

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

for the Fourth Quarter 2002

The Battle of Faith

Issued by the
General Conference
International Missionary Society
of the Seventh-day Adventist Reform Movement

Postfach 1310
D-74803 Mosbach/Baden

Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse 17
D-74821 Mosbach/Baden
Germany

Telephone (+49) 6261-4357 / Fax (49) 6261-14327
e-Mail: sda.refmov@t-online.de
Internet: www.imssdarm.org

Recipients of the
SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERINGS

January 5, 2002

General Conference Book Evangelism Department

April 6, 2002

Brazil

July 6, 2002

India

October 5, 2002

Suriname

January 4, 2003

Philippines

April 5, 2003

General Conference Education Department

CONTENTS

The Battle of Faith

Introduction 5

1. A Sacred Goal 7

2. Forces at War. 10

3. A New Perspective on Life 13

4. A Battle on Many Fronts 16

5. Alert Watchmen 20

6. Indispensable Equipment. 23

7. An Indispensable Requirement 27

8. A New Birth; a New Life 30

9. A Victorious Fighter 33

10. Demands on Faith and by Faith. 38

11. Battle of Faith, or Controversy over Doctrine? 42

12. A Necessary Balance 45

13. End of the Battle. 49

Missionary Report from the Philippines. 52

INTRODUCTION

Whether a believer or an unbeliever, every person on this earth has a battle to fight. Virtually everyone believes in something. A good number of people believe in the power of money, in position, in their intellect, in the achievements of “homo sapiens” –thus, themselves—and others believe in superstition. But a few people believe in the Almighty God, Creator of heaven and earth, who is great in wisdom, mercy, and love.

To believe is to hope, and this hope may be without foundation (the product of one’s own imagination, tradition, or vain dreams) or be based on things that are possible through faith, since “*faith is the substance of things hoped for...*” Hebrews 11:1. Hope entails struggling to reach a goal; and everyone struggles for something—either perishable or imperishable. Those who struggle for the latter, who believe and trust in God, are the most privileged and fortunate, for their battle has the highest goal a human being may reach. Furthermore, they are not alone in this battle, because the entire host of heavenly beings, commanded by their mighty, loving Captain, is beside them. “Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation? Hebrews 1:14.

This is a spiritual battle, called “the battle of faith.” It consists of seeing things as God does and seeking to live accordingly. Considering that fallen man is by nature an enemy of God and His principles, a miracle has to take place before one can even begin this battle; and that miracle is the new birth, by which one becomes a new being who is led by the Spirit, instead of by the flesh.

In this quarter, we want to center our attention on this very important battle which every one of God’s children has to fight daily. We will consider our goal and how to obtain it; our shortcomings and how to overcome them; our enemy and how to defeat him; our Helper and how to have Him constantly at our side; our weapons and how to use them; the demands we may make based on faith, along with the requirements of faith; the value of faith and doctrine in our Christian life (remembering that we are saved only by grace, through faith); and, finally, the reward.

Our great desire is that these lessons will help us become better acquainted with ourselves, with the different steps of this battle, and

with the requirements for entering into the battle and gaining the victory.

May the Lord enlighten our intellect so we will understand that this is the only battle that is worth fighting. May He also give us the courage and strength to endure until the end, fully convinced that by His infinite grace we can only be winners. May He, in His infinite mercy, grant us this grace.

THE BROTHERS AND SISTERS
OF THE GENERAL CONFERENCE

SPECIAL SABBATH SCHOOL OFFERING FOR SURINAME

God bless you and your special gift!

1

Sabbath, October 5, 2002

A Sacred Goal

“I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.” Philippians 3:14.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the Christian’s ultimate goal.
- To grasp the important role faith plays in the Christian’s life.
- To realize that there is no victory without a battle.

THE GOAL ITSELF

1. What is the main goal of every Christian? Psalm 17:15.

“The ideal of Christian character is Christlikeness. As the Son of man was perfect in His life, so His followers are to be perfect in their life.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 311.

2. Why may the goal seem unattainable to us? Revelation 3: 20; Acts 17:26, 27.

“The heavenly Guest is standing at your door, while you are filing up obstructions to bar His entrance. Jesus is knocking through the prosperity He gives you. He loads you with blessings to test your fidelity, that they may flow out from you to others....

“Every warning, reproof, and entreaty in the word of God, or through His delegated messengers, is a knock at the door of the heart; it is the voice of Jesus, asking for entrance.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 967, 966.

3. What is the great benefit of asking Jesus to come into our heart? Ephesians 3:19; 1 John 4:8, 9.

“Love proceeds from God. It is a plant of heavenly growth, and it cannot live and flourish in the natural heart. Where it exists, there is truth and life and power.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 256.

“Love is the basis of godliness. But we can never come into possession of this Spirit by *trying* to love others. What is needed is the love of Christ in the heart. When self is merged in Christ, love springs forth spontaneously....

“It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 384.

HOW TO REACH THE GOAL

4. How is this miracle possible? Ephesians 3:17, 18; 4:11-13; Hebrews 6:12; Romans 4:16.

“The Christian life must be a life of constant, living faith.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 112.

“The grace of God comes to the soul through the channel of living faith, and that faith it is in our power to exercise.” —*Early Writings*, p. 72.

5. Why does the natural man find it difficult to exercise faith? Matthew 14:31; Proverbs 3:5.

“We have great need of more faith. I am alarmed as I see the lack of faith among our people. We need to come right into the presence of Christ, believing that He will heal our physical and spiritual infirmities.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 83.

“Preachers and people have too little faith, too little devotion and true godliness.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 433.

A BATTLE AHEAD

6. So, what kind of a battle is a Christian called to fight? 1 Timothy 6:12, first part.

“Jesus came to draw all men unto Himself, and His followers must walk in the light of His glorious example, at whatever sacrifice of ease or reputation, at whatever peril of property or life. In this way only can they fight the good fight of faith.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 624.

“Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that must be overcome by vigorous warfare. Every soul is required to fight the fight of faith.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 20.

“In every soul two powers are struggling earnestly for the victory. Unbelief marshals its forces, led by Satan, to cut us off from the Source of our strength. Faith marshals its forces, led by Christ, the author and finisher of our faith. Hour by hour, in the sight of the heavenly universe, the conflict goes forward. This is a hand-to-hand fight, and the great question is, Which shall obtain the mastery? This question each must decide for himself. In this warfare all must take a part, fighting on one side or the other. From the conflict there is no release....” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 328.

7. What other name can be given to a Christian? 2 Timothy 2:3.

“The Lord has honored us by choosing us as His soldiers.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

“We are soldiers of Christ, and those who enlist in His army are expected to do difficult work, work which will tax their energies to the utmost.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 140.

“We are engaged to be soldiers, to enter into active service, to endure trials, shame, reproach, to fight the fight of faith, following the Captain of our salvation.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 124.

“It is not ministers alone who are soldiers, but every man and woman who has enlisted in Christ’s army...” —*Christian Service*, p. 35.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- How do my words and acts relate to my purpose in life?
 - What is keeping Jesus still standing outside the door of my heart?
 - Is living by faith something natural in me, or do I live mostly by feeling or sight?
-

2

Sabbath, October 12, 2002

Forces at War

“...Be not afraid, nor dismayed...; for the battle is not yours, but God’s.” 2 Chronicles 20:15.

OBJECTIVES

- To be aware that we have an enemy who does not slumber.
- To learn not to look for the culprit outside but to be aware of our own sinful nature and shortcomings.
- To be aware of our duality.
- To know that we are never alone.

IDENTIFYING THE ENEMY

- 1. In every battle there is at least one enemy. Who is the main enemy of one who wishes to follow Christ? (a) Ephesians 6:12; (b) Romans 7:18, 19, 23.**

“Self is the enemy we most need to fear. No form of vice has a more baleful effect upon the character than has human passion not under the control of the Holy Spirit. No other victory we can gain will be so precious as the victory gained over self.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 485.

“The warfare against self is the greatest battle that was ever fought. The yielding of self, surrendering all to the will of God, requires a struggle; but the soul must submit to God before it can be renewed in holiness.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 43.

2. What do we human beings often have trouble believing about ourselves? Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19; Galatians 6:3.

“Our hearts are naturally sinful, and slothful in the service of Christ; and we need to be guarded constantly, or we shall fail to endure hardness as good soldiers of Christ; and we shall not feel the necessity of aiming vigorous blows against besetting sins, but will readily yield to the suggestions of Satan and raise a standard for ourselves rather than accept the pure and elevated standard that God has raised for us.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 710.

3. But what does the knowledge of self bring? Luke 18:13; Proverbs 15:33; 2 Corinthians 7:10, first part.

“To know one’s self is great knowledge. True self-knowledge will lead to a humility that will allow the Lord to train the mind, and mold and discipline the character. The grace of humility is greatly needed by the workers for Christ in this period of the world’s history.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 525.

“The humble and broken heart, subdued by genuine repentance, will appreciate something of the love of God and the cost of Calvary, . . .” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 641.

“In the valley of humiliation, where men feel their need and depend on God to guide their steps, there is comparative safety.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 212.

TWO LAWS

4. Let us compare what comes out of the natural heart (Matthew 15:19) with God’s law (Exodus 20). What is the outcome? James 4:1-6.

“The natural heart does not love to think of God, of heaven, or of heavenly things. There must be a continual pressing back of the current of worldliness and inclination to evil and a letting in of heavenly light.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 533.

“...Our hearts are naturally depraved, and we are unable of ourselves to pursue a right course. It is only by the grace of God, combined with the most earnest effort on our part, that we can gain the victory.

“The intellect, as well as the heart, must be consecrated to the service of God. He has claim upon all there is of us.” —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 544.

GAINING THE VICTORY

5. Can anyone help us in this battle? Romans 7:25, first part; 8:31; Philippians 4:13.

“Through all our trials we have a never-failing Helper. He does not leave us alone to struggle with temptation, to battle with evil, and be finally crushed with burdens and sorrow. Though now He is hidden from mortal sight, the ear of faith can hear His voice saying, Fear not; I am with you.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 483.

6. How can one receive help? (a) Matthew 7:7, first part; Proverbs 23:26; (b) Psalm 119:9, 33; Proverbs 12:1; (c) Hebrews 10:24, 25.

“We cannot, of ourselves, conquer the evil desires and habits that strive for the mastery. We cannot overcome the mighty foe who holds us in his thrall. God alone can give us the victory. He desires us to have the mastery over ourselves, our own will and ways. But He cannot work in us without our consent and cooperation.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 142.

“When the soul surrenders itself to Christ, a new power takes possession of the new heart. A change is wrought which man can never accomplish for himself. It is a supernatural work, bringing a supernatural element into human nature. The soul that is yielded to Christ becomes His own fortress...” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

“The surrender of the heart to Jesus subdues the rebel into a penitent...” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 625.

7. What is the only way to overcome? Hebrews 12:2; Colossians 3:1, 2.

“By looking to Jesus, we may be overcomers. It is by fastening our eyes on the difficulties and shrinking from earnest battle for the right, that we become weak and faithless.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 46.

“We are to look to Christ for an example and imitate the humble pattern.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 431.

“We should go to Jesus and tell Him all our needs. We may bring Him our little cares and perplexities as well as our greater troubles. Whatever arises to disturb or distress us, we should take it to the Lord in prayer. When we feel that we need the presence of Christ at every step, Satan will have little opportunity to intrude his temptations.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 200, 201.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- How can I know myself?
- What in my heart is not yet in full agreement with God’s law?
- At what point in a difficult situation do I generally remember that I have a powerful Helper?

3

Sabbath, October 19, 2002

A New Perspective on Life

“...His banner over me was love.” Song of Solomon 2:4.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that love is God’s protective power.
- To see that doubt leads to unfaithfulness.
- To understand the importance of obedience.

UNDER A POWERFUL SHELTER

- 1. When we look heavenward with the eyes of faith, what do we see? Genesis 28:12, 13.**

“Look to the top of the ladder. God is above it. His glory shines on every soul ascending heavenward. Jesus is this ladder. Climb up by Him, cling to Him, and ere long you will step off the ladder into His everlasting kingdom.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 130.

2. What is God, and what are we called to do? 1 John 4:8; Jude 21.

“Here is love that no language can express. It passes knowledge. Great is the mystery of godliness. Our souls should be enlivened, elevated, and enraptured with the theme of the love of the Father and the Son to man.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 215.

“All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 740.

A TIRELESS FOE

3. What is the special aim of the enemy of our souls? James 1:6-8. What belief is most powerful against him? John 3:16, 17; Psalm 37:3, 4.

“Satan will seek to discourage the followers of Christ, so that they may not pray or study the Scriptures, and he will through his hateful shadow athwart the path to hide Jesus from view, to shut away the vision of His love, and the glories of the heavenly inheritance. It is his delight to cause the children of God to go shrinkingly, trembling, and painfully along, under continual doubt.” —*Messages to Young People*, p. 63.

4. Therefore, what other battle does the Christian have to face? Hebrews 3:19.

“Dear Brother P: I see ... that you are in a state of unbelief, questioning whether there is hope in your case.... Satan may tell you many times that you are a sinner, but you can answer: True, I am a sinner; but Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners.’...

“Will you not allow the Lord right here to erect a standard for you against the enemy? Satan is ready to steal away the blessed assurances of God. He desires to take every glimmer of hope and every ray of light from the soul; but you must not permit him to do this. Exercise faith; fight the good fight of faith; wrestle with these doubts; become acquainted with the promises.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 629.

5. How can we win this and every other battle? 1 Peter 5:6, 7; James 4:7.

“Satan ... will employ everyone who will engage in his service to hinder the chosen people of God from showing forth the praises of Him who has called them from darkness into His marvelous light. To hide, to cover up this light, to cause people to distrust it, to disbelieve it, is the work of the great rebel and his host. While Jesus is purifying His people unto Himself, redeeming them from all iniquity, Satan will employ his forces to hinder the work and prevent the perfection of the saints. He does not exert his power upon those who are all covered up with deception and walled in by fables and error, and who make no effort to receive and obey the truth. He knows he is sure of them; but those who are seeking for truth, that they may obey it in the love of it, are the ones who excite his malice and stir his ire. He can never weaken them while they keep close to Jesus; therefore he is pleased when he can lead them in a course of disobedience.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 105.

THE KEY TO HAPPINESS

6. Is obedience to God a natural trait of human nature? Hebrews 5:8; Acts 7:39.

“Humbled in the sight of the nations, those who once had been recognized as favored of Heaven above all other peoples of the earth were to learn in exile the lesson of obedience so necessary for their future happiness.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 475.

“True happiness in this life and in the future life depends upon obedience to a ‘Thus saith the Lord.’” —*Child Guidance*, p. 80.

7. So, what is faith for those who overcome doubt and surrender to God's love? Matthew 17:20; Psalm 84:7, first part.

“Faith is the living power that presses through every barrier, overrides all obstacles, and plants its banner in the heart of the enemy's camp.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 163.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- What do I notice when I think deeply about the times when I personally experienced God's protective love?
 - In what circumstances am I tempted to doubt God's faithfulness?
 - Have I determined in my heart to obey God's will?
 - What makes it difficult for me to obey all the light I have received from Heaven?
-

4

Sabbath, October 26, 2002

A Battle on Many Fronts

“...Fear not: for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.” 2 Kings 6:16.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that sin, which is inspired by Satan, is always at hand to ensnare us.
- To see that we are not just to remain passive and let things happen, waiting for God to work a miracle.
- To realize that faith pleads for divine help to overcome.
- To be aware of the role the mind plays when we choose to sin or not to sin.

1. We have seen that self and unbelief constitute our bitterest enemies. In one word, what is this persistent foe called? 1 Corinthians 15:56.

“Each one will have a close struggle to overcome sin in his own heart. This is at times a very painful and discouraging work; because, as we see the deformities in our character, we keep looking at them, when we should look to Jesus and put on the robe of His righteousness.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 182.

“We are not to wait for some special time, but today we are to give ourselves to Him, refusing to be the servants of sin. Do you imagine you can leave off sin a little at a time? Oh, leave the accursed thing at once! Hate the things that Christ hates, love the things that Christ loves....

“While we must often impress the mind with the fact that the Christian life is a life of warfare, that we must watch and pray and toil, that there is peril to the soul in relaxing the spiritual vigilance for one moment, the completeness of the salvation proffered us from Jesus who loves us and gave Himself that we should not perish but have everlasting life, is to be the theme.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 327, 182.

2. Who is behind every enticement to sin? Mark 1:13, first part; Ephesians 6:12.

“Evil spirits ... are leagued together for the dishonor of God and the destruction of men.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 513.

“We do not understand as we should the great conflict going on between invisible agencies, the controversy between loyal and disloyal angels. Over every man, good and evil angels strive. This is no make-believe conflict. It is no mimic battle in which we are engaged. We have to meet most powerful adversaries, and it rests with us to determine which shall win. We are to find our strength where the early disciples found theirs.” —*Evangelism*, p. 704.

“Could our spiritual vision be quickened, we should see souls bowed under oppression and burdened with grief, pressed as a cart beneath sheaves and ready to die in discouragement. We should see angels flying swiftly to aid these tempted ones, who are standing as on the brink of a precipice. The angels from heaven force back the hosts of evil that encom-

pass these souls, and guide them to plant their feet on the sure foundation. The battles waging between the two armies are as real as those fought by the armies of this world, and on the issue of the spiritual conflict eternal destinies depend.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 119.

SUCCESS IN COOPERATION

3. Will Christ fight this battle and overcome sin in us without our cooperation? Hebrews 12:1; Genesis 4:7.

“The battle is yours. No one can fight it for you. Others can pray for you, but the work must be wholly your own.

“God calls upon you to no longer dally with the tempter, but to cleanse yourself from all filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit, perfecting holiness in His fear. You need to work fast to remove the defects from your character.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 258.

4. “And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins.” 1 John 3:5. Does this statement contradict the previous statement? John 8:11, last part; Hebrews 4:14-16; 12:4.

“Besetting sins must be battled with and overcome. Objectionable traits of character, whether hereditary or cultivated, should be taken up separately, and compared with the great rule of righteousness; and in the light reflected from the word of God, they should be firmly resisted and overcome, through the strength of Christ. ...

“Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within;...” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 136.

“You may all engage in the spiritual warfare against besetting sins, and you may, through Christ, come off victors. But it will be no child’s play. It will be a stern warfare, involving self-denial and cross bearing.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 43.

A REAL BATTLEFIELD

5. Where does our battle against sin start? (a) Exodus 20:17; Matthew 5:28; (b) Proverbs 4:23; Romans 12:1, 2; (c) James 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 9:27.

"The mind and heart must be disciplined and brought under proper restraint in order for the character to harmonize with the wise laws that govern our being." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 202.

"Satan is constantly seeking to gain control of your bodies and spirits. But Christ has bought you, and you are His property. And now it is for you to work in union with Christ, in union with the holy angels that minister unto you. It is for you to keep the body under and bring it into subjection. Unless you do this you will certainly lose everlasting life and the crown of immortality." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 359.

"God has claims upon us to take care of the habitation. He has given us, that we may present our bodies to Him a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. Our bodies belong to Him who made them, and we are in duty bound to become intelligent in regard to the best means of preserving them from decay. If we enfeeble the body by self-gratification, by indulging the appetite, and by dressing in accordance with health-destroying fashions, in order to be in harmony with the world, we become enemies of God." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 63.

6. We may change our life style, but what about our feelings and emotions? Ezekiel 11:19; Exodus 20:25, first part.

"Be not discouraged because your heart seems hard. Every obstacle, every internal foe, only increases your need of Christ. He came to take away the heart of stone, and give you a heart of flesh. Look to Him for special grace to overcome your peculiar faults." –*The Sanctified Life*, p. 90.

"Many make a serious mistake in their religious life by keeping the attention fixed upon their feelings and thus judging of their advancement or decline. Feelings are not a safe criterion. We are not to look within for evidence of our acceptance with God. We shall find there nothing but that which will discourage us. Our only hope is in 'looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith.' There is everything in Him to inspire with hope, with faith, and with courage. He is our righteousness, our consolation and rejoicing." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 199, 200.

7. Therefore, what should we do every day? Matthew 26:41; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Corinthians 15:31, last part.

"It is the daily dying to self in the little transactions of life that makes us overcomers. We should forget self in the desire to do good to others." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 132.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- In what situations in my daily life have I had to battle with my flesh?
 - On what occasions has the free expression of my thoughts or feelings, without examining their origin, caused trouble in my life?
 - Have I experienced, even for just a day, what it means to die to self?
-

5

Sabbath, November 2, 2002

Alert Watchmen

“So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel; therefore thou shalt hear the word at My mouth, and warn them from Me.” *Ezekiel 33:7.*

OBJECTIVES

- To realize that we cannot live impulsively.
- To be aware of the vigilance with which we need to guard our senses.
- To understand the interaction among the different parts of our being—body, mind, and spirit.

AN EARNEST DUTY

- 1. Since we are called to be watchful, describe the watchman’s responsibility. Isaiah 21:11, last part, 12; Song of Solomon 5: 2.**

“Those who believe the truth must be as faithful sentinels on the watchtower, or Satan will suggest specious reasonings to them, and they will give utterance to opinions that will betray sacred, holy trusts.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 465.

“As a watchman upon the walls of Zion, constant watchfulness is necessary.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 706.

“At no time may they relax their vigilance.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 361.

2. What should we watch out for? 1 Peter 5:8; Galatians 6:1, last part.

“We have a vigilant foe, who is ever on our track, ready to take advantage of every weakness that would help to make his temptations effective. When the mind is overstrained and the body enfeebled, he presses upon the soul his fiercest temptations.” –*Gospel Workers*, p. 245.

“When harassed with temptations and evil thoughts, there is but One to whom you can flee for relief and succor. Flee to Him in your weakness. When near Him, Satan’s arrows are broken and cannot harm you. Your trials and temptations borne in God will purify and humble, but will not destroy or endanger you.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 93.

“While you pray, dear youth, that you may not be led into temptation, remember that your work does not end with the prayer. You must then answer your own prayer as far as possible by resisting temptation,...

“All who name the name of Christ need to watch and pray and guard the avenues of the soul;...

“All should guard the senses, lest Satan gain victory over them; for these are the avenues of the soul.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 378, 476, 507.

THE AVENUES OF THE SOUL

3. Which precious sense should be especially guarded? Matthew 6:22.

“Everything that can be done should be done to place ourselves and our children where we shall not see the iniquity that is practiced in the world. We should carefully guard the sight of our eyes and the hearing of our ears so that these awful things shall not enter our minds....

“Those who would have that wisdom which is from God must become fools in the sinful knowledge of this age, in order to be wise. They should shut their eyes, that they may see and learn no evil.” –*The Adventist Home*, pp. 403, 404.

4. Which other sense also is very important to guard so as to keep our soul from being hurt? Ecclesiastes 1:8, last part; Psalm 15:1, 3.

“Let all, in the fear of God and with love to their brethren, close their ears to gossip and censure.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 609.

“Music, when not abused is a great blessing,...

“Satan knows what organs to excite to animate, engross, and charm the mind so that Christ is not desired....

“The introduction of music into their [youths’] homes, instead of inciting to holiness and spirituality, have been the means of diverting their minds from the truth.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 497.

5. Which sense can be a stumbling block to our spiritual progress? Proverbs 23:1-3.

“Those who permit themselves to become slaves to a gluttonous appetite, often go still farther, and debase themselves by indulging their corrupt passions,...”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 62.

“It is sin to be intemperate in the quantity of food eaten, even if the quality is unobjectionable.... Overeating, even of the simplest food, benumbs the sensitive nerves of the brain and weakens its vitality...”

“Gratification of taste should not be consulted irrespective of physical, intellectual, or moral health.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 412, 352.

A POWERFUL RULER

6. What will indulgence in any of these areas cause? Ephesians 4:17.

“You will have to become a faithful sentinel over your eyes, ears, and all your senses if you would control your mind and prevent vain and corrupt thought from staining your soul.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 561.

“The body should be servant to the mind, and not the mind to the body.”—*Counsels on Diet and Foods*, p. 33.

7. Therefore, what is our only safeguard? 2 Corinthians 10:5; James 4:7.

“Constant war against the carnal mind must be maintained; and we must be aided by the refining influence of the grace of God, which will attract the mind upward and habituate it to meditate upon pure and holy things.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 479.

“You are bound by your baptismal vows to honor your Creator and to resolutely deny self and crucify your affections and lusts, and bring even your thoughts into obedience to the will of Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 45.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- To what extent can I trust my thoughts and emotions?
- What criteria do I use to select the things I read, watch, or listen to?
- What influence have the things I have read, listened to, or watched had upon my soul?
- Have I experienced the peace of concentrating my thoughts on heavenly things?

6

Sabbath, November 9, 2002

Indispensable Equipment

“...I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul.” 1 Peter 2:11.

OBJECTIVES

- To realize the futility of fighting with carnal weapons.
- To be aware that only a living faith in the truth and Christ’s righteousness will guarantee us the victory.
- To recognize that a deep knowledge of the Scriptures is of major importance.

WHAT A SOLDIER OF CHRIST CANNOT DO WITHOUT

- 1. What is provided to a soldier so he can fight the battle? 1 Samuel 17:38. What kind of armor does a soldier of Christ need to wear? Ephesians 6:11.**

“If we have on the heavenly armor, we shall find that the assaults of the enemy will not have power over us. Angels of God will be round about us to protect us.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1119.

“...Nothing less than the whole armor of righteousness can enable man to overcome the power of darkness and retain the victory over them.” —*Early Writings*, p. 273.

A PRECIOUS, MANY-SIDED GIFT

2. What are the parts of this armor? Ephesians 6:14-17.

3. Why is it so important to be girded with the truth? John 3:21; Hosea 2:3, first part.

“What is the shame of this nakedness and poverty? It is the shame of clothing ourselves with self-righteousness, and of separating ourselves from God,...

“There is nothing in us from which we can clothe the soul so that its nakedness shall not appear.” —*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 965.

“The word of God is plain. It is a straight chain of truth, and will prove an anchor to those who are willing to receive it,... It will save them from the terrible delusions of these perilous times.... The rejection of light and truth leaves men captives, the subjects of Satan’s deception. The greater the light they reject, the greater will be the power of deception and darkness that will come upon them.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 345.

4. What does the breastplate of righteousness protect us against? Psalm 141:4; Isaiah 64:6, first part.

“The merits of Jesus blot out transgressions, and clothe us with the robe of righteousness woven in the loom of heaven.” —*Evangelism*, p. 186.

“Linked to the Infinite One, man is made partaker of the divine nature. Upon him the shafts of evil have no effect; for he is clothed with

the panoply of Christ's righteousness."—*Counsels to Parents, Teachers and Students*, pp. 51, 52.

"By beholding Christ, you will become changed, until you will hate your former pride, your former vanity and self-esteem, your self-righteousness and unbelief."—*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 388.

5. What does it mean to have one's feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace? Isaiah 52:7.

"Let those who hold the truth in righteousness arise and go forth, shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace, to proclaim the truth to those who know it not. Let them make straight paths for their feet, lest the lame be turned out of the way."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 211, 212.

"Truth must be apprehended by the intellect, received into the heart, and its principles incorporated into the character; and then there must be a constant effort to win others to accept it..."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 272.

6. Against what does the shield, a movable part of the armor, protect us? Ephesians 6:16; 2 Peter 2:9, first part.

"When the servants of Christ take the shield of faith for their defense, and the sword of the Spirit for war, there is danger in the enemy's camp..."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 407.

"It is faith that connects us with heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. In Christ, God has provided means for subduing every sinful trait, and resisting every temptation, however strong."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 429.

7. What is significant about the helmet of salvation? Job 11:18, first part.

"Our hope is to be constantly strengthened by the knowledge that Christ is our righteousness."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 742.

"We must not think that our own merits will save us. Christ is our only hope of salvation..."

“In Him is our hope, our justification, our righteousness.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 431.

8. What is the sword of the Spirit, and why is it so indispensable in the Christian’s armor? Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 3: 16, 17.

“The sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, is the only sword which I can safely use.” —*The Adventist Home*, p. 180.

“In the truths of His word, God has given to men a revelation of Himself, and to all who accept them they are a shield against the deceptions of Satan.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 465.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- To what extent do I see myself as a soldier?
- What heavenly principles rule my life?
- How much time do I devote each day to studying the holy Scriptures?
- How sharp is my spiritual sword? In what areas of my life do I seek for spiritual discernment?

“Three times a day Daniel offered his petitions to God. He knew that One mighty in counsel was the source of wisdom and power. The truth as it is in Jesus—the sword of the Spirit, which cuts both ways—was his weapon of warfare. In word, in spirit, in principle, the men who have made God their trust are an example to the youth connected with them. These faithful servants of God are to link up with young men, drawing them with the cords of love because they are themselves drawn to them by the cords of Christ’s love.” —*Review and Herald*, March 20, 1900.

An Indispensable Requirement

“Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.” Matthew 6:10.

- To realize that what our eyes see is temporal, while the invisible world surrounding us is real and eternal.
- To be motivated to long for the heavenly kingdom.
- To gain courage to walk by faith, not by sight.

AN IMPORTANT DEFINITION

1. What is this faith for which we are fighting? Hebrews 11:1.

“Faith rests upon evidence, not demonstration. The Lord requires us to obey the voice of duty, when there are other voices all around us urging us to pursue an opposite course. It requires earnest attention from us to distinguish the voice which speaks from God....

“This word is heard in warnings, in counsels, in reproof. It is the Lord’s message of light to His people.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 28.

2. How powerful is faith? Luke 17:6.

A HOPE OF GREAT MAGNITUDE

3. What kind of kingdom are we representing? John 18:36, first part; Romans 14:17; Daniel 7:27, last part.

“This kingdom is not, as Christ’s hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His

love, His grace, His righteousness.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 8.

4. How is this unseen kingdom of love, grace and righteousness made evident? Romans 1:20; Hebrews 1:2, first part; Psalm 19:7; Luke 8:39, first part.

“Nature and revelation alike testify of God’s love.... Look at the wonderful and beautiful things of nature.... The sunshine and the rain, that gladden and refresh the earth, the hills and seas and plains, all speak to us of the Creator’s love....

“God is love’ is written upon every opening bud, upon every spire of springing grass.” —*Steps to Christ*, pp. 9, 10.

“We are to study the revelation that Christ, the Great Teacher, has given of the character of God,...” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 92.

“The great God has a law by which to govern His kingdom,...” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 331.

“The moral law ... is unchangeable, unalterable, infinite, and eternal.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 239, 240.

“God is love, and His law is love. Its two great principles are love to God and love to man.... Such a law, being an expression of the mind and will of God, must be as enduring as its Author.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 467.

“Far more than we do, we need to speak of the precious chapters in our experience. After a special outpouring of the Holy Spirit, our joy in the Lord and our efficiency in His service would be greatly increased by recounting His goodness and His wonderful works in behalf of His children.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 299, 300.

5. Since we have so many evidences of the existence of this spiritual kingdom, how should we live? 2 Corinthians 5:7; Romans 8:1, last part; Colossians 3:2; Hebrews 11:27, last part.

“Faith in Christ as the world’s Redeemer calls for acknowledgment of the enlightened intellect controlled by a heart that can discern and appreciate the heavenly treasure.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 112.

“Faith, living faith, always bears upward to God and glory;...” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 144.

THE REQUIRED TRANSFORMATION

6. What experience does one make before he follows Christ with joy? John 3:3.

“The change of heart by which we become children of God is in the Bible spoken of as birth.... Those who are just converted to Christ are, ‘as new-born babes,’ to ‘grow up’ to the stature of men and women in Christ Jesus. 1 Peter 2:2; Ephesians 4:15. Or like the good seed sown in the field, they are to grow up and bring forth fruit.” –*Steps to Christ*, p. 67.

7. What can be done if a person has not yet made this experience? Matthew 7:7, first part; 21:22; 1 John 5:14, last part.

“...God delights to give. He is full of compassion, and He longs to grant the requests of those who come unto Him in faith.” –*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 141.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- What would I like to accomplish in my personal life before Jesus comes?
- In my heart, do I long for the kingdom of heaven, or does it sound more like a fairy tale?
- What aspects of my life show that I believe I am a pilgrim and stranger on this earth?

“Everyone may place his will on the side of the will of God, may choose to obey Him, and by thus linking himself with divine agencies, he may stand where nothing can force him to do evil. In every youth, every child, lies the power, by the help of God, to form a character of integrity and to live a life of usefulness.” –*Education*, p. 289.

A New Birth; a New Life

*“For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God.”
Colossians 3:3.*

- To recognize the changes brought about by the new birth.
- To focus our attention on the main goal.
- To remember that we are meant to be the salt and light of the world.

THE EGO SWALLOWED UP

1. What will the life of a newborn person be like? Galatians 2:20; 2 Corinthians 5:15.

“God has given to every man his work, and we are to acknowledge the wisdom of His plan for us by a hearty cooperation with Him. It is in a life of service only that true happiness is found. He who lives a useless, selfish life is miserable. He is dissatisfied with himself and with every one else.”
—*Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1160.

“Only one lease of life is granted us; and the inquiry with everyone should be, How can I invest my life so that it will yield the greatest profit? How can I do most for the glory of God and the benefit of my fellow men? For life is valuable only as it is used for the attainment of these objects.”
—*Temperance*, p. 137.

2. What will he talk about? Philippians 4:8; 1 Corinthians 14:26.

“The pure influence of truth will elevate the whole man.... His conversation will be truthful, chaste, and of so elevating a character that unbelievers cannot take advantage of it, or say evil of him justly,...

“We should be chaste, modest, and elevated in conversation, and blameless in life. A trifling, joking, reckless spirit should be rebuked. It

is no evidence of the grace of God upon the heart for persons to talk and pray with talent in meeting, and then give up to a rough, careless manner of talking and acting when out of meeting. Such are miserable representatives of our faith; they are a reproach to the cause of God.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 415, 416, 413.

BUILDING A TEMPLE

3. What important principle will he keep? 3 John 2; Exodus 15:26. Why? 1 Corinthians 6:19.

“Health is a blessing of which few appreciate the value; yet upon it the efficiency of our mental and physical powers largely depends. Our impulses and passions have their seat in the body, and it must be kept in the best condition physically and under the most spiritual influences in order that our talents may be put to the highest use.” —*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 346.

4. What will this “new being” look like? 1 Peter 3:3, 4.

“For Christ’s sake, whose witnesses we are, we should seek to make the best of our appearance. In the tabernacle service, God specified every detail concerning the garments of those who ministered before Him. Thus we are taught that He has a preference in regard to the dress of those who serve Him.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 96.

“There will be no place for outward adornment in the sanctified heart; but there will be an earnest, anxious seeking for the inward adorning, the Christian graces--the fruits of the Spirit of God....

“I saw that the outside appearance is an index to the heart.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 162, 136.

ACHIEVING AN EARTHLY GOAL

5. What will be his chief goal on earth? Proverbs 11:30; Matthew 28:19, 20.

“The saving of human souls is an interest infinitely above any other line of work in our world. Whoever is brought under the influences of the truth, and through faith is made partaker of Christ’s love, is by that very fact appointed of God to save others.” —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 293.

6. What will characterize his life in all aspects? 1 Corinthians 9:25; Proverbs 23:1-5.

“God requires that His people shall be temperate in all things. Unless they practice temperance, they will not, cannot, be sanctified through the truth. Their very thoughts and minds become depraved.” —*Temperance*, p. 252.

“True temperance teaches us to abstain entirely from that which is injurious, and to use healthful and nutritious articles judiciously.” —*Review and Herald*, September 23, 1884.

“It is our duty to take ourselves in hand, and strive to bring our minds, our wills, and our tastes into conformity with the requirements of our Creator. The grace of God alone can enable us to do this:...

“Remember that you are daily weaving for yourself a web of habits. If these habits are according to the Bible rule, you are going every day in steps heavenward, growing in grace and the knowledge of the truth;...” —*Temperance*, pp. 149, 188.

“The great end for which Christ endured that long fast in the wilderness was to teach us the necessity of self-denial and temperance. This work should commence at our tables and should be strictly carried out in all the concerns of life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 488.

“Intemperance in eating, and in drinking, and the desire for wealth have led to this intemperance in labor. If the appetite is controlled, and that food only which is healthful be taken, there will be so great a saving of expense, that men and women will not be compelled to labor beyond their strength, and thus violate the laws of health.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 2, p. 429.

7. Which of God’s purposes will then be fulfilled? Matthew 5:13, 14.

“We are to be in the world as a corrective influence, as salt that retains its savor. Among an unholy, impure, idolatrous generation, we are

to be pure and holy, showing that the grace of Christ has power to restore in man the divine likeness. We are to exert a saving influence upon the world.” —*Counsels on Health*, p. 592.

“Those only who faithfully accept and appreciate the light God has given us, and who take a high, noble stand in self-denial and self-sacrifice, will be channels of light to the world.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 534.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- Have I experienced the new birth?
 - In what way does my life harmonize with God’s expectations?
 - Do I have a great longing to lead souls to Christ and His kingdom? Is this a main goal in my life?
 - In what way am I a positive influence in my environment?
-

9

Sabbath, November 30, 2002

A Victorious Fighter

“Who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken,...” Romans 4:18.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that we are justified only by faith.
- To see that the life of Abraham (the father of faith) had its ups and downs, just as do ours.
- To be encouraged and resolve never to give up.
- To grasp that the greater the sacrifice required, the greater the blessing that will be received.

CONSTANT TRIALS

- 1. Whom does the Bible call the father of faith, and why?
Isaiah 51:1, 2; Genesis 15:6.**

“Abraham was called the father of the faithful. Among the things that made him a remarkable example of godliness was the strict regard that in his home he paid to the commands of God. He cultivated home religion.” —*Child Guidance*, p. 18.

“The covenant of grace was first made with man in Eden, when after the Fall there was given a divine promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent’s head....

“This same covenant was renewed to Abraham in the promise, ‘In thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed.’ Genesis 22:18. This promise pointed to Christ. So Abraham understood it (see Galatians 3:8, 16), and he trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

2. What is recorded as his first trial of faith? Genesis 12:1.

“It was no light test that was thus brought upon Abraham, no small sacrifice that was required of him. There were strong ties to bind him to his country, his kindred, and his home. But he did not hesitate to obey the call.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 126.

“Abraham’s unquestioning obedience was one of the most striking instances of faith and reliance upon God to be found in the Sacred Record. With only the naked promise that his descendants should possess Canaan, without the least outward evidence, he followed on where God should lead, fully and sincerely complying with the conditions on his part, and confident that the Lord would faithfully perform His word.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 524.

3. On what other occasion was he strong in faith? What was more important to him than his possessions? Genesis 13: 9, 8, last part.

“Abraham was Lot’s senior in years, and his superior in relation, in wealth, and in position; yet he was the first to propose plans for preserving peace. Although the whole land had been given him by God Himself, he courteously waived this right....

“Here the noble, unselfish spirit of Abraham was displayed....

“‘Let there be no strife between me and thee,’ said Abraham, ‘for we be brethren,’ not only by natural relationship, but as worshipers of the

true God. The children of God the world over are one family, and the same spirit of love and conciliation should govern them.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 132.

THE LORD’S FAITHFULNESS

4. Was Abraham’s trust in God always perfect? Genesis 12: 18, 19; 16:3, 4.

“During his stay in Egypt, Abraham gave evidence that he was not free from human weakness and imperfection. In concealing the fact that Sarah was his wife, he betrayed a distrust of the divine care, a lack of that lofty faith and courage so often and nobly exemplified in his life....

“Abraham had accepted without question the promise of a son, but he did not wait for God to fulfill His word in His own time and way. A delay was permitted, to test his faith in the power of God; but he failed to endure the trial....

“God had called Abraham to be the father of the faithful, and his life was to stand as an example of faith to succeeding generations. But his faith had not been perfect.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*. pp. 130, 145, 147.

5. What did he have to learn by waiting such a long time for the promise to be fulfilled? James 1:3, 4.

“The promises are not yea and nay, but if man complies with the conditions, they are, in Christ, ‘yea, and in Him Amen,...’

“Patience, faith, and love for duty are the lessons we must learn.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 631, 70.

THE CLIMAX OF A LIFE OF FAITH

6. What was the greatest trial Abraham had to pass through, and what was his great reward? Genesis 22:2; John 8:56.

“In the obedience of faith, Abraham had forsaken his native country—... had wandered as a stranger in the land of his inheritance. He had waited long for the birth of the promised heir. At the command of God he

had sent away his son Ishmael. And now, when the son so long desired was entering upon manhood,... a trial greater than all others was before him....

“The loss of such a son by accident or disease would have been heart rending to the fond father; it would have bowed down his whitened head with grief; but he was commanded to shed the blood of that son with his own hand. It seemed to him a fearful impossibility.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 148.

“Abraham greatly desired to see the promised Saviour. He offered up the most earnest prayer that before his death he might behold the Messiah. And He saw Christ.... He was given a view of the divine sacrifice for sin. Of this sacrifice he had an illustration in his own experience....

“This terrible ordeal was imposed upon Abraham that he might see the day of Christ, and realize the great love of God for the world, so great that to raise it from its degradation, He gave His only-begotten Son to a most shameful death....

“Through his own suffering, Abraham was enabled to behold the Saviour’s mission of sacrifice.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 468, 469.

- 7. What divine principles would normally appear to be violated by such a command, which, humanly speaking, would justify Abraham in hesitating to obey? Exodus 20:13; Psalm 106:38.**

“Satan was at hand to suggest that he must be deceived, for the divine law commands, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and God would not require what He had once forbidden....

“During that three days’ journey he had sufficient time to reason, and to doubt God, if he was disposed to doubt. He might have reasoned that the slaying of his son would cause him to be looked upon as a murderer, a second Cain; that it would cause his teaching to be rejected and despised; and thus destroy his power to do good to his fellow men. He might have pleaded that age should excuse him from obedience. But the patriarch did not take refuge in any of these excuses. Abraham was human; his passions and attachments were like ours; but he did not stop to question how the promise could be fulfilled if Isaac should be slain. He did not stay to reason with his aching heart.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 148, 153.

- 8. What was Abraham’s amazing attitude and perfect hope in this test that revealed that his faith was as pure as gold? Job 1:21, last part; Acts 21:14, last part; John 6:40.**

"This son had been unexpectedly given; and had not He who bestowed the precious gift a right to recall His own?" –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 151.

"Abraham did not disbelieve God and hesitate,...

"He staggered not at the promise of God but believed that God, who had in His providence given Sarah a son in her old age, and who had required him to take that son's life, could also give life again and bring up Isaac from the dead." –*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 80, 81.

"God has always tried His people in the furnace of affliction. It is in the heat of the furnace that the dross is separated from the true gold of the Christian character. Jesus watches the test; He knows what is needed to purify the precious metal, that it may reflect the radiance of His love. It is by close, testing trials that God disciplines His servants" –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- Can I recognize when my faith is being tested?
- Looking back at my life of faith, what stages can I see?
- What blessings have I received from going through trials of faith?
- What does the Lord ask me to sacrifice that I find difficult to give up?

"Yield not to the power of the tempter. He will come as a strong man armed, but give him no advantage. Nerve yourselves for duty, and dispute every inch of ground. Instead of retreating, advance; instead of becoming weak and nerveless, brace yourselves for the conflict. God calls on you to engage with all your powers against sin in every form. Put on the whole armor of God, and keep your eye steadily fixed on the Captain of your salvation; for there is danger ahead. Follow no false colors, but watch the banner of our holy faith, and be found where that waves, even though it be in the thickest of the fight. Soon the warfare will be over and the victory won, and if you are faithful you will come off more than conquerors through Him that has loved you. The glorious prize, the eternal weight of glory, will then be yours." –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 309.

Demands on Faith and by Faith

“But without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently see Him.” Hebrews 11:6.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand that faith asks for that which is impossible and receives it if it is according to God’s will.
- To realize why the demands of faith may appear foolish to the wise people of this world.
- To gain courage to press forward in faith, no matter what it costs us.

DEMANDS MADE UPON FAITH

1. **What may we ask God, based on faith? Matthew 17:20; Luke 1:37.**

“Natural impossibilities cannot prevent the work of the Omnipotent One....

“With Him there can be no such thing as failure, loss, impossibility, or defeat; we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.” *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 535, 490.

“His resources are limitless, and apparent impossibilities will make the victory all the greater.” *—Prophets and Kings*, p. 202.

2. **Consider some examples from the Scriptures of people who demonstrated such faith. 1 Samuel 1:2, last part, 11, 20; Luke 8:43, 44.**

“His wife, Hannah, was a woman of fervent piety. Gentle and unassuming, her character was marked with deep earnestness and a lofty faith....

“Hannah’s prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 569, 570.

“The wondering crowd that pressed close about Christ realized no accession of vital power. But when the suffering woman put forth her hand to touch Him, believing that she would be made whole, she felt the healing virtue. So in spiritual things. To talk of religion in a casual way, to pray without soul hunger and living faith, avails nothing. A nominal faith in Christ, which accepts Him merely as the Saviour of the world, can never bring healing to the soul.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

DEMANDS AND PROMISES MADE BY FAITH

3. In what sense are the demands and promises of faith not always according to human logic? 1 Kings 17:3, 4; 2 Kings 5: 14; Joshua 6:20.

“Naaman had expected to see some wonderful manifestation of power from heaven.... When told to wash in the Jordan, his pride was touched,...

“The faith of Naaman was being tested, while pride struggled for the mastery. But faith conquered, and the haughty Syrian yielded his pride of heart and bowed submission to the revealed will of Jehovah.” –*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 248, 249.

“By faith the walls of Jericho fell down.’ Hebrews 11:30.... They might have reasoned: ‘What unmeaning movements are these, and how ridiculous the performance of marching daily around the walls of the city, blowing trumpets of rams’ horns. This can have no effect upon those towering fortifications.’ But the very plan of continuing this ceremony through so long a time prior to the final overthrow of the walls afforded opportunity for the development of faith among the Israelites. It was to be impressed upon their minds that their strength was not in the wisdom of man, nor in his might, but only in the God of their salvation. They were thus to become accustomed to relying wholly upon their divine Leader.” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 493.

4. How generously does God reward humility and faith? 1 Kings 17:16; Job 42:10.

“The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith

in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities. But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him....

“No greater test of faith than this could have been required....

“From the depths of discouragement and despondency Job rose to the heights of implicit trust in the mercy and the saving power of God....

“When Job caught a glimpse of his Creator, he abhorred himself and repented in dust and ashes. Then the Lord was able to bless him abundantly and to make his last years the best of his life.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 130, 163, 164.

5. What are some conditions for the fulfillment of the promise to those who believe? Hebrews 10:36; 1 Peter 1:22.

“Severe trial endured by the grace of God develops patience, vigilance, fortitude, and a deep and abiding trust in God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 468.

“God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength for others.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

“Nothing less than perfect obedience can meet the standard of God’s requirement.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 180.

6. What are patience and obedience the result of? Proverbs 22:4.

“It is painful to learn lessons of humility, yet nothing is more beneficial in the end. The pain attendant upon learning lessons of humility is in consequence of our being elated by a false estimate of ourselves, so that we are unable to see our great need....

“Humility is a hard lesson for fallen man to learn. There is something in the human heart which rises in opposition to revealed truth on subjects connected with God and sinners, the transgression of the divine law, and pardon through Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 378, 588.

“Advancement in Christian experience is characterized by increasing humility, as the result of increasing knowledge.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 49.

A GLORIOUS REVELATION

7. How will our humble obedience to the “illogical” requirements of faith benefit us and also the unbelieving world? Daniel 3:25.

“These three Hebrews possessed genuine sanctification....

“By their steadfast integrity they showed forth the praises of Him who had called them out of darkness into His marvelous light. In their wonderful deliverance were displayed, before that vast assembly, the power and majesty of God.” –*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 39, 40.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- What great things have I requested from my heavenly Father?
- What requests have been answered?
- Can I see big tests of faith in small things in my daily life?
- Do I ever get tired of waiting for God to fulfill His promises?

“Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord’s promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us.... Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith....” Romans 1:5.

- To understand that, while doctrine is very important, salvation is only by faith.
- To realize that faith is something dynamic, not static.
- To cooperate in examining our collective condition in the light of the message to the church of Laodicea in regard to faith.

1. What is Jesus' concern for every human being for whom He gave His life? Luke 8:25, first part; 18:8, last part.

“Faith and works go together, believing and doing are blended....

“Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit. Where faith is, good works appear. The sick are visited, the poor are cared for, the fatherless and the widows are not neglected, the naked are clothed, the destitute are fed. Christ went about doing good, and when men are united with Him, they love the children of God, and meekness and truth guide their footsteps.”—*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, pp. 373, 398.

“Faith and works are two oars which we must use equally if we would press our way up the stream against the current of unbelief.... The Christian is a man of thought and practice. His faith fixes its roots firmly

in Christ. By faith and good works he keeps his spirituality strong and healthy, and his spiritual strength increases as he strives to work the works of God.” –*Welfare Ministry*, p. 316.

EXAMPLES OF LIVING FAITH

- 3. Give some examples from the Scriptures of people who demonstrated that they had faith in the Almighty God of love, independent of the consequences.**

- 4. Give some examples of individuals who exercised great faith, even though they were not official members of God’s church.**

- 5. What lack did the Lord foresee in His people at the end of time? What do we need to plead for and do? Revelation 3: 18; Luke 17:5; 1 Timothy 6:12, first part.**

“The Laodicean message applies to the people of God who profess to believe present truth.... They profess to love the truth, yet are deficient in Christian fervor and devotion. They dare not give up wholly and run the risk of the unbeliever, yet they are unwilling to die to self and follow out closely the principles of their faith....

“Faith and love are the true riches, the pure gold which the True Witness counsels the lukewarm to buy....

“True grace, which is of inestimable value, and which will endure the test of trial and adversity, is only obtained through faith and humble, prayerful obedience.... The dead, heartless performance of duty does not make us Christians. We must get out of a lukewarm condition and experience a true conversion, or we shall fail of heaven.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 87, 88, 89.

“Our faith must be increased, and we must become more like Christ in conduct and disposition in order to endure, and successfully resist, the temptations of Satan.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 308.

WHAT REALLY COUNTS

6. Does the fight of faith include entering into controversy over doctrine? Acts 24:12; 1 Timothy 1:4.

“None should be forward to enter into controversy, but they should tell the simple story of the love of Jesus.” —*Evangelism*, p. 356.

“We are not called upon to enter into controversy with those who hold false theories. Controversy is unprofitable. Christ never entered into it....

“Have naught to do with controversy and dissension and strife, which bring darkness and discouragement to your soul. Truth is clear, pure, savory....” —*Life Sketches*, pp. 93, 433.

7. What is required for salvation? Matthew 18:3.

“True conversion is a radical change. The very drift of the mind and bent of the heart should be turned and life become new again in Christ.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 17.

“With every truly converted soul the relation to God and to eternal things will be the great topic of life.” —*The Great Controversy*, p. 463.

“We must die to self and cherish humble, childlike faith.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 75.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- Do I enter into controversy or confrontation concerning doctrine with other groups or individuals?
 - Is my faith in my Redeemer's love a magnet that attracts people to Him?
 - What are the different roles that doctrine, faith, and grace play in my life?
-

A Necessary Balance

“And they continued stedfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship,...” Acts 2:42.

OBJECTIVES

- To understand the importance of pure doctrine.
- To realize the danger of compromising the doctrine.
- To see that, in divine matters, it is not the majority that is always right.

THE VALUE OF DOCTRINE

1. **It is true that we are saved by faith; nevertheless what must the messengers of Christ be attentive to? 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 13:9, first part.**

“There are a thousand temptations in disguise prepared for those who have the light of truth; and the only safety for any of us is in receiving no new doctrine, no new interpretation of the Scriptures, without first submitting it to brethren of experience.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 293.

2. **What should be the foundation of our faith? Luke 24:27; Psalm 93:5; 1 Corinthians 3:11.**

“The word of God is our only foundation. Every semblance of error will come upon us. Some of these errors will be very specious and attractive, but if received, they would remove the pillars of the foundation that Christ has established....” —*Medical Ministry*, p. 87.

“We shall meet with false doctrines of every kind, and unless we are acquainted with what Christ has said, and are following His instruction, we shall be led astray.” —*Evangelism*, p. 595.

3. Virtually all Christians assert that their faith is based on belief in Christ. But what is the principle behind the ecumenical movement? Isaiah 4:1; Song of Solomon 6:8, 9, first part.

“Christ calls for unity. But He does not call for us to unify on wrong practices. The God of heaven draws a sharp contrast between pure, elevating, ennobling truth and false, misleading doctrines.... I urge our brethren to unify upon a true, scriptural basis.”—*Selected Messages*, vol. 1, p. 175.

“The wide diversity of belief in the Protestant churches is regarded by many as decisive proof that no effort to secure a forced uniformity can ever be made. But there has been for years, in churches of the Protestant faith, a strong and growing sentiment in favor of a union based upon common points of doctrine. To secure such a union, the discussion of subjects upon which all were not agreed—however important they might be from a Bible standpoint—must necessarily be waived.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 444.

4. Where does God’s Spirit guide His people? Acts 9:17; 2:47.

“Some have advanced the thought that, as we near the close of time, every child of God will act independently of any religious organization. But I have been instructed by the Lord that in this work there is no such thing as every man’s being independent.... In order that the Lord’s work may advance healthfully and solidly, His people must draw together.

“The spasmodic, fitful movements of some who claim to be Christians are well represented by the work of strong but untrained horses. When one pulls forward, another pulls back, and at the voice of their master one plunges ahead and the other stands immovable. If men will not move in concert in the great and grand work for this time, there will be confusion. It is not a good sign when men refuse to unite with their brethren and prefer to act alone.... If men wear the yoke of Christ, they can not pull apart; they will draw with Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 258.

“True, refined independence never disdains to seek counsel of the experienced and of the wise, and it treats the counsel of others with respect.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 240.

- 5. What warning in the Scriptures must be carefully heeded?
2 Peter 2:1, 2.**
- 6. What will actually occur in the latter days? 1 John 2:18, 19;
Isaiah 2:2, 3.**

“As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel’s message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition.... They become the most bitter enemies of their former brethren....

“Notwithstanding the spiritual darkness and alienation from God that exist in the churches which constitute Babylon, the great body of Christ’s true followers are still to be found in their communion. There are many of these who have never seen the special truths for this time. Not a few are dissatisfied with their present condition and are longing for clearer light....

“Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6-12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that ‘believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness’ (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: ‘Come out of her, My people’ (Revelation 18:4).” —*The Great Controversy*, pp. 608, 390.

OVERCOMERS BY FAITH

- 7. How large a multitude will remain faithful in God’s church?
Isaiah 10:19; 17:6.**

“In comparison with the millions of the world, God’s people will be, as they have ever been, a little flock; but if they stand for the truth as revealed in His word, God will be their refuge.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 590.

“God will move upon men in humble positions to declare the message of present truth.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 26.

8. What will characterize these people, and what will be their connecting point? Zephaniah 3:12, 13; Ephesians 4:3-6, 13.

“The oneness and unity of God’s truth-believing remnant people carries powerful conviction to the world that they have the truth, and are the peculiar, chosen people of God. This oneness and unity disconcerts the enemy, and he is determined that it shall not exist. The present truth, believed in the heart and exemplified in the life, makes God’s people one, and gives them a powerful influence.” –*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 327.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- What is my faith based on?
 - What convicting arguments prove that I know what I believe and why?
 - Do I think that we can unite with other denominations for the sake of love, since we all believe more or less the same and have accepted Christ as our personal Saviour?
 - Although the church does not save me, do I understand that it was God who led me to His church? Do I value this miracle and privilege?
-

*Please read the Missionary Report
from the Philippines
on page 52*

13

Sabbath, December 28, 2002

End of the Battle

“...And His servants shall serve Him; And they shall see His face; and His name shall be in their foreheads.” Revelation 22:3, 4.

OBJECTIVES

- Understand that the battle of faith will continue until the end of time.
- To remain courageous, even when we become weak and fall.
- To be motivated to prepare for the outpouring of the latter rain.

THE IMPORTANCE OF PERSEVERANCE

- 1. How long will the battle of faith continue? Mark 13:13, last part; Philippians 3:12.**

“It is the steady purpose, the untiring effort, that will gain the victory at last. It is he who endureth to the end that shall be saved. It is they who patiently continue in well-doing that shall have eternal life and the immortal reward.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 101, 102.

“The struggle for conquest over self, for holiness and heaven, is a lifelong struggle. Without continual effort and constant activity there can be no advancement in the divine life, no attainment of the victor’s crown.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 312.

- 2. What may happen to one who fights the battle? Proverbs 24:16, first part.**

3. What do we need to do to be able to continue? Philippians 3:13, 14.

THE REWARD

4. What will be the result if we persevere? Matthew 3:11.

“God desires to refresh His people by the gift of the Holy Spirit, baptizing them anew in His love.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 40.

5. Why is it so important to be baptized with the Spirit? Galatians 5:22,23; John 17:26, last part.

“The fruit we bear is the only test of the character of the tree before the world. This is the proof of our discipleship. If our works are of such a character that as branches of the living Vine we bear rich clusters of precious fruit, then we wear before the world God’s own badge as His sons and daughters. We are living epistles, known and read of all men.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 348.

“Love is power.... Whatsoever is done out of pure love, be it ever so little or contemptible in the sight of men, is wholly fruitful;...

“Love cannot live without action, and every act increases, strengthens, and extends it. Love will gain the victory when argument and authority are powerless.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 135.

6. Why is it so important to have the love of God and Christ in us? John 17:21.

“When Christ abides in the heart, the whole nature is transformed. Christ’s Spirit, His love, softens the heart, subdues the soul, and raises the thoughts and desires toward God and heaven.” —*Steps to Christ*, p. 73.

“Harmony and union existing among men of varied dispositions is the strongest witness that can be borne that God has sent His Son into the world to save sinners. It is our privilege to bear this witness.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 242, 243.

FAREWELL

7. What two great companions in our Christian life will vanish when we enter the New Jerusalem, and which one will dwell in us for all eternity? 1 Corinthians 13:13.

FOR PERSONAL MEDITATION

- Have I given up the fight, or do I persevere?
 - Do I realize that while Jesus is in the sanctuary there is still grace and that He wants me to stand up and fight at His side?
 - Do I understand that the weaker I feel, the more His grace can be given to me?
 - Do I keep on trying to love others, or do I plead for the indwelling of the Spirit and the heavenly gift of love?
 - “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Romans 7:25. What experiences have I passed through in which I was ready to give up and the Lord lifted me up?
-

Missionary Report from the Philippines

To be read on Sabbath, December 28, 2002

**The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered Sabbath, January 4, 2003**

The Philippine Republic is an independent nation on an archipelago made up of more than 7,125 tropical islands located about 800 kilometers off the coast of Southeast Asia. The islands have a combined area comparable to that of Italy, 66 percent of which is encompassed by the two largest islands—Luzon and Mindanao. The Philippines were named in 1543 for the crown prince of Spain (the future Philip II). Independence was achieved in 1946, after almost four centuries of Spanish and then American colonial rule.

Most Filipinos are an ethnic mix of Malay, divided by language and culture into numerous ethnic subgroups to which European and Chinese racial elements have been added. More than 85 indigenous dialects are spoken in the country. Tagalog is the national language, and English is the official language. Eighty-three percent of the population is Roman Catholic, and 10 percent adhere to other Christian denominations. There are approximately 75 million inhabitants. Manila is the largest city. There are around 250,000 Adventists.

In the 1960s, the message of the Reformation reached the Philippines. A young man from Chile by the name of Raul Escobar along with Brother Carlos Kozel came to pioneer the work. Neither one of them spoke English. They hired a translator from Spanish to English and almost converted the translator. Brother Augusto Pizarro and his wife also came and helped with the work. They traveled in Mindanao and in the Visayan Island, including visiting Seventh-day Adventists. Only eternity will reveal how all these missionaries overcame difficulties after leaving the comfort of their homes and families to bring the light of truth to the Philippines.

I also want to mention dear Brother and Sister Henry and Anita Andrade. In 1968, they were sent by Brother Escobar to visit Legaspi City, around 500 kilometers from Manila. At that time, my family attended a Seventh-day Adventist Church which had about 300 members. My father was the church elder. On that Sabbath, the

pastor warned all the members not to open their doors or invite the missionaries from the Reform Movement to their homes. He called the Reformers agents of Satan. In fact, the pastor told the church members that the Reformers were in the church that Sabbath morning. As a young boy, I was shocked by what the minister said, for I was sitting next to two young ladies who had long hair and long dresses—very simple-looking sisters.

After the service, the minister shook the hands of all the members but not of these two sisters. We all went home; and as our custom was every Sabbath, we prepared delicious fried chicken as a special food for the Sabbath day for Adventists. I was not at peace that afternoon, because I was thinking about the two ladies. I asked myself if they were really agents of Satan; by chance, they appeared in front of our house. They were hungry and were carrying two heavy bags. I called my father, and we invited them for lunch. They refused to eat our food, telling us that they were vegetarians. They also told us that real Adventists must not cook their food on Sabbath. Later on, I discovered that the heavy bags they were carrying contained the testimonies of Sister Ellen G. White.

That Sabbath afternoon was the beginning of the conversion of our family to the Reformation. My father, Brother Juan Barnedo, became a minister in 1972 and helped organize the work. Before he died in 1991, he told me to continue helping the canvassing work. His dream was to have a missionary school in the Philippines and invite young people from Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, and Vietnam to study in this school and then return to their own country and spread the truth.

The president of the Philippine Union, Brother Victoriano Alima, asked me to write this report. He is also a teacher for the Education Department of the Philippine Union and in favor of using the money that is gathered for the Special Sabbath School Offering next week to build a missionary school in the Philippines, as well as to have enough health books and spiritual books for our book evangelists.

As we hopefully wait for your generous help, we thank you with all our heart for the sacrifice that you can give and petition God to bless and recompense you abundantly for your generosity.

Right now we have more than 1,000 members in the Philippines, including approximately 50 active canvassers. Part of the money from the special offering will be used to prepare health books, vegetarian recipes, and children's books. We are also planning to build a small health sanitarium to reach the people and remove their prejudice.

We pray that you will help us realize our dream for the

advancement of the work of the Reformation. We would like to thank you in advance for your offerings.

“Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen.” Ephesians 6:24.

*—Joel Barnedo, Luzon Mission Field Leader,
General Conference Committee Member,
and Book Evangelism Department Leader
for English-speaking Countries*

