



YOUTH messenger

Vol. XXX, No. 1

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**Once Saved
Always Saved?**

OVERCOMING DIFFICULTIES

*A study from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy,
with comments by Pam Stemmler*

Why do bad things happen to “righteous” people? Why do good people suffer? Why do bad things happen at all?

Have you ever wondered about these questions? There are those around us who are quite blatant about disobeying God and His ways and seem to have nothing bad happen in their life. They prosper financially, have nice homes, a family that sticks together, and some even have fairly good health. Then you might notice other families that seem to be trying to do what is right, going the extra mile, it seems, in being obedient to the Word of God, yet things go wrong. Maybe their children become rebellious, they struggle financially, or their health goes bad, a loved one dies, or the house burns down. Often the hidden response of many is, “I wonder what sin they have been hiding?”

BIBLE HEROES HAD THESE QUESTIONS, TOO

We are not alone in our trying to figure out the fairness of what

we see around us. David and Jeremiah had a similar struggle. They cried out as well, “Why do the wicked prosper?”

Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, prayed: “Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (Jeremiah 12:1).

David, the sweet singer, admitted: “I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. . . . They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. . . . They have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily. They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth. Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High? Behold, these are the ungodly,

who prosper in the world; they increase in riches” (Psalm 73:3-12).

David went further in his anguish. He wondered why he even bothered trying to do right. . . . “Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued. . . . When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me” (verses 13-16).

But then he was given a view of how the wicked would end up. We read of that in verses 17-19: “Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places: thou castedst them down into destruction. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors.”

WHAT ABOUT JOSEPH?

The Lord has also given us the story of Joseph. Joseph is one of my favorite Bible examples! Why? Because I see a young man who made a lifelong decision to honor his Maker no matter what. In his example we see some of the results of a firm, faithful decision. Joseph is an inspiration and a source of so many lessons. His is a hopeful story, one that encourages us to persevere in trials and to wait for an expected end, the blessings of the Lord. It starts in Genesis chapter 30, then it gives more information in chapters 37-50.


Let us begin with a little history. Understanding that we must overcome hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, it is helpful to study a little of Joseph’s background. We should also keep in mind that hereditary and cultivated tendencies can also be for good. This should encourage those who are seeking to do the will of God and working to be good examples to others.

JOSEPH’S PARENTS

Joseph was born to Rachel, the true love of Jacob. The circumstances of their marriage were not ideal. Deceived by his father-in-law and tricked into marrying her sister first, this was not a good start for a relationship. But Jacob had a lot of perseverance. He waited and worked for Rachel.

Rachel had patience too. Though barren of children, while her sister bore many, she waited and prayed for her own. Finally, the answer came.

“God remembered Rachel, and God hearkened to her, and opened her womb. And she conceived, and bare a son; and said, God hath taken away my reproach: and she called his name Joseph; and said, The Lord shall add to me another son. And it came to pass, when Rachel had born Joseph, that Jacob said unto Laban, Send me away, that I may go unto mine own place, and to my country” (Genesis 30:22-25).



The miracle child born to Rachel, the true love of Jacob, became the motivation for him to move on to his own place. This is not a story of Jacob & Rachel, but realizing the family dynamics resulting from the deception by the grandfather of Joseph, Laban, the threats of extermination of his father by his uncle Esau, and traveling to a new home, must have created a stressful atmosphere in the Jacob family. Talk about trying circumstances! What would we do while facing all of these types of issues?

In the history, Jacob persisted with God in prayer until he was changed and converted. Now he was ready to go and fulfill the plan of God in a new country.

Jacob saw his large family, his great responsibilities, and his mistakes. He must have realized that he would need the great help of God to make right out of wrong. He was the father of 12 sons with widely varied characteristics, one of them being Joseph. We would call this family a “religious family” in our modern day. Some would say that Jacob had a “born-again” experience with the Lord and would be able to lead all his family to Christ.

If we look at Jacob’s references in the New Testament, we find him in the list of the faithful in Hebrews 11, a patriarch, one in the line of ancestry of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With such titles, he must have been a man full of faith.

A father who loved God, a father who wanted that experience to be passed onto his sons, a father who saw something different in Joseph, was the one responsible for raising him. Rachel had died, leaving Joseph without his blood mother. What a setting for the story of this young man! Can something good come out of so much trouble? Let’s see. . . .

LETTING CHRIST CHANGE US

“Our cases are pending in the court of heaven. We are rendering our accounts there day by day. Everyone will be rewarded according to his works. Burnt offerings and sacrifices were not acceptable to God in ancient times unless the spirit was right with which the gift was offered. . . . All the money on earth cannot buy the blessing of God nor ensure you a single victory. . . .


“Our heavenly Father sees the hearts of men, and He knows their characters better than they



themselves know them. He sees that some have susceptibilities and powers, which, directed in the right channel, might be used to His glory to aid in the advancement of His work. He puts these persons on trial and in His wise providence brings them into different positions and under a variety of circumstances, testing them that they may reveal what is in their hearts and the weak points in their characters which have been concealed from their own knowledge. He gives them opportunities to correct these weaknesses, to polish off the rough corners of their natures, and to fit themselves for His service, that when He calls them to action they will be ready, and that angels of heaven may unite their labor with human effort in the work that must be done upon the earth. . . .

“The purification of the people of God cannot be accomplished without their suffering. God permits the fires of affliction to consume the dross, to separate the worthless from the valuable, that the pure metal may shine forth. He passes us from one fire to another, testing our true worth. If we cannot bear these trials, what will we do in the time of trouble? If prosperity or adversity discover falseness, pride, or

selfishness in our hearts, what shall we do when God tries every man’s work as by fire and lays bare the secrets of all hearts? . . . “Jesus watches the test. He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal that it may reflect the radiance of His divine love.

“God brings His people near Him by close, testing trials, by showing them their own weakness and inability, and by teaching them to lean upon Him as their only help and safeguard. Then His object is accomplished. They are prepared to be used in every emergency, to fill important positions of trust, and to accomplish the grand purposes for which their powers were given them. God takes men upon trial; He proves them on the right hand and on the left, and thus they are educated, trained, disciplined. Jesus, our Redeemer, man’s representative and head, endured this testing process. He suffered more than we can be called upon to suffer. He bore our infirmities and was in all points tempted as we are. He did not suffer thus on His own account, but because of our sins; and now, relying on the merits of our Overcomer, we may become victors in His name.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 84–86. 

Climbing Above the CLOUDS

Jonathan Tyler



As a child I was intensely fascinated by mountains. I remember riding along in the car, looking up in wonder at the mountain ridges and peaks, imagining myself on top. Growing up in eastern Tennessee, there are quite a few mountains, so obviously I had a lot to stare at. As I got older and started climbing, my fascination grew stronger. Upon seeing a lofty mountain I would get an incredible, seemingly irresistible urge to climb. I began planning trips just to explore the breathtaking, awe-inspiring, and ever changing world of the mountains. I was in love.

Adjusting to Higher Altitudes

Looking back, I smile and kind of chuckle at myself because, on trips to the coastal plains or to the mid-western prairies, I would wonder how anyone could live where there were no mountains. My interest was so great that I began collecting books, magazines, and maps. When I saw pictures of the Sierras and the Rocky Mountains for the first time, I sat spellbound staring at their grandeur and beauty. However, I was greatly disappointed the first time I drove through the Rockies on my way to California. Somewhere above eight thousand feet I got altitude sickness and could not enjoy the mountains at all. My head was hurting so much that I just wanted to get down.

Fortunately, I got the opportunity to work in Colorado for a summer and could adjust enough to the altitude to be able to enjoy the Rockies. It was a year before I had adapted enough and was in the physical shape to really start climbing. Even then it was slow going above ten thousand feet. Many times I felt like giving up—it seemed I would never fully adjust. I would feel so weak and be gasping for air. At times I thought I could not possibly take another step, but my love of the mountains eventually won out, and after two years I started climbing to over fourteen thousand feet. The view and feeling were absolutely incredible. There you are literally on top of the world! It was captivating.

Preparing for the Peak

In thinking about my experiences climbing mountains, I find many correlations to everyday life. You have probably heard people talk about mountaintop experiences in their lives. Life seems to bring really happy top-of-the-mountain experiences, and other times we find ourselves really low down in the valley. Actually, there are not that many mountaintop experiences in life that “just happen.” Usually they require effort and planning, just like climbing a real mountain.

So what does it take to climb a really big mountain? Many things, actually. Lots of planning comes

first. You must decide which mountains are within your skill and fitness level, and then figure out one that you will be able to access within the allotted time you have to climb. You have to decide on a route and read descriptions of the climb. Then checking the weather is extremely important. You don't want to be above the trees on an exposed mountain ridge during a thunderstorm. Expert climbers, and those aspiring to be, try to summit before noon, as the afternoon holds the greatest danger of storms. In order to reach the top before noon you often must start early in the morning when it is still dark. Things can change rapidly at high altitude, storms can come from seemingly nowhere, temperatures can range from pleasant and balmy to a piercing, bitter cold, and it is not uncommon to have snow, even in summer, at higher altitudes.

After good planning, comes proper equipment. Nothing ruins a trip like not having the right gear. The clothes you wear around the house or out to dinner are not going to work on the mountain, and depending on the time of year and the mountain will depend how much safety equipment that is required. First aid training and a first aid kit are absolutely essential.

After planning, and equipment, come food and water. You need

fuel for your body in order to get to the top. Without energy to satisfy the huge calorie demand you will not make it, and at high altitudes water is lost through respiration at a double rate to that of sea level. So you are losing lots of water just breathing. Carrying and remembering to drink extra water is very important. One gallon or three to four liters a day is recommended.

Watching out for danger, safety, and paying attention to your body are also important. High altitudes can bring on medical sicknesses like HAPE, and HACE which are basically water build up, or swelling in your lungs and brain. These are serious medical conditions that can be fatal. Knowing the symptoms and when to head back down the mountain are absolutely essential. Physical symptoms and medical conditions related to altitude almost always occur exclusively over eight thousand feet.

So assuming you are in good physical condition you're ready to climb. It is best to go with a group for safety reasons, and take a map, compass, and GPS (if you have one) along on the trip. Take a cell phone with a fully charged battery, as often you can get service at the top. If you need to call for help it can be really handy, but batteries will often drop 20-40% charge when they are

cold, and it can be cold on top. The last—but not at all the least—requirement is a lot of determination. Without your sights set on the goal and a determination to achieve it, you will not then get there.

The spiritual parallel

So, what does mountain climbing have to do with life? Well if you have never struggled to pass through the valley and climb the mountain, then you will not appreciate the mountaintop experience like those who struggled do. We all have different valleys that take us low and make us feel like life is just not fair, and we all have challenges and obstacles that we must climb and surmount.

In your spiritual life, do you feel weak and out of shape? If so, then you are probably not climbing your mountains. God never gives you a mountain that is too much for you to climb. He may start you out on a lot of little hills to improve your spiritual fitness, till you are ready for the mountains, but at some point you will face a mountain. So what is your spiritual mountain? Any temptation, trial, or struggle that is keeping you down is your spiritual mountain. (Does anything come to mind?)

You may have wondered if the struggle or trial was worth the effort. If overcoming the

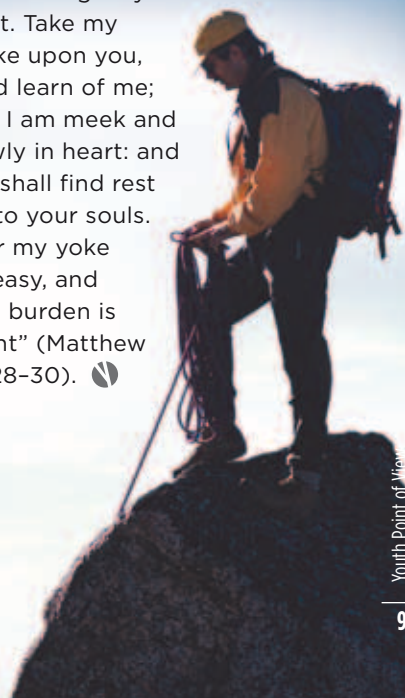
temptation was worth all the difficulty and self-denial. If you really don't think it is, then most likely you have never experienced the joy and peace of the mountaintop experience. Who really likes losing? Life isn't fun if you always lose. Winning doesn't mean you become a millionaire, or are really famous. Winning means that you face your mountains and climb them.

So what does it take to climb your spiritual mountains? Well, planning comes to mind. Do you know what you are dealing with? Open up the Guide Book, the Bible, and read about your challenge. See if there are any stories from those who went before. Are there precipices to avoid along the way? Are there rocks you might stumble on? Do you need to be in better spiritual condition? Do you have what you need? Remember, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Philippians 4:13). Is Christ in your heart to help you? You will need faith along the way and the proper clothes. Your own clothing will not do. You need the robe of Christ's righteousness.

Prayer and devotions will help sustain you and give you strength and energy for the climb. Knowing your weaknesses, what pulls you down, and making use of the things and people that lift up are your first aid.

Remember, if you start developing serious symptoms do not hesitate to call the Great Physician.

No mountain is "easy" when you are out of shape, so don't give up. It takes time to build up strength. Some mountains require more energy, so you will need to pray and study more for the strength to overcome. Jesus never said being a Christian was easy. He said the way to heaven was a straight and narrow path, but the reward to those who endure to the end is enormously satisfying and lasts forever. Never "go-it-alone." The burden is too much, and the way too difficult to attempt on your own. Be sure and take a guide. Jesus the Guide says to you, weary traveler, "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matthew 11:28-30). 🌄



Once

By B. Monteiro



Always Saved?



Example: Eli

There is a popular idea among many professed Christians that once a person is born again through Christ, he or she can never be lost. After all, our mighty God is omnipotent and Jesus promises that no one can pluck us out of His hand (John 10:28). We are safe in His tender, loving care.

But does this mean we are totally free from any danger of falling away? Not exactly. Yes, we are safe when we are choosing to cleave to Him, to abide in His love. Yes, we may have been forgiven, delivered, and even “saved” from wallowing in our past sins that have been overcome. But the Bible is clear that we cannot presume to be already “saved” (past tense) for the future unless that future shall find us to be continuing in Christ, going onto perfection in Him until such time that our entire period of testing is finished. This principle has been shown throughout Bible history:

“Wherefore the Lord God of Israel saith, I said indeed that thy [Eli’s] house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever: **but now** the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed” (1 Samuel 2:30). Why did this happen? It was because Eli had taken his relationship with God for granted and had become careless in the management of his family.



Example: Saul

At one point Saul, the first king of Israel, had a genuine, born-again conversion experience. The prophet told him: “The spirit of the Lord will come upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with [the prophets], and shall be turned into another man. . . . And it was so, that when he had turned his back to go from Samuel, God gave him another heart” (1 Samuel 10:6, 9).

But what happened some years later? When visiting the witch at Endor, Saul described how his own spiritual condition had deteriorated: “God is departed from me, and answereth me no more, neither by prophets, nor by dreams” (1 Samuel 28:15). “So Saul died for his transgression which he committed against the Lord, even against the word of the Lord, which he kept not, and also for asking counsel of one that had a familiar spirit, to enquire of it; and enquired not of the Lord: therefore he slew him, and turned the kingdom unto David the son of Jesse” (1 Chronicles 10:13, 14). Does that sound like Saul was still a “saved” man? No longer!



A general principle about individuals

“Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord God: and not that he should return from his ways, and live? But when the righteous turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and doeth according to all the abominations that the wicked man doeth, shall he live? All his righteousness that he hath done shall not be mentioned: in his trespass that he hath trespassed, and in his sin that he hath sinned, in them shall he die. Yet ye say, The way of the Lord is not equal. Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? Are not your ways unequal? When a righteous

man turneth away from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, and dieth in them; for his iniquity that he hath done shall he die. Again, when the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive” (Ezekiel 18:23–27).

“When I shall say to the righteous, that he shall surely live; if he trust to his own righteousness, and commit iniquity, all his righteousnesses shall not be remembered; but for his iniquity that he hath committed, he shall die for it. Again, when I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; if he turn from his sin, and do that which is lawful and right; if the wicked restore the pledge, give again that he had robbed, walk in the statutes of life, without committing iniquity; he shall surely live, he shall not die. None of his sins that he hath committed shall be mentioned unto him; he hath done that which is lawful and right; he shall surely live. . . . **When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby**” (Ezekiel 33:13–16, 18, 19).



A general principle about nations

“If that nation, against whom I have pronounced, turn from

their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do unto them. And at what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if it do evil in my sight, that it obey not my voice, then I will repent of the good, wherewith I said I would benefit them” (Jeremiah 18:8-10).



test of discipleship: Continuing in the word of Jesus

“Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; and ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham’s seed, and were never in bondage to any man; how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? Jesus answered them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. . . . If a man keep my saying, he shall never see death” (John 8:31-35, 51).

“If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire, and they are burned. If ye abide in me, and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will, and it shall be done unto you. Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be

Our covenant relationship with God is a two-way street, a mutual commitment.

my disciples. As the Father hath loved me, so have I loved you: continue ye in my love. If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father’s commandments, and abide in his love. . . . Ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you” (John 15:6-10, 14). The little word “if” may be small, but it carries a lot of weight. The promises of God will never fail, but they are given on conditions. Our covenant relationship with God is a two-way street, a mutual commitment.



we are warned:

“If we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. He that despised Moses’ law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing,

and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? . . . But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul” (Hebrews 10:26–29, 39).

Jesus tells us, “Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame” (Revelation 16:15).



We are promised:

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

“But that which ye have already hold fast till I come. And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations” (Revelation 2:25, 26).

“Let that therefore abide in you, which ye have heard from the beginning. If that which ye have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, ye also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father. And this is the promise that he hath promised us, even eternal life” (1 John 2:24, 25).



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

Architects of Destiny

Liliane Balbach

Part 1

When designing a structure, an architect faces a challenging task. He must combine various conflicting elements into a beautiful design. The size and slope of the lot, its relation to the environment, the size and shape of the house, and the budget are some of these elements. Did you know that you are an architect? No, you are not a designer of homes or commercial buildings, but an architect of your own character. Every day the structure is going up. What kind of character are you designing? Is your character structure founded upon Christ, the eternal Rock?

As the architect, we also have conflicting elements in our life, inherited and cultivated habits and tendencies that must be put together to make a beautiful character structure. Christ, our Creator, presents us with the challenge of building a perfect character structure. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). How are we going to meet it?

The measuring rod

Clocks, thermometers, scales, speedometers, electric meters, glucometers for diabetics, and sphygmomanometers for people with high blood pressure. In our society we have measuring devices for almost everything. If someone asked you to evaluate the character of a very close friend, what measurement would you use? The Bible gives us simple but accurate criteria for measuring character: The power of the will and the power of self-control. "Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5). These criteria are based on the law of God.

In God's sight, character is measured by the power of the feelings we subdue, not by the power of the feelings that subdue us. The strongest man or woman is the one who, while sensitive to mistreatment, will restrain passion and forgive their enemies. According to heaven's measure, these are true heroes.

Character defined

Before we can build our character structure, we must understand what is character. It can be defined as the (inherited) tendencies or (cultivated) habits of a person, which distinguishes him or her from others. Character, therefore, is made up of inherited tendencies or cultivated habits which are repeated over and over again until they become part of us.

Great characters are formed by little acts and efforts well performed. Likewise, weak characters are developed by little neglects and inconsistencies, and wrong thoughts and actions often repeated. It is “the little foxes that spoil the vines” (Song of Solomon 2:15). We must guard our habits, if we are to develop strong characters.

Habits make character

Our society highly values good character. The Bible challenges us to choose a good character rather than wealth. “A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving

favour rather than silver and gold” (Proverbs 22:1). Yet, despite these inducements, humanity has been plagued with weak characters ever since our first parents disobeyed God. Is there any hope for people who are plagued with warped character and bad habits? What are some habits that you and your loved ones have been fighting against? Impatience, procrastination, poor health habits, tardiness, overspending, bossiness, impulsiveness, messiness, disorganization, overeating, intoxication of alcohol, caffeine, drugs, or nicotine?

Few people form bad habits deliberately. Have you ever heard someone say: I would like to become a procrastinator, I want to become addicted to caffeine, or I want to overspend on credit cards? We form bad habits by frequent but unconscious repetition of wrong thoughts and actions.

“Never forget that thoughts work out actions. Repeated actions form habits, and habits form character.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 89.

Once formed, habits become so firmly established that the most



persistent effort is required to change them.

The apostle Paul understood the problem facing humanity. He describes it in Romans 7:14-23: “I am carnal, sold under sin. . . . For the good that I would I do not; but the evil which I would not, that I do” (verses 14, 19).

Paul was constantly fighting against his bad habits, but he realized that because of human’s sinful nature, he needed help. As he reviewed his failures, he admitted: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (verses 24).

Can you identify with the apostle? Have you been waging a battle over bad habits without much success? Do you feel disheartened because you want to do what is right but don’t have the power? The apostle Paul found the solution and shares it with us in verse 25: “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Yes, the One who created us in His image has the key to help us overcome every evil habit. He who formed every nerve cell of our brain and nervous system knows the pathways they take when we choose to do a bad habit. In fact, He specializes in helping people like us turn our weaknesses into

strengths. “And [the Lord] said unto [Paul], My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

How new habits are formed

The apostle Paul is not the only one who was interested in the formation of good habits. For decades, neurologists, biochemists, and psychologists have been studying the brain and trying to discover how habits are formed. What makes thoughts, words, and actions that are often repeated a permanent part of our brain?

Our brain is the central processing center for the whole body. It sends and receives messages from all parts of the body through nerve cells called neurons. Each neuron has a nucleus in the center which is surrounded by a jelly-like cytoplasm and a gatekeeper called the membrane. Branching fibers called dendrites extend from the membrane and receive incoming messages. A long fiber called an axon sends a message to neighboring cells. Between the sending fiber of one cell and the receiving fiber of another is a tiny gap called a synapse.



“While Sir John Eccles, of Australia, was examining this synaptic junction under a powerful microscope, he noticed some tiny enlargements on the sending fiber that looked to him like miniature buttons. So he called them boutons—the French word for buttons.”—Chalmers, E. M., *Making the Most of Family Living*.

These boutons come in different shapes and sizes. They also secrete chemicals that can speed up or slow down the nerve impulse. One of these chemicals, acetylcholine, closes the tiny gap between nerve cells and causes the cell to send its message to a neighboring cell.

“Dr. Eccles noticed that some sending fibers had many boutons, while others had only a few. As

a true scientist, he wondered why this was so. He theorized that boutons might be formed when that particular sending fiber is repeatedly stimulated. This repeated stimulation could cause more boutons to be formed, thus making it increasingly easier for messages to flow along that particular pathway.”—Ibid.

Recently, other researchers have found this to be true. We can then assume that any thought or action which is often repeated is actually building little boutons on the end of certain nerve fibers so that it becomes easier to repeat the same thought or action. This appears to be the way that habits are formed in the nervous system.

(To be continued.) 





THE LITTLE DOLPHIN

MARK A. HERNANDEZ

The majestic spectacle of dolphins swimming gracefully, together in the open sea. . . . O inspiring harmony! In His brilliance, God created the dolphins with delight, intellect and beauty. They waltz in the waters as one. Remarkable unity! They praise and glorify Him as He creates melody in the ocean. Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty! The Creator performs His own masterpiece. O glorious symphony!

There was a little dolphin, so adorable and yet, so young and independent. The little dolphin's parents and her group of dolphins warned the little dolphin not to stray too far, for danger is all around and by staying together there is safety and protection.

During a serene afternoon, every dolphin—including the little dolphin's parents—was napping, but she was so full of life and energy that her nap was brief. The little dolphin gazes to make

sure that none was awake. As she suspected, all were soundly napping. She slowly and quietly swam away from her parents and the group. As she continued further, she noticed sea horses, crabs, and all the natives of the oceanic world. She danced, played, and embraced them. How fascinating! How liberating! How compelling is independence! Her eyes captured all the wonders of God's creation. Of course, she didn't notice how far she had drifted from her parents and group.

Unsuspectingly, a great white shark came lurking at the bottom of the ocean floor, camouflaged in the seaweeds and rocks. This massive creature was starving and looking for something to eat. Its razor sharp teeth could easily cut off a human limb. This shark was four times the size of the little dolphin and comparing its power with hers, she was no contest. To the shark's surprise, the little dolphin was alone. The

shark knew this was an easy prey. So, the shark came up along the seaweeds, sneaking ever so closer, then stopping, waiting until the little dolphin came close enough. The little dolphin was so amazed with the enjoyment of playing and viewing everything in sight that the shark wasn't detected. She loved being alone, independent, and carefree. In her mind, her parents and the group's warnings were keeping her from having fun. Then, as she drifted further and further, she came within range of the shark's ambush. The shark leaped but, fortunately, for her, the shark got caught amongst the seaweeds. With horror and amazement, the little dolphin swam as fast as she could to her parents and the group.

The shark struggled and by his massive might he finally broke free from the seaweeds and raced to catch her. The full grown shark had the advantage of speed, for the little dolphin was young and not fully developed in speed and agility. The shark was gaining ground, but she kept on swimming as fast as she could. Her mind was remembering the warnings, regretting not doing what she was told and warned. She never noticed how far she had drifted and now growing tired, but with all the energy she can muster, she kept on. She swam along the ocean floor by going up and around rocks and

trying to outmaneuver the shark, hoping that he would get tired and go away. It wasn't working: the shark was so hungry and determined to have her for lunch. Then, tragedy struck! The little dolphin got tangled in the seaweed. She struggled with all the might she had left, but she couldn't get free. The more she struggled to break free, the more entangled she got. All the energy is now spent. She's growing ever so tired, so exhausted! The shark saw her stuck and could tell that she wasn't going anywhere fast. The shark drew nearer and nearer. The little dolphin could see those razor sharp teeth and mouth opening wider and wider. She couldn't bear to see her destiny. Is this the end? Is this the outcome of being alone, of drifting away from those that love you, of the excitement of being independent, of having fun?


As the shark's mouth opened wide to devour the little dolphin, the shark was smacked from the side and knocked away from her. The hits came from her papa along with the rest of the males. Then, mama with the other lady dolphins covered the little dolphin to protect her and free her from the entanglement of the seaweeds. The mother assured her that everything was all right. Meanwhile, the shark got thumped from every side. All the dolphins risked their very lives to rescue this little dolphin that

The little dolphin could easily represent the youth that want to venture out into the world without realizing the dangers that exist in the world due to sin.

drifted away. The papa and the rest of the males were swimming and dancing around the shark, striking him with pinpoint accuracy as if he was a punching bag. The elegance of the dolphins' movements and teamwork overmatched the shark. One on one, the advantage belonged to the shark. But with a group of dolphins collectively in battle against a lone shark, it's a totally different conclusion.

Finally, after being black and blue from the dolphins' assault, the shark departed to look for a less painless prey. The little dolphin was so thankful that they

came, especially grateful to her parents. She thanked them for saving her precious life by risking their own lives to save her. The parents and the group were so happy and glad that she was back home safe, protected, and loved. They weren't too upset with her, because she learned her lesson. She realized that those warnings are for her own good.

(The experience of the little dolphin and the actions of the parents and the group of dolphins demonstrates that when one goes astray, he or she is worth saving. It shows how harmonious action and unity play a vital role in the Christian walk. The little dolphin could easily represent the youth that want to venture out into the world without realizing the dangers that exist in the world due to sin. It could be anyone that thinks he or she can handle Satan alone. The parents and the group symbolize the importance of family and unity, especially in the church that Christ has placed on this earth. The shark of course symbolizes Satan and his strategy to charm us from the body of Christ and His guidance.) 

A LESSON

FOR A LIFETIME

KARINA
ESPINAL

In 1851 Ellen G. White (nee Harmon) finally gave in to her friends and decided to write a book about her “experience and views.” Her goal was to motivate people and to revive them spiritually. Her plan was to write a small book. Her book may have started out small, but little did she know that she still had sixty-four more years worth of experiences to write in that little book. Now that her work has come to a close, her “little book” managed to be fit into six very big volumes.

In 1901 she wrote of an experience she had when she was a child. It was a “character-building discipline” that she used as a guide throughout her life. When Ellen was a child and was ordered to do her chores, there were times she would complain and leave the room. But she was often called back and asked to say what she had said over again. When she repeated what she had said, her mother would consider what Ellen told her, then explain to her that she was as much a member of the Harmon family as all of them. That whether she liked it or not, she was part of this family partnership, and it was her job to do her part to keep the business going. Just like she had her responsibilities, her parents had the hardest job of all, which was to watch over Ellen. In her book, Ellen said, “She (her mom) would carry that out to the letter.” Ellen went on to say in her story that in her home, there was a time for everything. They had their fun times, she explained, but there certainly was no time for idleness in her home, and no rebellious act that went unpunished. ●



The Youthful Conversion of *Ellen Gould Harmon*

Excerpt From *Life Sketches*, pp. 39-42.

A View of the Father's Love

Faith . . . took possession of my heart. I felt an inexpressible love for God and had the witness of His Spirit that my sins were pardoned. My views of the Father were changed. I now looked upon Him as a kind and tender parent, rather than a stern tyrant compelling men to a blind obedience. My heart went out toward Him in a deep and fervent love. Obedience to His will seemed a joy; it was a pleasure to be in His service. No shadow clouded the light that revealed to me the perfect will of God. I felt the assurance of an indwelling Saviour and realized the truth of what Christ had said: "He that followeth Me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life" (John 8:12).

My peace and happiness were in such marked contrast with my former gloom and anguish that it seemed to me as if I had been rescued from hell and transported to heaven. I could even praise God for the misfortune that had been the trial of my life, for it had been the means of fixing my thoughts upon eternity. Naturally proud

and ambitious, I might not have been inclined to give my heart to Jesus had it not been for the sore affliction that had cut me off, in a manner, from the triumphs and vanities of the world.

For six months not a shadow clouded my mind, nor did I neglect one known duty. My whole endeavor was to do the will of God, and keep Jesus and heaven continually in mind. I was surprised and enraptured with the clear views now presented to me of the atonement and the work of Christ. I will not attempt to further explain the exercises of my mind; suffice it to say that old things had passed away, all things had become new. There was not a cloud to mar my perfect bliss. I longed to tell the story of Jesus' love but felt no disposition to engage in common conversation with anyone. My heart was so filled with love to God and the peace that passeth understanding, that I loved to meditate and pray.

Bearing Testimony

The night after receiving so great a blessing, I attended the advent meeting. When the time came for the followers of Christ to speak

in His favor, I could not remain silent but rose and related my experience. Not a thought had entered my mind of what I should say; but the simple story of Jesus' love to me fell from my lips with perfect freedom, and my heart was so happy to be liberated from its bondage of dark despair, that I lost sight of the people about me and seemed to be alone with God. I found no difficulty in expressing my peace and happiness, except for the tears of gratitude that choked my utterance.

Elder Stockman was present. He had recently seen me in deep despair, and as he now saw my captivity turned, he wept aloud, rejoicing with me, and praising God for this proof of His tender mercy and loving kindness.

Not long after receiving this great blessing, I attended a conference meeting at the Christian church, where Elder Brown was pastor.

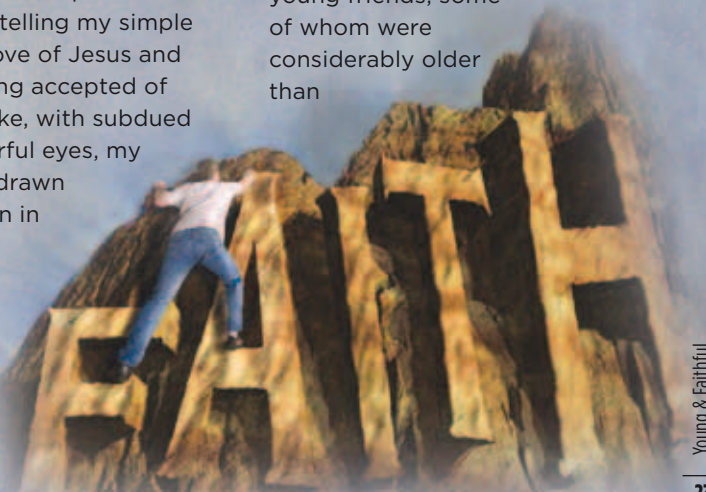
I was invited to relate my experience and felt not only great freedom of expression but happiness, in telling my simple story of the love of Jesus and the joy of being accepted of God. As I spoke, with subdued heart and tearful eyes, my soul seemed drawn toward heaven in thanksgiving.

The melting power of the Lord came upon the

assembled people. Many were weeping and others praising God. Sinners were invited to arise for prayers, and many responded to the call. My heart was so thankful to God for the blessing He had given me, that I longed to have others participate in this sacred joy. My mind was deeply interested for those who might be suffering under a sense of the Lord's displeasure and the burden of sin. While relating my experience, I felt that no one could resist the evidence of God's pardoning love that had wrought so wonderful a change in me. The reality of true conversion seemed so plain to me that I felt like helping my young friends into the light, and at every opportunity exerted my influence toward this end.

Laboring for Young Friends


I arranged meetings with my young friends, some of whom were considerably older than



myself, and a few were married persons. A number of them were vain and thoughtless; my experience sounded to them like an idle tale, and they did not heed my entreaties. But I determined that my efforts should never cease till these dear souls, for whom I had so great an interest, yielded to God. Several entire nights were spent by me in earnest prayer for those whom I had sought out and brought together for the purpose of laboring and praying with them.

Some of these had met with us from curiosity to hear what I had to say; others thought me beside myself to be so persistent in my efforts, especially when they manifested no concern on their own part. But at every one of our little meetings I continued to exhort and pray for each one separately, until every one had yielded to Jesus, acknowledging the merits of His pardoning love. Everyone was converted to God. Night after night in my dreams I seemed to be laboring for the salvation of souls. At such times special cases were presented to my mind; these I afterward sought

out and prayed with. In every instance but one these persons yielded themselves to the Lord. Some of our more formal brethren feared that I was too zealous for the conversion of souls; but time seemed to me so short that it behooved all who had a hope of a blessed immortality and looked for the soon coming of Christ, to labor without ceasing for those who were still in their sins and standing on the awful brink of ruin.

Though I was very young, the plan of salvation was so clear to my mind, and my personal experience had been so marked, that, upon considering the matter, I knew it was my duty to continue my efforts for the salvation of precious souls, and to pray and confess Christ at every opportunity. My entire being was offered to the service of my Master. Let come what would, I determined to please God, and live as one who expected the Saviour to come and reward the faithful. I felt like a little child coming to God as to my father, and asking Him what He would have me to do. Then as my duty was made plain to me, it was my greatest happiness to perform it. Peculiar trials sometimes beset me. Those older in experience than myself endeavored to hold me back and cool the ardor of my faith; but with the smiles of Jesus brightening my life and the love of God in my heart, I went on my way with a joyful spirit. 



What Sign Hangs on Your Face?

Paul Balbach

A young man is standing at the freeway entrance and holding a sign: “Will work for food.” A mother with two small children is waiting at a busy street intersection. “Need money for gas,” says her sign. Much more disturbing than the signs these people are holding is the sign that hangs on their faces. We read hopelessness, confusion, and desperation all over their countenances. Maybe they have good reasons for hanging unhappy signs on their faces, but what about us? What kind of sign hangs on our face?

Is our countenance positive, cheerful, hopeful, and peaceful under all circumstances? We all like being around people who are positive and happy. Why then do we, sometimes, hang negative emotions on our faces? The wise man says: “For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he” (Proverbs 23:7). Every feeling we cherish makes its mark on our countenance. Selfishness,

deceit, jealousy, anger, and other negative emotions leave their scars on our faces. What can we do to have positive signs written on our faces? Can we just fake a smile? One author points out: “The human countenance itself is a mirror of the soul, read by others, and having a telling influence upon them for good or evil” (*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 523). We cannot pretend to be happy if our inner soul is unhappy or negative.



Positive Signs


In the Bible we find men and women who had positive signs hanging on their faces. What was their secret? We read of Moses coming down from the mountain after talking with God. His face was illuminated with light and reflected his close relationship with God.

The disciples after Christ's ascension were no longer

bickering but were fully united. Their love for God and for one another was contagious. The Holy Spirit was poured out and their countenances shone with light, joy, and peace. Even their enemies “marvelled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

When Stephen was tried by the Jewish religious leaders for preaching Christ, his acusers were gnashing their teeth from anger, but even they “saw his face as it had been the face of an angel” (Acts 6:15).

These examples and many others in the Bible show that a friendship with God through prayer and Bible study will give us a similar experience. As we surrender our life to Him, the Holy Spirit will work in us. We will yield our thoughts to Christ and stop thinking and doing evil. Humility and peace will replace anger and envy. Joy will replace sadness. Our countenance will reflect the inner peace, “a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).



What about us?

People are constantly reading our countenances. What type of facial messages have been giving to them? Are we influencing

them for good or for evil? God especially takes notice of our expressions. After Cain’s sacrifice was not accepted, he was upset and God noticed it. “Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?” (Genesis 4:6), He asked. Likewise, He asks us: “Why are you angry? Why is your countenance changed?”

Smile, everyone. Let the sunshine from a loving, surrendered heart light up your countenance.

Is your facial sign warped, discolored, or cracked? There is hope. “Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted in me? hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance” (Psalm 42:5).

WHEN YOU TRY IN YOUR OWN STRENGTH BUT FAIL . . .

“Look to Jesus when you come in and when you go out, and pray without ceasing. You should realize that temptation is on every side. Around you are those whose conversation is only chaff and nonsense. In the world pride and vanity are displayed, and you will be tempted to feel poverty concerning these things that the world admires, which can never satisfy the soul’s hunger. Oh, then pray, ‘Lord, make me a jewel for thy kingdom!’”—The Signs of the Times, May 16, 1892.

Sibiu, Romania

A CALL TO PRAYER

for the 21st General Conference Session

**THIS IMPORTANT CONVOCATION
WILL BE HELD AT:**

Sala Transilvania (www.salatransilvania.ro)
Str. Octavian Goga Nr. 1
Sibiu, Romania

Young people, would you like to see God's work prosper? Would you like to see a powerful Young People's Department? Then pray earnestly for the 21st GC Delegation Session of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement scheduled for August 23 to September 8, 2011.

YOUNG AND YOUNG-AT-HEART—ALL ARE INVITED
to the spiritual meetings preceding the delegation session.

EVENT

SPIRITUAL MEETINGS

DATE

**AUGUST 18-21
(THURSDAY-SUNDAY)**

VENUE

SIBIU, ROMANIA

THEME

"HE IS COMING"

The day after the meetings, on Monday, August 22, will be the dedication of the International Youth Convention and Family Retreat Center in Porumbacu, Romania.

For location, travel possibilities, access to Sibiu, hotels, contacts, and so forth: <http://gcsession.sdarm.org> or write to gcsession@sdarm.org.



Test Your Reading!

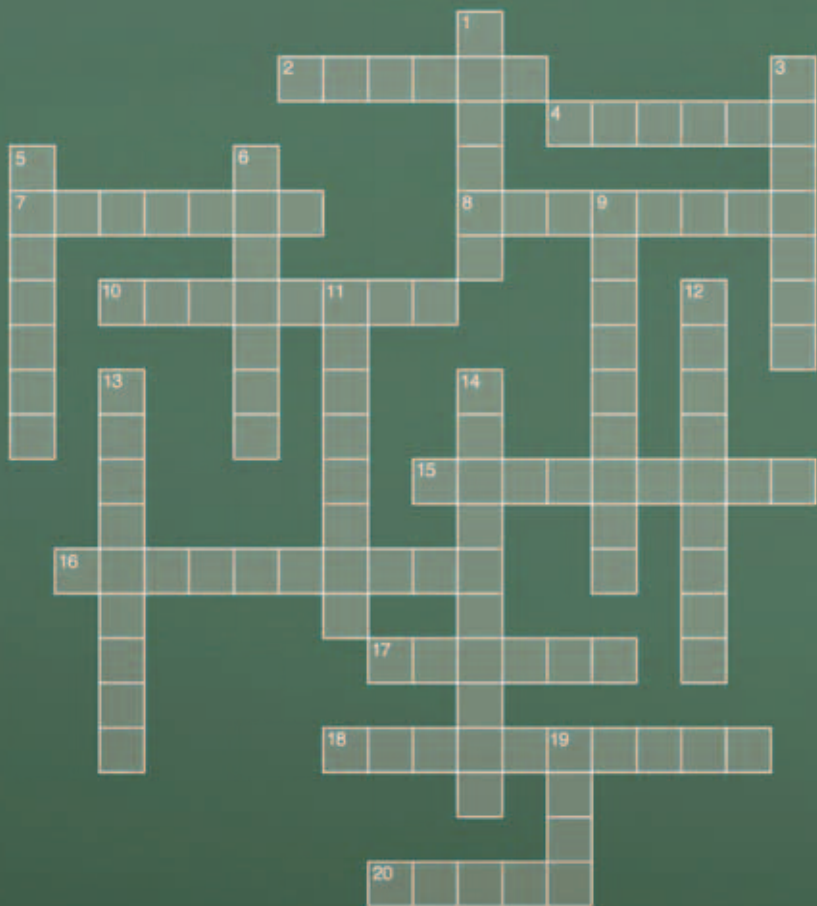
ACROSS

2. What type of _____ messages have we been giving to others?
4. The human countenance is the _____ of the soul.
6. At first David was _____ when he saw the prosperity of the wicked.
7. Repeated _____ form habits.
8. Often around you are those whose conversation is only chaff and _____.
10. The sore affliction of young Ellen cut her off from the triumphs and _____ of the world.
16. Any _____ trial or struggle that keeps you down is your spiritual mountain.
17. _____ is a Bible example of one who overcame great difficulties.
18. In the childhood home of Ellen White, no _____ act went unpunished.
20. To climb spiritual mountains, we need to open up the _____ Book, the Bible.

DOWN

1. The dolphin story shows that when one goes astray, he or she is worth _____.
3. Young Ellen felt like helping her young _____ into the light.
5. The little dolphin was like the youth who would venture out into the world without realizing the ____.
9. God helps us turn our weaknesses into _____.
11. When the righteous turns from righteousness and commits _____, he shall even die thereby.
12. Habits form _____.
13. Through Ellen's prayers and efforts, every one of her young friends was _____ to God.
14. Knowing your _____ and making use of the things and people that lift up are your first aid.
15. When David went into the ____ of God he understood the end of the wicked.
19. If the wicked man turns from wickedness to do what is lawful and right, he shall _____.





DON'T

Laugh

A. Balbach

Those who have taken part in a campaign to collect funds for important church projects often meet with sad disappointments and happy surprises. When children are involved, the seriousness of their approach may be so amusing that you cannot help laughing.

I remember having read about a little Japanese boy who went out with a very serious determination to raise "one million dollars" for a certain missionary project. He approached one gentleman who showed surprise.

"One million dollars!" he said.
"That is a huge amount of money! And do you expect to collect such a large sum of money all by yourself?"

"Oh, no! There is another little boy helping me."


Don't laugh. Sometimes the Holy Spirit uses children to do a job which grown-ups do not know how to do it.

A certain minister set out to raise one million dollars to help establish missions in poor countries. But he had no success. He was greatly discouraged when, one day, he received a letter from

a boy—it was actually a childish scrawl full of blots—and enclosed with the letter was a five-cent piece. The letter read:

"Dear Mr. ---: I'm sure you're going to get a million dollars for missions. And I want to help you get it, too. So here's a nickel toward it. It's all I've got right now. But if you need any more, you just call on me."

The minister, you think, must have laughed. You think he tossed out the letter. No, when it was read to the people the goal was reached. When plans and sermons seem to be powerless, God can still touch hearts and work miracles through unexpected means.

To keep the congregations under his jurisdiction informed about the response to his campaign for one million dollars, the people heard new stories which the minister expected would stimulate the donors to put their hands in their pockets a little deeper. His goal was reached when the boy's letter was read and his nickel was shown, with which he helped the minister reach his goal. 

Sometimes in Life . . .

Sometimes in life temptations arise from every corner. We look at our life and are overwhelmed with all our faults and how many times we have given in and fallen. We are discouraged and just continue to sin and think, “Oh what’s the use, I’ve already sinned and fallen so many times.” Little do we realize that this is a temptation in itself. The devil wants us to think so little of ourselves that we don’t try to find a way out of our sins but continue wallowing in them. We forget to look up to a Higher Power that can help us. No, we cannot on our own overcome our sins, but we can ask for help. God has promised grace and mercy to all that ask.

Sometimes in life we need to be reminded how much God values us: “For thou hast made [man] a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour” (Psalm 8:5). We do our part and He will be faithful to do His! Let us never allow any temptation to discourage us, but let it remind us of our need to accept the Gift of Calvary!

Temptations and anxiety are callings for you to pray!

“In the gift of Jesus, God gave all heaven.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 565.

And it was all given for you! Then as you appreciate this gift, you become encouraged to help others understand about it also. This is why we do missionary work. God comforts us “in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God” (2 Corinthians 1:4). As we lift up others, we are amazed to find that our own hearts become encouraged as well. So don’t give up—and don’t give up on cheering up others, too!

May God bless you.

From your friend and brother in Jesus, Eli Tenorio.

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Youth Messenger® (USPS 765-030) is published quarterly by the Young People’s Department of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference as an educational service for our youth worldwide. **Web:** <http://www.sdarm.org>, **e-mail:** info@sdarm.org. The Youth Messenger is printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, VA 24019-5048. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Postmaster: Send address changes to, *Youth Messenger*, P.O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019-0240. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscription requests, and donations should be mailed to the address above. Vol. XXX, No. 1. Copyright © 2011 January–March Issue. Illustrations: DeviantArt on p. 24; Dreamstime on p. 9; istockphoto.com on front cover and pp. 6, 9, 10, 16, 18, 20, 27; Photoxpress on pp. 17, 25, 26; SermonView on pp. 12, 13, 22, 23; StockXchng on back cover.

Subscription: United States U.S. \$8.95; foreign (air mail) U.S. \$17.00; single issue U.S. \$2.95.

Words of *Comfort*

Eunice Braidman

The pathway may seem dim and dark,
But Jesus Christ will be your light.
Your body may at times feel weak,
But in Him you will find might.

Many storms you may confront,
But your shelter He will be.
Waves may try to sink your ship,
But the Lord will pilot thee.

You may stumble on the way,
But He'll be there to help you stand.
Things may seem too much to bear,
But He'll reach out and hold your hand.

The road may lead through many dangers,
But the Lord will guard and guide you.
The path may seem so lonely, long . . .
But He will be there, right beside you.

The Pilgrim's journey won't be easy.
Give yourself into His care!
Love and strength will e'er enshroud you
While you're safely hidden there.

It may seem you've lost your way,
But ne'er forget the Lighthouse glows—
To guide you through the darkest night
To where the heav'nly river flows.

