidden into the way of danger, and thus we should be saved from many a defeat.

“Yet we should not lose courage when assailed by temptation. Often when placed in a trying situation we doubt that the Spirit of God has been leading us. But it was the Spirit’s leading that brought Jesus into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. When God brings us into trial, He has a purpose to accomplish for our good. Jesus did not presume on God’s promises by going unbidden into temptation, neither did He give up to despondency when temptation came upon Him. Nor should we.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 126–129.

“Temptation is not sin. Jesus was holy and pure; yet He was tempted in all points as we are, but with a strength and power that man will never be called upon to endure. In His successful resistance He has left us a bright example, that we should follow His steps. If we are self-confident or self-righteous we shall be left to fall under the power of temptation; but if we look to Jesus and trust in Him we call to our aid a power that has conquered the foe on the field of battle, and with every temptation He will make a way of escape. When Satan comes in like a flood, we must meet his temptations with the sword of the Spirit, and Jesus will be our helper and will lift up for us a standard against him. The father of lies quakes and trembles when the truth of God, in burning power, is thrown in his face.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 426.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can understanding Bible prophecy help me in the days to come?
2. Why did Jesus share prophecy with the disciples going to Emmaus?
3. In what ways does Satan seek to undermine our trust in Scripture?
4. Why is it so important to cling steadfastly to the words of Inspiration?
5. When assailed by temptation, what action should we remember to take?

Purity in a Corrupt Age

MEMORY TEXT: “Unto the pure all things are pure: but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure; but even their mind and conscience is defiled” (Titus 1:15).

“By being circumspect, reserved, taking no liberties, receiving no unwarrantable attentions, but preserving a high moral tone and becoming dignity, much evil might be avoided.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 331.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 137–148, 191–199.

Sunday

August 18

1. WATCHING OUR ATTITUDE

- a. How did God punish the Moses’ sister for envy—and how is this a warning for today as well? Numbers 12:1, 2, 6–10; James 4:11; 2 Peter 2:9 (second half), 10.

“If Miriam’s envy and dissatisfaction had not been signally rebuked, it would have resulted in great evil. Envy is one of the most satanic traits that can exist in the human heart, and it is one of the most baleful in its effects. Says the wise man, ‘Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?’ Proverbs 27:4. It was envy that first caused discord in heaven, and its indulgence has wrought untold evil among men. ‘Where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.’ James 3:16.

“It should not be regarded as a light thing to speak evil of others or to make ourselves judges of their motives or actions. ‘He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge.’ James 4:11. There is but one judge. . . . And whoever takes it upon himself to judge and condemn his fellow men is usurping the prerogative of the Creator.

“The Bible specially teaches us to beware of lightly bringing accusation against those whom God has called to act as His ambassadors.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 385, 386.

2. ARROGANT PRESUMPTION

- a. **How does God warn against the arrogant who boast in their lust—especially if they try to creep in among His people? 2 Peter 2:11–13.**
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“When Satan’s bewitching power controls a person, God is forgotten, and man who is filled with corrupt purposes is extolled. Secret licentiousness is practiced by these deceived souls as a virtue. This is a species of witchcraft. The question of the apostle to the Galatians may well be asked: ‘Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?’ There is always a bewitching power in heresies and in licentiousness. The mind is so deluded that it cannot reason intelligently, and an illusion is continually leading it from purity. The spiritual eyesight becomes blurred, and persons of hitherto untainted morals become confused under the delusive sophistry of those agents of Satan who profess to be messengers of light. It is this delusion which gives these agents power. Should they come out boldly and make their advances openly they would be repulsed without a moment’s hesitation; but they work first to gain sympathy and secure confidence in themselves as holy, self-sacrificing men of God. As His special messengers they then begin their artful work of drawing away souls from the path of rectitude by attempting to make void the law of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 142, 143.

- b. **On what should we focus if facing such perils? Isaiah 51:7, 8; Titus 1:15.**
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“In this age of corruption when our adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour, I see the necessity of lifting my voice in warning. ‘Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation.’ There are many who possess brilliant talents who wickedly devote them to the service of Satan. What warning can I give to a people who profess to have come out from the world and to have left its works of darkness? . . . Many of them cherish impure thoughts, unholy imaginations, unsanctified desires, and base passions. God hates the fruit borne upon such a tree. Angels, pure and holy, look upon the course of such with abhorrence, while Satan exults. Oh, that men and women would consider what is to be gained by transgressing God’s law! Under any and every circumstance, transgression is a dishonor to God and a curse to man. We must regard it thus, however fair its guise, and by whomsoever committed.”—*Ibid.*, p. 146.

3. ACCOUNTABLE FOR GREATER LIGHT

- a. How does Inspiration describe the fate of predators who would seek to defile God's people? 2 Peter 2:14; 2 Timothy 3:5-9.
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"The unhappiness and degradation that follow in the train of licentiousness cannot be estimated. The world is defiled under its inhabitants. They have nearly filled up the measure of their iniquity; but that which will bring the heaviest retribution is the practice of iniquity under the cloak of godliness. The Redeemer of the world never spurned true repentance, however great the guilt; but He hurls burning denunciations against Pharisees and hypocrites. There is more hope for the open sinner than for this class.

" 'And for this cause [not receiving the love of the truth] God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.' This man and those deceived by him love not the truth but have pleasure in unrighteousness. And what stronger delusion could come upon them than that there is nothing displeasing to God in licentiousness and adultery? The Bible contains many warnings against these sins."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 144, 145.

"As Christ's ambassador, I entreat you who profess present truth to promptly resent any approach to impurity and forsake the society of those who breathe an impure suggestion. Loathe these defiling sins with the most intense hatred. . . .

"As those who practice these defiling sins are steadily increasing in the world and would intrude themselves into our churches, I warn you to give no place to them. Turn from the seducer. Though a professed follower of Christ, he is Satan in the form of man."—*Ibid.*, p. 146.

- b. Name a specific danger for those who profess to have greater light. Romans 2:21-23.
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"The most solemn message ever committed to mortals has been entrusted to this people, and they can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by it. They profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God's commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them."—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 450, 451.

4. TIME TO RENOUNCE OUR PET SINS!

- a. To whom are we compared if we stubbornly indulge any sinful habit—and why? 2 Peter 2:15, 16; Numbers 22:9, 12, 21, 27, 28; 31:16.
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“Here is a solemn warning for the people of God today, to allow no unchristian trait to live in their hearts. A sin which is fostered becomes habitual; and, strengthened by repetition, it soon exerts a controlling influence, bringing into subjection all the nobler powers. Balaam loved the reward of unrighteousness. The sin of covetousness, which God ranks with idolatry, he did not resist and overcome. Satan obtained entire control of him through this one fault, which deteriorated his character.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1116.

- b. Through what means are unwary Christians enticed to corruption? 2 Peter 2:17, 18; Romans 6:12; Ephesians 6:12.
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“The boastful spiritualist claims great freedom, and in smooth, flowery language seeks to fascinate and delude unwary souls to choose the broad path of pleasure and sinful indulgence, rather than the narrow path and the straight way. Spiritualists call the requirements of God’s law bondage, and say those who obey them live a life of slavish fear. With smooth words and fair speeches they boast of their freedom, and seek to cover their dangerous heresies with the garments of righteousness. They would make the most revolting crimes be considered as blessings to the race.

“They open before the sinner a wide door to follow the promptings of the carnal heart, and violate the law of God, especially the seventh commandment. Those who speak these great swelling words of vanity, and who triumph in their freedom in sin, promise those whom they deceive the enjoyment of freedom in a course of rebellion against the revealed will of God. These deluded souls are themselves in the veriest bondage to Satan and are controlled by his power, and yet promising liberty to those who will dare to follow the same course of sin that they themselves have chosen.

“The Scriptures are indeed fulfilled in this, that the blind are leading the blind. For by whom a man is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. These deluded souls are under the most abject slavery to the will of demons. They have allied themselves to the powers of darkness and have no strength to go contrary to the will of demons.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 15, 1875.

5. BLESSED BY REPROOF

- a. Explain the choice we have. 2 Peter 2:19; Romans 6:16, 19; Proverbs 10:17.

“[John] was often warned and cautioned by the Saviour; and these reproofs he accepted. As the character of the Divine One was manifested to him, John saw his own deficiencies, and was humbled by the revelation. Day by day, in contrast with his own violent spirit, he beheld the tenderness and forbearance of Jesus, and heard His lessons of humility and patience. Day by day his heart was drawn out to Christ, until he lost sight of self in love for his Master. The power and tenderness, the majesty and meekness, the strength and patience, that he saw in the daily life of the Son of God, filled his soul with admiration. He yielded his resentful, ambitious temper to the molding power of Christ, and divine love wrought in him a transformation of character.

“In striking contrast to the sanctification worked out in the life of John is the experience of his fellow disciple, Judas. . . . Often, as he listened to the Saviour’s words, conviction came to him, but he would not humble his heart or confess his sins. By resisting the divine influence he dishonored the Master whom he professed to love. John warred earnestly against his faults; but Judas violated his conscience and yielded to temptation. . . .

“John and Judas are representatives of those who profess to be Christ’s followers. Both these disciples had the same opportunities to study and follow the divine Pattern. Both were closely associated with Jesus and were privileged to listen to His teaching. Each possessed serious defects of character; and each had access to the divine grace that transforms character. . . . One, daily dying to self and overcoming sin, was sanctified through the truth; the other, resisting the transforming power of grace and indulging selfish desires, was brought into bondage to Satan.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 557, 558.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How could Miriam have been spared the disgrace of leprosy?
2. How does today’s society make Peter’s warnings so relevant for us now?
3. In a perverted world, in what ways will God’s people be unique?
4. How only can I avoid the fate of Balaam?
5. Explain the difference in attitude between erring John and erring Judas.

Cherishing Heavenly Light

MEMORY TEXT: “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin” (James 4:17).

“Said the angel: ‘If light come, and that light is set aside or rejected, then comes condemnation and the frown of God; but before the light comes, there is no sin, for there is no light for them to reject.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 116.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 695–711.

Sunday

August 25

1. ATTITUDE PROBLEMS

a. How does Peter explain the fate of false teachers? 2 Peter 2:20.

“False teachers, arising in the church and accounted true by many of their brethren in the faith, the apostle compared to ‘wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest; to whom the mist of darkness is reserved forever.’ ‘The latter end is worse with them,’ he declared, ‘than the beginning.’ ”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 535.

b. What timeless words help us keep a mature perspective and make wise choices when others look down on us or try our patience? Ecclesiastes 7:8.

“Many love to be flattered and are jealously watching for slights or neglect. There is a hard, unforgiving spirit. There is envy, strife, emulation. . . .

“While you are so eagerly striving to be first, remember that you will be last in the favor of God if you fail to cherish a meek and lowly spirit. Pride of heart will cause many to fail where they might have made a success. ‘Before honor is humility,’ and ‘the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 50.

2. SOME INTERESTING ILLUSTRATIONS

- a. To what does Peter refer to awaken us? Proverbs 26:11; 2 Peter 2:20–22.
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“The world is ripening for its destruction. God can bear with sinners but a little longer. They must drink the dregs of the cup of His wrath un-mixed with mercy. . . . It is soon to be known who is on the Lord’s side, who will not be ashamed of Jesus. Those who have not moral courage to conscientiously take their position in the face of unbelievers, leave the fashions of the world, and imitate the self-denying life of Christ, are ashamed of Him, and do not love His example.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 287.

- b. How does Christ similarly warn us against failing to maintain a humble, dependent connection with Him? Luke 11:24–26.
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“The garnished house represents the self-righteous soul. Satan is driven out by Christ. But he returned, in the hope of finding entrance. He finds the house empty, swept, and garnished. Only self-righteousness is abiding there. ‘Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.’

“Self-righteousness is a curse, a human embellishment, which Satan uses for his glory. Those who garnish the soul with self-praise and flattery prepare the way for the seven other spirits more wicked than the first. In their very reception of the truth these souls deceive themselves. They are building upon a foundation of self-righteousness. The prayers of congregations may be offered to God with a round of ceremonies, but if they are offered in self-righteousness God is not honored by them. The Lord declares, ‘I will declare thy righteousness, and thy works; for they shall not profit thee.’ In spite of all their display, their garnished habitation, Satan comes in with a troop of evil angels and takes his place in the soul, to help in the deception. The apostle writes, ‘If after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.’ ”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, p. 1093.

3. CONTINUING IN FAITH

a. Why are we clearly told to “continue” in Christ? Colossians 1:21–23.

“It is not necessary for us deliberately to choose the service of the kingdom of darkness in order to come under its dominion. We have only to neglect to ally ourselves with the kingdom of light. If we do not cooperate with the heavenly agencies, Satan will take possession of the heart, and will make it his abiding place. The only defense against evil is the indwelling of Christ in the heart through faith in His righteousness. Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. We may leave off many bad habits, for the time we may part company with Satan; but without a vital connection with God, through the surrender of ourselves to Him moment by moment, we shall be overcome. Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

b. Explain the beautiful balance we must understand through justification by faith in Jesus. Romans 3:24–26; Hebrews 6:4–6; 10:26, 27.

“He who healed the sick and cast out demons when He walked among men is the same mighty Redeemer today. Faith comes by the word of God. Then grasp His promise, ‘Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.’ John 6:37. Cast yourself at His feet with the cry, ‘Lord, I believe; help *Thou* mine unbelief.’ You can never perish while you do this—never.”—*Ibid.*, p. 429.

“As the sinner looks to the law, his guilt is made plain to him, and pressed home to his conscience, and he is condemned. His only comfort and hope is found in looking to the cross of Calvary. As he ventures upon the promises, taking God at His word, relief and peace come to his soul. He cries, ‘Lord, Thou hast promised to save all who come unto Thee in the name of Thy Son. I am a lost, helpless, hopeless soul. Lord, save, or I perish.’ His faith lays hold on Christ, and he is justified before God.

“But while God can be just, and yet justify the sinner through the merits of Christ, no man can cover his soul with the garments of Christ’s righteousness while practicing known sins, or neglecting known duties. God requires the entire surrender of the heart, before justification can take place; and in order for man to retain justification, there must be continual obedience, through active, living faith that works by love and purifies the soul.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 365, 366.

4. LIVING UP TO THE LIGHT

- a. **Blessed as we are with an abundance of light from Heaven, what do we need to keep in mind if we are serious about our salvation? James 4:17.**
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“When persons are spoken to on the subject of health, they often say: ‘We know a great deal better than we do.’ They do not realize that they are accountable for every ray of light in regard to their physical well-being, and that their every habit is open to the inspection of God. Physical life is not to be treated in a haphazard manner. Every organ, every fiber of the being, is to be sacredly guarded from harmful practices.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 372.

- b. **In the many aspects of present truth in which reform is needed (health being just one example), how far-reaching are the results of our daily decisions? Romans 14:21; Jeremiah 13:20.**
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“The subject of health reform has been presented in the churches; but the light has not been heartily received. The selfish, health-destroying indulgences of men and women have counteracted the influence of the message that is to prepare a people for the great day of God. If the churches expect strength, they must live the truth which God has given them. If the members of our churches disregard the light on this subject, they will reap the sure result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy. And the influence of these older church members will leaven those newly come to the faith. The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?”—*Ibid.*, pp. 370, 371.

- c. **In view of the weighty responsibility resting upon all who are entrusted with Heaven-sent light for today, what earnest appeal echoes down to us right now? Jeremiah 3:12, 13; Psalm 32:5.**
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5. PRESSING ONWARD

- a. Describe some appropriate appeals for God's church living in challenging times. Hebrews 5:13, 14; 6:1; Philippians 2:14, 15.

"Throughout our churches there is to be a reconversion and a re-consecration to service. Shall we not, in our work in the future and in the gatherings that we hold, be of *one accord*? Shall we not wrestle with God in prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to come into every heart? The presence of Christ, manifest among us, would cure the leprosy of unbelief that has made our service so weak and inefficient. We need the breath of the divine life breathed into us. We are to be channels through which the Lord can send light and grace to the world. Backsliders are to be reclaimed. We are to put away our sins, by confession and repentance humbling our proud hearts before God. Floods of spiritual power are to be poured forth upon those prepared to receive it."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 46. [Author's emphasis.]

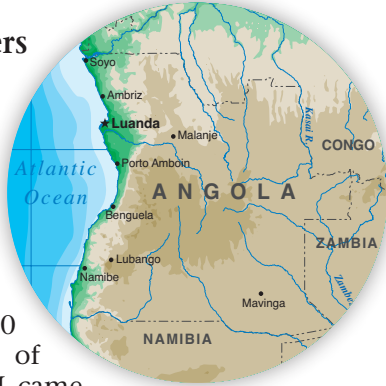
"Whatever your work may be, dear brethren and sisters, do it as for the Master, and do your best. Do not overlook present golden opportunities and let your life prove a failure while you sit idly dreaming of ease and success in a work for which God has never fitted you. Do the work that is nearest you. Do it, even though it may be amid perils and hardships in the missionary field; but do not, I beg of you, complain of hardships and self-sacrifices. Look at the Waldenses. See what plans they devised that the light of the gospel might shine into benighted minds. We should not labor with the expectation of receiving our reward in this life, but with our eyes fixed steadfastly upon the prize at the end of the race. Men and women are wanted now who are as true to duty as the needle to the pole, men and women who will work without having their way smoothed and every obstacle removed."—*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 68, 69.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Do I assume the worst when someone does not seem to appreciate me?
2. In what ways does self-righteousness manifest itself in these last days?
3. How can I obtain and retain justification by faith in the blood of Christ?
4. In what areas of life do my actions need to better reflect what I know?
5. When tempted to complain, what must I remember?

First Sabbath Offering for the Angolan Union Headquarters

The SDARM Northeast Angolan Field was organized in 2015 by the General Conference, to serve three provinces—Kwanza North, Uíge, and Malanje. The latter is located inside the headquarters of the North Central Angolan Field. The region has an area of 181,110 km² and an estimated population of 3,550,774 inhabitants. The SDARM came



to this region in 1978 with a gradual start. However, in 1990, by God's grace, the work had become definitively established in the region and since then the message has not stopped. Significant advances have been made and the message of present truth has reached several nearby places in the region.

Our need right now is for an office building with work rooms for the employees of the Angolan Union, a library, and an auditorium for conferences.

We have acquired land in a suburban area with easy access. We hope that in this space we can construct the desired building to rightly represent the sacred work of God in this region.

In contemplating the great task ahead of us, we need an institutional organization that will allow the coordination and planning of activities in perfect order—keeping in mind that “[God] requires that order and system be observed in the conduct of church affairs today no less than in the days of old. He desires His work to be carried forward with thoroughness and exactness so that He may place upon it the seal of His approval. Christian is to be united with Christian, church with church, the human instrumentality cooperating with the divine, every agency subordinate to the Holy Spirit, and all combined in giving to the world the good tidings of the grace of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 96.

The message of salvation must reach all lands, and we are sure that the Lord “will not fail, nor be broken, until he sends judgment on the earth; and the isles shall wait for his doctrine” (Isaiah 42:4).

In this we ask our dear brothers and sisters around the world to assist us by generously donating your offering to this project to help spread the gospel to souls in this vast territory of Angola. May the Lord God richly bless you.

—Your brothers and sisters from the Northeast Angolan Union

Fortifying Our Mind

MEMORY TEXT: “This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance” (2 Peter 3:1).

“We should ever recount our blessings. We should gather them together and hang them in memory’s hall. What kind of picture will you hang there today?”—*The Review and Herald*, March 26, 1889.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 671–691.

Sunday

September 1

1. AN APPEAL TO MEMORY’S HALL

- a. How and why does Peter appeal to the power of our memory? 2 Peter 3:1.

“When men and women can more fully comprehend the magnitude of the great sacrifice which was made by the Majesty of heaven in dying in man’s stead, then will the plan of salvation be magnified, and reflections of Calvary will awaken tender, sacred, and lively emotions in the Christian’s heart. Praises to God and the Lamb will be in their hearts and upon their lips. Pride and self-esteem cannot flourish in the hearts that keep fresh in memory the scenes of Calvary. This world will appear of but little value to those who appreciate the great price of man’s redemption, the precious blood of God’s dear Son. All the riches of the world are not of sufficient value to redeem one perishing soul. Who can measure the love Christ felt for a lost world as He hung upon the cross, suffering for the sins of guilty men? This love was immeasurable, infinite.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 212.

“Oh, if all the misdirected energies were devoted to the one great object—the rich provisions of the grace of God in this life—what testimonials we could hang in memory’s halls, recounting the mercies and favors of God! . . . Then the habit would be carried with us as an abiding principle to accumulate spiritual treasures as earnestly and perseveringly as the worldly aspirants labor for the earthly and temporal things.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 188.

2. WHAT TO STORE IN OUR MEMORY

- a. **What should be the greatest priority for us to remember, and why? 2 Peter 3:2; Psalm 119:11.**
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“Temptations often appear irresistible because, through neglect of prayer and the study of the Bible, the tempted one cannot readily remember God’s promises and meet Satan with the Scripture weapons. But angels are round about those who are willing to be taught in divine things; and in the time of great necessity they will bring to their remembrance the very truths which are needed. Thus ‘when the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the Lord shall lift up a standard against him.’ Isaiah 59:19.

“Jesus promised His disciples: ‘The Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.’ John 14:26. But the teachings of Christ must previously have been stored in the mind in order for the Spirit of God to bring them to our remembrance in the time of peril.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 599, 600.

- b. **Name examples emphasizing the vital importance of storing our mind with Bible history and teachings. Luke 1:67–70; Acts 3:20, 21.**
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“The Bible is the most ancient and the most comprehensive history that men possess. It came fresh from the fountain of eternal truth, and throughout the ages a divine hand has preserved its purity. It lights up the far-distant past, where human research in vain seeks to penetrate. In God’s word only do we behold the power that laid the foundations of the earth and that stretched out the heavens. Here only do we find an authentic account of the origin of nations. Here only is given a history of our race unsullied by human pride or prejudice.”—*Education*, p. 173.

“My mind has been burdened over the matter of writing on Old Testament history. I am troubled to see my brethren and sisters bringing into the daily life so little Bible truth. In order for us to be overcomers we must realize that there is a battle to be fought. We rejoice to know that through the strengthening power of God’s grace we are sure to win. God is stronger than all the powers of the fallen foe.”—*The Bible Training School*, June 1, 1903.

3. A PROPHETIC SIGN FULFILLED

- a. **What is occurring in the last days to shake the faith of many? 2 Peter 3:3.**

“The general method of educating the youth does not meet the standard of true education. Infidel sentiments are interwoven in the matter placed in schoolbooks, and the oracles of God are placed in a questionable or even an objectionable light. Thus the minds of the youth become familiar with Satan’s suggestions, and the doubts once entertained become to those who entertain them, assured facts, and scientific research is made misleading on account of the way its discoveries are interpreted and perverted. Men take it upon themselves to rein up the word of God before a finite tribunal, and sentence is pronounced upon the inspiration of God according to finite measurement, and the truth of God is made to appear as a thing uncertain before the records of science. . . . When they should have been able to inspire faith in those who were doubting, they made admission of their own uncertainty as to whether the word of God or the discoveries of science, falsely so called, were true. Those who were truly conscientious have been made to waver in their faith because of the hesitation of those who were professed expositors of the Bible when they dealt with the living oracles. Satan has taken advantage of the uncertainty of the mind, and through unseen agencies, he has crowded in his sophistries, and has caused men to become befogged in the mists of skepticism.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 328, 329.

- b. **What admonition of Paul applies in this regard today? 1 Timothy 6:20.**

“The immutability of nature has been largely dwelt upon, and skeptical theories have been readily adopted by those whose minds chose the atmosphere of doubt, because they were not in harmony with God’s holy law, the foundation of His government in heaven and earth. Their natural tendency to evil made it easy for them to choose false paths, and to doubt the reliability of both the Old and the New Testament’s records and history. Poisoned with error themselves, they have watched every opportunity to sow the seeds of doubt in other minds. Nature is exalted above the God of nature, and the simplicity of faith is destroyed; for the foundation of faith is made to appear uncertain. Befogged in skepticism, the minds of those who doubt are left to beat on the rocks of infidelity.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 329, 330.

4. INSPIRATION TARGETED

- a. Besides undermining the authority of the Holy Scriptures, what else is the increasing focus of Satan's sinister attack? Revelation 12:17; 19:10.
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"It is Satan's plan to weaken the faith of God's people in the *Testimonies*. Next follows skepticism in regard to the vital points of our faith, the pillars of our position, then doubt as to the Holy Scriptures, and then the downward march to perdition. When the *Testimonies*, which were once believed, are doubted and given up, Satan knows the deceived ones will not stop at this; and he redoubles his efforts till he launches them into open rebellion, which becomes incurable and ends in destruction."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 211. [Author's emphasis.]

"The very last deception of Satan will be to make of none effect the testimony of the Spirit of God. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish.' Proverbs 29:18. Satan will work ingeniously, in different ways and through different agencies, to unsettle the confidence of God's remnant people in the true testimony. He will bring in spurious visions, to mislead and mingle the false with the true, and so disgust people that they will regard everything that bears the name of visions, as a species of fanaticism; but honest souls, by contrasting false and true, will be enabled to distinguish between them."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 296.

- b. What happens when professed believers in the third angel's message begin to doubt the *Testimonies*—and often, why do they do this? John 3:19, 20.
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"I know your danger. If you lose confidence in the testimonies you will drift away from Bible truth. I have been fearful that many would take a questioning, doubting position, and in my distress for your souls I would warn you. How many will heed the warning? As you now hold the testimonies, should one be given crossing your track, correcting your errors, would you feel at perfect liberty to accept or reject any part or the whole? That which you will be least inclined to receive is the very part most needed. God and Satan never work in copartnership. The testimonies either bear the signet of God or that of Satan. A good tree cannot bring forth corrupt fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. By their fruit ye shall know them. God has spoken. Who has trembled at His word?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 98.

5. TREASURING THE MESSAGES FOR TODAY

- a. Why is it vital to obey the testimonies God sends to His people through the Spirit of prophecy, particularly in these last days? Proverbs 29:18 (first half); Hosea 12:13; 2 Chronicles 20:20 (last half).

“The Lord calls for a renewal of the straight testimony borne in years past. He calls for a renewal of spiritual life. The spiritual energies of His people have long been torpid, but there is to be a resurrection from apparent death. By prayer and confession of sin we must clear the King’s highway. As we do this, the power of the Spirit will come to us. We need the pentecostal energy. This will come; for the Lord has promised to send His Spirit as the all-conquering power.

“Perilous times are before us. Every one who has a knowledge of the truth should awake, and place himself, body, soul, and spirit, under the discipline of God. The enemy is on our track. We must be wide awake, on our guard against him. We must put on the whole armor of God. We must follow the directions given through the Spirit of prophecy. We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church, and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?

“I beseech those who are laboring for God not to accept the spurious for the genuine. Let not human reasoning be placed where sanctifying truth should be. Christ is waiting to kindle faith and love in the hearts of His people. Let not erroneous theories receive countenance from the people who ought to be standing firm on the platform of eternal truth. God calls upon us to hold firmly to the fundamental principles that are based upon unquestionable authority.”—*Gospel Workers*, pp. 307, 308.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. On what memories do I dwell that should be replaced with better ones?
2. How can I best prepare for the next major trial to be inevitably faced?
3. What aspects of my education have been operating contrary to my faith?
4. Why is the enemy of souls determined to discredit the *Testimonies*?
5. Why should I devote more quality time and appreciation to their study?

Extra Time for a Purpose

MEMORY TEXT: “The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” (2 Peter 3:9).

“When we, with all the redeemed, shall stand upon the sea of glass, with harps of gold and crowns of glory, and before us the immensity of eternity, then we shall see how short was the waiting period of probation.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 485.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 183–199.

Sunday

September 8

1. WHAT ARE WE SEEING?

- a. What do scoffers often cite as an excuse for their doubts—and how does this attitude affect even many awaiting the Lord? 2 Peter 3:4; Isaiah 56:12.

“The love of the world has so occupied our thoughts that our eyes are not turned upward, but downward to the earth. We are hurrying about, engaging with zeal and earnestness in different enterprises, but God is forgotten, and the heavenly treasure is not valued. We are not in a waiting, watching position. The love of the world and the deceitfulness of riches eclipse our faith, and we do not long for, and love, the appearing of our Saviour. We try too hard to take care of self ourselves. We are uneasy and greatly lack a firm trust in God. Many worry and work, contrive and plan, fearing they may suffer need. They cannot afford time to pray or to attend religious meetings and, in their care for themselves, leave no chance for God to care for them. And the Lord does not do much for them, for they give Him no opportunity. They do too much for themselves, and believe and trust in God too little.

“The love of the world has a terrible hold upon the people whom the Lord has commanded to watch and pray always, lest coming suddenly He find them sleeping.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 195, 196.

2. EVENTUALLY . . . OR VERY SOON?

- a. Explain how scoffing too often occurs even among professed Advent believers. Matthew 24:48–51; Proverbs 26:20–22; Romans 1:29–32.
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“The evil servant says in his heart, ‘My lord delayeth his coming.’ He does not say that Christ will not come. He does not scoff at the idea of His second coming. But in his heart and by his actions and words he declares that the Lord’s coming is delayed. He banishes from the minds of others the conviction that the Lord is coming quickly. His influence leads men to presumptuous, careless delay. They are confirmed in their worldliness and stupor. Earthly passions, corrupt thoughts, take possession of the mind. The evil servant eats and drinks with the drunken, unites with the world in pleasure seeking. He smites his fellow servants, accusing and condemning those who are faithful to their Master.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 635.

- b. How are we to stand in contrast to those who consider Christ’s return to be far off into the distant future? Colossians 3:1–4.
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“While the attention of worldlings is turned to various enterprises, ours should be to the heavens; our faith should reach further and further into the glorious mysteries of the heavenly treasure, drawing the precious, divine rays of light from the heavenly sanctuary to shine in our hearts, as they shine upon the face of Jesus. The scoffers mock the waiting, watching ones, and inquire: ‘Where is the promise of His coming? You have been disappointed. Engage now with us, and you will prosper in worldly things. Get gain, get money, and be honored of the world.’ The waiting ones look upward and answer: ‘We are watching.’ And by turning from earthly pleasure and worldly fame, and from the deceitfulness of riches, they show themselves to be in that position. By watching they become strong; they overcome sloth and selfishness and love of ease. Affliction’s fire kindles upon them, and the waiting time seems long. They sometimes grieve, and faith falters; but they rally again, overcome their fears and doubts, and while their eyes are directed heavenward, say to their adversaries: ‘I am watching, I am waiting the return of my Lord. I will glory in tribulation, in affliction, in necessities.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 194, 195.

3. JUDGMENT USING NATURAL ELEMENTS

- a. **What very important event in world history is often casually overlooked? Genesis 6:5-8; 7:23; 2 Peter 3:5, 6.**
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“Before the destruction of the old world by a flood, there were talented men, men who possessed skill and knowledge. But they became corrupt in their imagination, because they left God out of their plans and councils. They were wise to do what God had never told them to do, wise to do evil. The Lord saw that this example would be deleterious to those who should afterwards be born, and He took the matter in hand. For one hundred twenty years He sent them warnings through His servant Noah. But they used the probation so graciously granted them in ridiculing Noah. They caricatured him and criticized him. They laughed at him for his peculiar earnestness and intense feeling in regard to the judgments which he declared God would surely fulfill. They talked of science and of the laws controlling nature. Then they held a carnival over the words of Noah, calling him a crazy fanatic. God’s patience was exhausted.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1090.

- b. **What is ultimately awaiting this planet? 2 Peter 3:7; Psalms 11:6; 59:13.**
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“The bowels of the earth were the Lord’s arsenal, from which He drew forth the weapons He employed in the destruction of the old world. Waters in the bowels of the earth gushed forth, and united with the waters from Heaven, to accomplish the work of destruction. Since the flood, God has used both water and fire in the earth as his agents to destroy wicked cities.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, p. 82.

“The whole work of the father of lies is recorded in the statute books of heaven, and those who lend themselves to the service of Satan, to put forth and present to men the lies of Satan by precept and practice, will receive according to their deeds. Root and branch will be destroyed by the fires of the last days. Satan, the great general of apostasy, is the root, and all his workers, who teach his lies in regard to the law of God, are the branches.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 4, p. 1184.

4. THE AWESOME ETERNAL GOD

- a. To give God's children trust in His promises and hope for eternity, how is the limitless scope of our Creator summarized? Psalm 90:4; 2 Peter 3:8.
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"The heritage that God has promised to His people is not in this world. Abraham had no possession in the earth, 'no, not so much as to set his foot on.' Acts 7:5. He possessed great substance, and he used it to the glory of God and the good of his fellow men; but he did not look upon this world as his home. The Lord had called him to leave his idolatrous countrymen, with the promise of the land of Canaan as an everlasting possession; yet neither he nor his son nor his son's son received it. When Abraham desired a burial place for his dead, he had to buy it of the Canaanites. His sole possession in the Land of Promise was that rock-hewn tomb in the cave of Machpelah.

"But the word of God had not failed; neither did it meet its final accomplishment in the occupation of Canaan by the Jewish people. 'To Abraham and his seed were the promises made.' Galatians 3:16. Abraham himself was to share the inheritance. The fulfillment of God's promise may seem to be long delayed—for 'one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day' (2 Peter 3:8); it may appear to tarry; but at the appointed time 'it will surely come, it will not tarry.' Habakkuk 2:3."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 169, 170.

- b. What must we realize about Christ's return? 2 Peter 3:9; Nahum 1:3.
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"The long-suffering of God is wonderful. Long does justice wait while mercy pleads with the sinner. . . .

"The world has become bold in transgression of God's law. Because of His long forbearance, men have trampled upon His authority. They have strengthened one another in oppression and cruelty toward His heritage, saying, 'How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?' Psalm 73:11. But there is a line beyond which they cannot pass. The time is near when they will have reached the prescribed limit. Even now they have almost exceeded the bounds of the long-suffering of God, the limits of His grace, the limits of His mercy. The Lord will interpose to vindicate His own honor, to deliver His people, and to repress the swellings of unrighteousness."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 177, 178.

5. A CHANCE FOR DEEPER REPENTANCE

- a. Why can we be very thankful for God's longsuffering? Psalm 86: 12-15.

"The Lord is willing to help us, to strengthen and bless us; but we must pass through the refining process until all the impurities in our character are burned away. Every member of the church will be subjected to the furnace, not to consume, but to purify."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 485.

"Do not look to men nor hang your hopes upon them, feeling that they are infallible; but look to Jesus constantly. Say nothing that would cast a reproach upon our faith. Confess your secret sins alone before your God. Acknowledge your heart wanderings to Him who knows perfectly how to treat your case. If you have wronged your neighbor, acknowledge to him your sin and show fruit of the same by making restitution. Then claim the blessing. Come to God just as you are, and let Him heal all your infirmities. Press your case to the throne of grace; let the work be thorough. Be sincere in dealing with God and your own soul. If you come to Him with a heart truly contrite, He will give you the victory. Then you may bear a sweet testimony of freedom, showing forth the praises of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light. He will not misapprehend or misjudge you. Your fellow men cannot absolve you from sin or cleanse you from iniquity. Jesus is the only one who can give you peace. He loved you and gave Himself for you. His great heart of love is 'touched with the feeling of our infirmities?' What sins are too great for Him to pardon? what soul too dark and sin-oppressed for Him to save? He is gracious, not looking for merit in us, but of His own boundless goodness healing our backslidings and loving us freely, while we are yet sinners. He is 'slow to anger, and of great kindness;' 'long-suffering to usward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.'"—*Ibid.*, p. 649.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What aspects of the world may be distracting me away from God?
2. How may I be guilty of smiting my fellow servants, spiritually speaking?
3. Why should I develop a keen awareness of the coming judgment by fire?
4. Explain the inheritance of Abraham and his children (Galatians 3:29).
5. Why should I be grateful for this little extra time—and how shall I use it?

What Kind of People?

MEMORY TEXT: “Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness” (2 Peter 3:11).

“The exchange we make in the denial of selfish desires and inclinations is an exchange of the worthless and transitory for the precious and enduring. This is not sacrifice, but infinite gain. . . . Whatever Christ asks us to renounce, He offers in its stead something better.”—*Education*, p. 296.

Suggested Readings: *Early Writings*, pp. 52–54;
The Great Controversy, pp. 662–673.

Sunday

September 15

1. INEVITABLE, UNQUENCHABLE

a. How is the final executive judgment depicted? 2 Peter 3:10.

“The new heavens, and the new earth, (Revelation 21:1. Isaiah 65:17. 2 Peter 3:13.) will not appear, till after the wicked dead are raised, and destroyed, at the end of the 1000 years. I saw that Satan was ‘loosed out of his prison,’ at the end of the 1000 years, just at the time the wicked dead were raised; and that Satan deceived them by making them believe that they could take the holy city from the saints. The wicked all marched up around the ‘camp of the saints,’ with Satan at their head; and when they were ready to make an effort to take the city, the Almighty breathed from His high throne, on the city, a breath of devouring fire, which came down on them, and burnt them up, ‘root and branch.’

“And I saw, that as Christ is the Vine, and His children the branches: so Satan is the ‘root’, and his children are the ‘branches;’ and at the final destruction of ‘Gog and Magog,’ the whole wicked host will be burnt up, ‘root and branch,’ and cease to exist.”—*A Word to the Little Flock*, pp. 11, 12.

2. THE EARTH PURIFIED

- a. **How did Old Testament prophets foresee the final destruction of evil and the purification of the earth? Isaiah 34:8–10; Ezekiel 28:16–19.**
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“Fire comes down from God out of heaven. The earth is broken up. The weapons concealed in its depths are drawn forth. Devouring flames burst from every yawning chasm. The very rocks are on fire. The day has come that shall burn as an oven. The elements melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein are burned up. Malachi 4:1; 2 Peter 3:10. The earth’s surface seems one molten mass—a vast, seething lake of fire. It is the time of the judgment and perdition of ungodly men—‘the day of the Lord’s vengeance.’ . . .

“The wicked receive their recompense in the earth. Proverbs 11:31. They ‘shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts.’ Malachi 4:1. Some are destroyed as in a moment, while others suffer many days. All are punished ‘according to their deeds.’ The sins of the righteous having been transferred to Satan, he is made to suffer not only for his own rebellion, but for all the sins which he has caused God’s people to commit. His punishment is to be far greater than that of those whom he has deceived. After all have perished who fell by his deceptions, he is still to live and suffer on. In the cleansing flames the wicked are at last destroyed, root and branch—Satan the root, his followers the branches. The full penalty of the law has been visited; the demands of justice have been met; and heaven and earth, beholding, declare the righteousness of Jehovah.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 672, 673.

- b. **Describe the beauty of God’s next step. Revelation 20:7–10, 15; 21:1, 2.**
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“When God finally purifies the earth, it will appear like a boundless lake of fire. As God preserved the ark amid the commotions of the flood, because it contained eight righteous persons, He will preserve the New Jerusalem, containing the faithful of all ages, from righteous Abel down to the last saint which lived. Although the whole earth, with the exception of that portion where the city rests, will be wrapped in a sea of liquid fire, yet the city is preserved as was the ark, by a miracle of Almighty power. It stands unharmed amid the devouring elements.”—*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 3, pp. 87, 88.

3. SOBERING REALITY

- a. What should the final, ultimate reality to come upon the earth's inhabitants cause us to consider? Psalm 139:23, 24; 2 Peter 3:11.
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“When the truth has a sanctifying influence upon our hearts and lives, we can render to God acceptable service and can glorify Him upon the earth, being partakers of the divine nature and having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

“Oh, how many will be found unready when the Master shall come to reckon with His servants! Many have meager ideas of what constitutes a Christian. Self-righteousness will then be of no avail. Only those can stand the test who shall be found having on the righteousness of Christ, who are imbued with His spirit, and walk even as He walked, in purity of heart and life. The conversation must be holy, and then the words will be seasoned with grace.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 317, 318.

- b. Explain the deeper consecration we urgently need. 1 John 2:6.
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“Every soul who truly believes the truth will have corresponding works. All will be earnest and solemn, and unwearied in their efforts to win souls to Christ. If the truth is first planted deep in their own souls, then they will seek to plant it in the hearts of others. The truth is kept altogether too much in the outer court. Bring it into the inner temple of the soul, enthrone it in the heart, and let it control the life. The word of God should be studied and obeyed, then the heart will find rest and peace and joy, and the aspirations will tend heavenward; but when truth is kept apart from the life, in the outer court, the heart is not warmed with the glowing fire of God's goodness.

“The religion of Jesus is, by many, reserved for certain days, or certain occasions, and at other times is laid aside and neglected. The abiding principle of truth is not merely for a few hours on the Sabbath, or for a few acts of charity, but it is to be brought into the heart, refining and sanctifying the character. If there is a moment when man is safe without this special light and strength from heaven, then he may dispense with the truth of God. The Bible, God's pure, holy word, must be his counselor and guide, the controlling power of his life. It gives forth its lessons to us if we will take them to heart.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 547.

4. NOT TO BE DETERRED

- a. Describe God's plan for His people—and how half-hearted ones focusing on this world react to that plan and those seeking to live by it. Titus 2:11–14; Deuteronomy 26:18.
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“The time has come when a large portion of those who once rejoiced and shouted aloud for joy in view of the immediate coming of the Lord, are on the ground of the churches and the world who once derided them for believing that Jesus was coming, and circulated all manner of falsehoods to raise prejudice against them and destroy their influence. Now, if any one longs after the living God, hungering and thirsting for righteousness, and God gives him to feel His power, and satisfies his longing soul by shedding abroad His love in his heart, and if he glorifies God by praising Him, he is, by these professed believers in the soon coming of the Lord, often considered deluded, and charged with being mesmerized or having some wicked spirit.

“Many of these professed Christians dress, talk, and act like the world, and the only thing by which they may be known is their profession. Though they profess to be looking for Christ, their conversation is not in heaven, but on worldly things. ‘What manner of persons’ ought those to be ‘in all holy conversation and godliness,’ who profess to be ‘looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God.’ 2 Peter 3:11, 12. ‘Every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.’ 1 John 3:3. But it is evident that many who bear the name of Adventist study more to decorate their bodies and to appear well in the eyes of the world than they do to learn from the Word of God how they may be approved of Him.”—*Early Writings*, p. 108.

- b. In contrast, what is to be our focus? 2 Corinthians 4:18.
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“Forever cease your murmurings in regard to this poor life, but let your soul's burden be, how to secure the better life than this, a title to the mansions prepared for those who are true and faithful to the end. If you make a mistake here, everything is lost. If you devote your lifetime to securing earthly treasures, and lose the heavenly, you will find that you have made a terrible mistake. You cannot have both worlds.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 706.

5. LOOKING UP HIGHER

- a. How are we warned against blind trust in the human frailty of leaders and other close associates who may err? Isaiah 3:11, 12; Amos 2:4; 4:12.

“There are those who, though thought to be serving God, are fast becoming girded about with infidelity. To them crooked paths seem straight; they are living in continual violation of God’s truth; corrupt principles are interwoven into their life practice, and wherever they go they sow seeds of evil. In the place of leading others to Christ their influence causes them to question and doubt.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 281.

“Beware of those who preach to others the word of life but do not themselves cherish the spirit of humility and self-denial which it inculcates. Such men cannot be depended on in a crisis. They disregard the voice of God as readily as did Saul, and like him many stand ready to justify their course. When rebuked by the Lord through His prophet, Saul stoutly asserted that he had obeyed the voice of God; but the bleating sheep and lowing oxen testified that he had not. In the same manner do many today assert their loyalty to God, but their concerts and other pleasure gatherings, their worldly associations, their glorifying of self, and their eager desire for popularity all testify that they have not obeyed His voice. ‘As for My people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them.’

“That is a high standard which the gospel sets before us. The consistent Christian is not only a new but a noble creature in Christ Jesus. He is an unflinching light to show others the way to heaven and to God. He who is drawing his life from Christ will have no desire for the frivolous, unsatisfying enjoyments of the world.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 88.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the biblical truth of what is commonly referred to as hellfire.
2. What miracle does God perform amid those unquenchable flames?
3. How can my Christian experience deepen, and why is this necessary?
4. Explain the perils of leaning on a fleshly arm in regard to salvation.
5. What steps should I personally take to focus more intently on eternity?

Persevering to the End

MEMORY TEXT: “Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with the error of the wicked, fall from your own steadfastness. But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen” (2 Peter 3:17, 18).

“There is no Bible sanctification for those who cast a part of the truth behind them.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 7, p, 947.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 557–567.

Sunday

September 22

1. PROACTIVELY SPEEDING UP THE PACE

a. In view of the ultimate fire, what are we called to do? 2 Peter 3:12.

“Now, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached ‘to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.’ Revelation 14:6, 14. God ‘hath appointed a day, in the which He will judge the world.’ Acts 17:31. Christ tells us when that day shall be ushered in. He does not say that all the world will be converted, but that ‘this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.’ By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord’s return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. 2 Peter 3:12, margin. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory. . . .

“Those who are watching for the Lord are purifying their souls by obedience to the truth. With vigilant watching they combine earnest working. Because they know that the Lord is at the door, their zeal is quickened to cooperate with the divine intelligences in working for the salvation of souls.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 633, 634.

2. WHAT A PRIVILEGE!

- a. How are each of us to hasten Christ's return? Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2, 6.
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“Christ has given to the church a sacred charge. Every member should be a channel through which God can communicate to the world the treasures of His grace, the unsearchable riches of Christ. There is nothing that the Saviour desires so much as agents who will represent to the world His Spirit and His character. There is nothing that the world needs so much as the manifestation through humanity of the Saviour's love. All heaven is waiting for men and women through whom God can reveal the power of Christianity.

“The church is God's agency for the proclamation of truth, empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to Him, obedient to all His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellency of divine grace. If she will be true to her allegiance, if she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her.

“Zeal for God and His cause moved the disciples to bear witness to the gospel with mighty power. Should not a like zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified? It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of the Saviour.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 600.

- b. How does God describe His aim for us? Song of Solomon 6:10; Psalm 60:4.
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“Truth and error are nearing their final conflict. Let us march under the blood-stained banner of Prince Emmanuel, . . . for the truth will triumph.”—*Christian Service*, p. 77.

“If the church will put on the robe of Christ's righteousness, withdrawing from all allegiance with the world, there is before her the dawn of a bright and glorious day. God's promise to her will stand fast forever. He will make her an eternal excellency, a joy of many generations. Truth, passing by those who despise and reject it, will triumph. Although at times apparently retarded, its progress has never been checked. When the message of God meets with opposition, He gives it additional force, that it may exert greater influence. Endowed with divine energy, it will cut its way through the strongest barriers and triumph over every obstacle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 601.

3. STRENGTH AND HOPE

- a. **What provides strength to every believer yearning to carry out the mission of soul-saving? Isaiah 53:11; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15; 12:9.**
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“There are toils and conflicts, self-denials and secret heart trials, for us all to meet and bear. There will be sorrow and tears for our sins; there will be constant struggles and watchings, mingled with remorse and shame because of our deficiencies. . . .

“Let the love of Christ constrain us to be very compassionate and tender, that we can weep over the erring and those who have backslidden from God. The soul is of infinite value. Its worth can be estimated only by the price paid to ransom it. Calvary! Calvary! Calvary! will explain the true value of the soul. . . .

“Without the power of grace upon the heart, assisting our efforts and sanctifying our labors, we shall fail of saving our own souls and of saving the souls of others. System and order are highly essential, but none should receive the impression that these will do the work without the grace and power of God operating upon the mind and heart. Heart and flesh would fail in the round of ceremonies, and in the carrying out of our plans, without the power of God to inspire and give courage to perform.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 187, 188.

- b. **Why is the hope of eternity so inspiring? 2 Peter 3:13; Psalm 149:4.**
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“The meek ‘shall inherit the earth.’ It was through the desire for self-exaltation that sin entered into the world, and our first parents lost the dominion over this fair earth, their kingdom. It is through self-abnegation that Christ redeems what was lost. And He says we are to overcome as He did. Revelation 3:21. Through humility and self-surrender we may become heirs with Him when ‘the meek shall inherit the earth.’ Psalm 37:11.

“The earth promised to the meek will not be like this, darkened with the shadow of death and the curse. ‘We, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.’ . . .

“There is no disappointment, no sorrow, no sin, no one who shall say, I am sick; there are no burial trains, no mourning, no death, no partings, no broken hearts; but Jesus is there, peace is there.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 17.

4. A SERIOUS CALLING

a. What does Peter emphasize in his epistle—and why? 2 Peter 3:14.

“We know not one day how strong will be our conflict the next. Satan lives, and is active, and every day we need to cry earnestly to God for help and strength to resist him. As long as Satan reigns we shall have self to subdue, besetments to overcome, and there is no stopping place, there is no point to which we can come and say we have fully attained.

“Philippians 3:12: ‘Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.’

“The Christian life is constantly an onward march. Jesus sits as a refiner and purifier of His people; and when His image is perfectly reflected in them, they are perfect and holy, and prepared for translation. A great work is required of the Christian. We are exhorted to cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 340.

b. Why is patience vital to our sanctification? 2 Peter 3:15, 16; Luke 21:19.

“There are in the Scriptures some things which are hard to be understood and which, according to the language of Peter, the unlearned and unstable wrest unto their own destruction. We may not, in this life, be able to explain the meaning of every passage of Scripture; but there are no vital points of practical truth that will be clouded in mystery. When the time shall come, in the providence of God, for the world to be tested upon the truth for that time, minds will be exercised by His Spirit to search the Scriptures, even with fasting and with prayer, until link after link is searched out and united in a perfect chain. Every fact which immediately concerns the salvation of souls will be made so clear that none need err or walk in darkness.

“As we have followed down the chain of prophecy, revealed truth for our time has been clearly seen and explained. We are accountable for the privileges that we enjoy and for the light that shines upon our pathway.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 692.

“‘This is the will of God’ concerning you, ‘even your sanctification.’ 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Is it your will also?”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 566.

5. STEADFAST IN HOPE

a. How does Peter exhort us to vigilant perseverance? 2 Peter 3:17.

“The directions laid down in the word of God leave no room for compromise with evil. The Son of God was manifested that He might draw all men unto Himself. He came not to lull the world to sleep, but to point out the narrow path in which all must travel who reach at last the gates of the City of God. His children must follow where He has led the way; at whatever sacrifice of ease or selfish indulgence, at whatever cost of labor or suffering, they must maintain a constant battle with self.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 565.

b. In closing the epistle, what is the apostle’s final appeal? 2 Peter 3:18.

“Your sins may be as mountains before you; but if you humble your heart and confess your sins, trusting in the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour, He will forgive and will cleanse you from all unrighteousness. God demands of you entire conformity to His law. This law is the echo of His voice saying to you, Holier, yes, holier still. Desire the fullness of the grace of Christ. Let your heart be filled with an intense longing for His righteousness, the work of which God’s word declares is peace, and its effect quietness and assurance forever.

“As your soul yearns after God, you will find more and still more of the unsearchable riches of His grace. As you contemplate these riches you will come into possession of them and will reveal the merits of the Saviour’s sacrifice, the protection of His righteousness, the fullness of His wisdom, and His power to present you before the Father ‘without spot, and blameless.’ ”—*Ibid.*, pp. 566, 567.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What gives evidence that our zeal is truly being quickened?
2. What practical steps can I take to hasten the Lord’s return?
3. Despite all the bullying and intimidation, who will inherit this planet?
4. Why do I need to be very serious about the sanctification process?
5. As I see the depths of my great sinfulness, what should I do?

First Sabbath Offerings



JULY 6

for a Chapel, School, and Office in Liberia

(see p. 4.)

AUGUST 3
for GC Education Department
(see p. 25.)



SEPTEMBER 7

For the Angolan Union Headquarters

(see p. 46.)