



The Sabbath Watchman

March-April 2013

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Ashes

When something is thoroughly burned, all that remains are ashes. In the Scriptures, they are associated with sacrificial offerings, repentance, mourning, fasting, and cleansing ceremonies. Even now ashes are one of the main ingredients in soap (fat being the other). Peter says that the fate of the unrepentant is like that of "the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah," which were turned into ashes. 2 Peter 2:6.

Even the wealthy patriarchs Abraham and Job referred to themselves as but "dust and ashes." In other words, as nothing! It is not what we have or do not have that defines us, rather what we do with what we have. Do our possessions possess us, or do we manage them for God's glory? Are we stewards of what we have, or are we slaves of that which we have and/or want? These questions boil life down to one concept—personal responsibility, or stewardship.

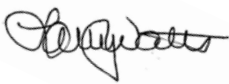
As ashes are all that remains after a fire burns out, so at the end of time the remnant or residue of the seed of the woman will see themselves as nothing. Taking what we have and dedicating it unreservedly to God is the only way we can be ready for Him to give us more.

Furthermore, when all the wealth, wisdom, and wants here of this world are seen as ashes—of no value outside of God's plans—then we will be ready to inherit heaven. Then Babylon will occupy its proper position in our hearts and minds—fallen and ready to become ashes. Revelation 18:2.

In this issue, the themes of justice and freedom remind us that privilege and blessings are two-edged swords. With globalism have come commercialism and insatiable desire; everyone can see what others have, and covetousness abounds. "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out." 1 Timothy 6:6, 7.

So, our thinking needs to be permanently changed—our minds' eyes lifted high above our everyday surroundings to the eternal world. To walk in that place, it must be a habit—a principle—now to put God's blessings to use in His service. Be ready. Do it.

In His service,



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The Sabbath Watchman

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Beacon of hope, faith, and truth in a confused world.

We believe:

- The all-wise, loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ; He is its Owner and Sustainer.
- He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh.
- The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth, convicts of sin, guides into truth, and, when abiding in man, overcomes all unrighteousness.
- The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine; the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform.
- His people, in harmony with God's Word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit, call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus.
- Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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Diverse Weights and Measures—Great and Small

By Idel Suárez, Jr.

The personification of justice

Outside the entrance of the county courthouse in Tampa, Florida, stands a statue that personifies justice. It is a blindfolded woman with a sword in one hand and a scale of weights in the other. The blindfold symbolizes that those who execute justice should not be influenced by the beauty, financial means, education, ethnicity, or race of those who stand before the court. However, my uncle put a different spin on it when he said, "Justice appears blindfolded so that she does not see the injustices committed in her name!" Is it possible that we are committing injustices in the name of justice?

In the Torah (the first five books of the Bible), Moses taught Israel not to deceive others in business transactions. Merchants were not to obtain more for less, nor sell less for more deceitfully. He said, "Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small. Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small." Deuteronomy 25:13.

This text also has a spiritual meaning that can be applied to interpersonal relationships. In our hearts, thoughts, and feelings, we hold mental balances. We carry mental weights with which we measure others' attitudes, words, and behavior. Then, with a separate set of mental measures, we measure our own attitudes, words, and behavior. Sadly, there seems to be a significant difference between our estimation of our own accomplishments and those of others.

Our afflictions

In our minds, we have a bag of diverse weights—great and small. When it comes to measuring our own trials, troubles, and sufferings, we open our bag of diverse weights and take out the heaviest ones. We use them to overestimate our own difficulties and measure them as heavy and insurmountable. With our minds carnally wired to display a large digital read-out of our burdens in comparison to those of others, we weigh our own troubles by tons.

Yet how does the apostle Paul consider our afflictions? "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." 2 Corinthians 4:17. Paul declares that all our afflictions are *light*, not *heavy*. They are small, not great. We are guilty of unrighteousness when we choose from our bag of diverse weights a large weight to estimate our "light affliction, which is but for a moment."

Deuteronomy 25:13-16

25:13 Thou shalt not have in thy bag divers weights, a great and a small.

25:14 Thou shalt not have in thine house divers measures, a great and a small.

25:15 But thou shalt have a perfect and just weight, a perfect and just measure shalt thou have: that thy days may be lengthened in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

25:16 For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God.



The next time we are tempted to weigh our trials, we need to be careful not to pull out of our diverse weights' bags a great weight or large measure but to plead with the Spirit to help us, by faith, to pull out a small weight or a light measure with which to estimate our trouble.

Our acts

Then, on the other hand, when we measure our good works, righteous acts, or works of mercy, we again take out of our diverse measures' bag a large measure to estimate our accomplishments. We are tempted to believe that we truly are the best. We consider how smart we are, how good we have been, and how efficiently we completed the task at hand. We are self-deceived, given our carnal natural mind, and evaluate ourselves as did the Pharisee in the temple. Behold, how grand, perfect, and exemplary are our actions for God and our community! Like a good Laodicean, we recount our goodness in detail. Yet what does the holy prophet of old say? Read Isaiah 64:6: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away."

The evangelist of the Old Testament, the prince of prophets, Isaiah, clearly declares that all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags. He is not referring to our unrighteousness but to our righteousness! In God's sight, all of our great, holy, exemplary actions are like filthy rags. What is Isaiah referring to? He compares our best human accomplishments to rotten things which must be discarded.

In reality, our righteous acts don't merit much praise. They don't smell good. They don't look neat and clean. They don't feel soft and cuddly. They simply don't have much value in God's bag of weights. It is only by the merits and righteous acts of Christ, who intercedes for us before the Father, that our acts, behavior, and words are purified and made acceptable in the sight of Almighty God. The blood of Christ, not ours, is of true value in the light of eternity.

When we are tempted to consider ourselves highly, we should be careful not to pull out a great weight to measure what we have accom-

plished, for God considers this unrighteousness and an abomination. Our key text tells us, "For all that do such things, and all that do unrighteously, are an abomination unto the Lord thy God." Deuteronomy 25:16.

Our aspirations

Even our holy, noble aspirations can be misleading. The carnal heart is deceitful above all things. We are tempted to aspire to be rich so that we can do grand things for God, for the community, and for the betterment of humanity. Like the Jewish protagonist in the musical *Fiddler on the Roof*, we seem to sing, "If I were a rich man,..." I could help the poor, I could help the church, I could be a true help to all. I would not be like other rich folks who buy big houses, expensive cars, and nice clothes. No, I would not be like that. And so we flatter and deceive ourselves.

At the time of the Civil War, an Adventist pioneer, Ellen G. White, wrote a letter to a poor sister in the church who aspired to be rich so she could help others. This woman often held silent conversations with herself, promising that, if she ever became wealthy, she would not use her means to gratify herself, like other well-off individuals had done. However, her story typifies the reality of many believers.

"My attention was called to your desire to possess means. The sentiment of your heart was: 'Oh, if I only had means, I would not squander it! I would set an example to those who are close and penurious. I would show them the great blessing there is to be received in doing good...."

"When your condition in life began to improve, you said: 'As soon as I can get me a home, I will then donate to the cause of God.' But when you had a home you saw so many improvements to make to have everything about you convenient and pleasant that you forgot the Lord and His claims upon you, and were less inclined to help the cause of God than in the days of your poverty and affliction." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 277, 283.

Yes, even in our righteous aspirations, we can be led down a path of self-deception. We are tempted to bring out a great weight from our

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bag of diverse weights to measure our seemingly noble pursuits. But, after all is said and done, we have to exclaim with Elijah that we are no greater than our fathers.

The wise Preacher advises us not to aspire too greatly to worldly pursuits, or we might end up with very few heavenly treasures. His prayer was, "Two things have I required of Thee; deny me them not before I die: Remove far from me vanity and lies: give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with food convenient for me: Lest I be full, and deny Thee, and say, Who is the Lord? or lest I be poor, and steal, and take the name of my God in vain." Proverbs 30: 8, 9.

Rating others' afflictions, actions, and aspirations

When we rate the afflictions of others, do we use the same large weights to estimate their troubles and trials as we do to measure our own? Absolutely not! We weigh the difficulties of others as if they were mere feathers on the scale. The troubles of others are easy, light, and short lived. The suffering of others is small stuff, not large like our own. We are tempted to pull out of our mental bag of diverse weights a small measure to estimate the pain of others' afflictions.

Our carnal mind estimates the successes, accomplishments, and righteous works of others from the same selfish perspective. We tend to find fault with their accomplishments. We easily see their mistakes and foibles. We quickly recognize their imperfections and failures. We downplay their abilities. We criticize their achievements.

When negotiating the price of an old stamp, a collector will devalue it by using negative descriptions such as, chipped, stained, used, cancelled, dull, faded, wrinkled, or torn to help lower the price. We seem to use the same adjectives in describing the actions of others. We devalue their accomplishments with our own self-righteous spirit.

The spiritual reset button

In the modern world of technology, many electronic gadgets come with a reset button. When the equipment goes out of whack, the operator's

manual gives instructions on how to press the reset button.

Similarly, the Holy Scriptures serve as our operator's manual. The Holy Spirit has the ability to activate the reset button of our souls. Consider what the Bible says about this matter of estimating the trials of others:

1. "Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another." Romans 12:10. Here the apostle Paul exhorts us to put on a spiritual mindset. He instructs us to prefer others above ourselves.

2. "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." Philippians 2:3-5. Paul states that if we have the mind of Christ, we will automatically pull out of our mental diverse weights' bag a greater estimation of others than of ourselves. We will be lowly when comparing our afflictions, acts, and aspirations with those of others. We will estimate others more highly than ourselves.

Did Christ really estimate the capabilities of others as greater than His own? Yes. Notice what He told His disciples right before His great sacrifice on Calvary. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto My Father." John 14:12.

Jesus stated that the works of His apostles and subsequent disciples would be "greater works" than those which He had performed. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Philippians 2:5; Ephesians 4:12, 13.

Why not enter today into His rest? Why not stop using our diverse measures of self, and rather let each esteem others better than themselves? What is in our bags of diverse weights? What weights will we use when we estimate the actions of others and of ourselves in the light of God's word? May God help us always to choose the correct weights and measures. **SW**

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How Can We Be Righteous?

By Glendon Higgins

No one can succeed at this on his own. We need to connect to the power grid of heaven. This is the only way we can obtain salvation.

Christians speak about heaven. They hope for something better past this life. Many people are aware of heaven, yet not many are ready to be a part of its society. Human beings have ugly character attributes, none of which can be taken to heaven. If such ugly character attributes were taken there, they would be thoroughly discordant with that place. Therefore, to enter heaven, a person's character must be changed through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. In this process, good character attributes are obtained.

"Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." 2 Peter 1:4. Yes, it is possible to partake of the divine nature. God's nature is very different from human nature. God has character attributes that human beings must have. These attributes are described in the Scriptures as the fruit of the Spirit. Galatians 5:22, 23. If we partake of the Holy Spirit and receive the attributes God provides, we can become people who are fit for that better world.

Nicodemus was a Pharisee—a righteous, holy man to the Jews. He came to talk with Jesus one night. In this interview, Jesus told him that in his present condition he was not fit for heaven. Nicodemus was astonished. In fact, Jesus was more definite, prefacing His pronouncements with the determined words, "Verily, verily," telling him that he must be born again, be born from above. Nicodemus needed the Holy Spirit to regenerate and renew his heart. He was a church leader who thought he kept the law and

believed he was already righteous, but he had been attempting to generate his own righteousness. Instead, he needed to look to Christ for righteousness.

To illustrate the point, consider electricity. What could we do if we had no electricity in our house and everything was dark? We might get a stationary bicycle and attach to it a small generator that produced electricity. We could wire the generator to the electrical supply of the house. Then we could pedal away, trying to produce enough electricity for the entire house. Pedalling away furiously with our little generator, trying to come up with enough electricity, we might produce enough so the light bulbs in the house flicker a little, emitting very dim light. This would hardly be enough to see by. We could keep on pedalling until finally we were exhausted. We couldn't keep this up for very long, and we could never produce enough electricity for the whole house on our own in this way.

This is the same as trying to be righteous through our own merits or trying to keep God's commandments in our own strength. It is like trying to attain salvation with the small generator of our own human power. It is impossible.

Why not connect to the power grid? There are power lines running up and down the street. The power grid will bring electricity to the whole house. We won't need to generate it under our own steam.

In a spiritual sense, we need to connect to the power grid of heaven and receive the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus appealed to Nicodemus to do this. He told him that he must be born again. He needed the Holy Spirit to regenerate his heart and to cease trying to generate his own righteousness. No one can succeed at this on his own. We need to connect to the power grid of heaven. This is the only way we can obtain salvation.

During the days of the apostles, the people of Galatia fell into error. Initially they had trusted in Christ for salvation. Later there were some who came in among them, teaching them to trust in the flesh. Galatians 3:3. These teachers did not tell them that they were at liberty to sin. Oh no, they told them that they must keep the law. Yes, they must do it themselves. They must make

themselves righteous.

To help the Galatians, the apostle Paul wrote them a letter describing the old and new covenants. The two covenants of the Bible are agreements between God and man. The old covenant (Exodus 24:7) was based in part on the promises of man to be righteous and keep the law, which is right; but that can only be done by faith. Hebrews 4:6.. In this situation the people sought to do it themselves and to make themselves righteous. On the other hand, the new covenant was based on the promises of God to forgive man's sins and make him righteous by writing the law in his heart. Jeremiah 31:31-34.

In the letter to the Galatians, the apostle Paul presented an allegory of the two covenants—the birth of sons to two different women. "For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman. But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise. Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar. For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children. But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Galatians 4:22-26.

God promised Abraham a son, but his wife Sarah was barren. There had been no child born to them all of their married life. It seemed very unlikely that God's promise would be fulfilled. Since Sarah doubted the promise of God, she carried out a plan of her own devising. She sought to produce a son, not from her own womb, but from that of her bondmaid, Hagar. Abraham became involved, and a son, Ishmael, was born.

God did not accept Ishmael as the promised son of Abraham; and about fourteen years after Ishmael's birth, He repeated to Abraham the promise that he would have a son by his wife, Sarah. However, Sarah was now ninety years old. She was beyond childbearing age and laughed at the very idea. She doubted that she could have a child at such an age. Nevertheless a child, Isaac, was born a year later. This was the miraculous working of God.

Ishmael's birth was the result of unbelief and

human devising in an effort to carry out God's promise. This son was born "after the flesh" (Galatians 4:23), demonstrating what happens when we approach the law of God and promise to keep it in our own strength. Such actions are attempts to keep our promise to God by producing our own righteousness. Likewise the Israelites entered into the old covenant agreement thinking that they could keep the law by themselves and be righteous. Inevitably they failed, which led them to devise a system of human works.

The birth of Isaac came from God's promise. It demonstrates what happens when God's law is approached in faith, trusting in His promises. In the new covenant (Hebrews 8:10-12), God promises to forgive past sin and to write the law in one's heart so he can obey it. He promises to impart the Holy Spirit to renew and regenerate the heart. Even though human unbelief often gets in the way, God has promised to make His every child righteous through the indwelling of the Spirit.

Many centuries before the first advent of Christ, the Israelites had escaped from Egyptian slavery. God performed many wonderful miracles in the process of freeing them from Egyptian bondage and bringing them to Mount Sinai in Arabia. In the book of Galatians, it is written that the covenant from Mount Sinai gives birth to bondage. The Israelites had just escaped Egyptian bondage. Was it God's intention to take them out of Egyptian bondage only to put them under another kind of bondage at Mount Sinai? What occurred at Mount Sinai that could have put them into bondage?

"Now therefore, if ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me above all people: for all the earth is Mine: And ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." Exodus 19:5, 6. When God spoke these words to the Israelites, to what covenant was He referring? The covenant God had made with Abraham was already in existence. No other covenant had been made. If the Israelites would have faith and believe in God, He was able to do for them everything He promised. They would be a righteous, holy people. But something very different than

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"The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God."

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what God purposed emerged after Mount Sinai.

"The people did not realize the sinfulness of their own hearts, and that without Christ it was impossible for them to keep God's law; and they readily entered into covenant with God. Feeling that they were able to establish their own righteousness, they declared, 'All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient.' Exodus 24:7." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 371.

It was admirable that the people agreed to obey God. But in making this covenant, the people in their self-sufficiency rashly took the entire responsibility for obedience upon themselves. They believed they could be righteous in their own strength. How miserably they failed when, just a few days later, many of them were found worshipping the golden calf. The covenant they made with God at Mount Sinai was faulty, not because of God but because of them. "For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them,..." God needed to "make a new covenant." Hebrews 8:7, 8.

If we approach the law of God in the spirit of self-sufficiency, in the old covenant way, it gives rise to a type of bondage. Why does this self-sufficiency end up in bondage? When we attempt to obey God in our own strength, we inevitably fail. We try again and fail. We try again and again and again. We're locked into this cycle of doing and failing. At this point, many just give up and go back to their sinful ways. Meanwhile, others, like the Pharisees, up the ante. "For, seeing that they fail to keep the law, they will devise rules and regulations of their own to force themselves to obey.... They developed a system of human invention, with its multitudinous exactions...." —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 123.

The Pharisees made many extra laws to promote righteousness and obedience to God's law. It was probably all well intended, but they particularly defined everything that should and shouldn't be done on the Sabbath day. In addition, they defined many other laws to cover almost every contingency of life. Perhaps they were trying to remove the guesswork of how to be holy or righteous. The definitions of what constituted righteousness were contained in many volumes. The scribes and Pharisees sup-

posed themselves to be masters of the law, yet their lives were still full of sin.

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves." "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness." Matthew 7:15; 23:27. Outwardly the Pharisees appeared holy, but inwardly they were full of pride, malice, hatred, and many other sins. Their legalistic religion, devoid of God's power, led them to live lives of hypocrisy.

"They [the Jews] answered Him [Jesus], 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." John 8:33, 34. The Jews supposed themselves to be free men, yet Jesus stated otherwise.

Under their cloak of supposed holiness they hid many sins. They were in bondage to sin. Their system of human works—invented to promote the keeping of the law—proved a complete failure. The law of God condemned them as sinners. They were in bondage to sin. The law of God is holy, just, and good (Romans 7:12), but approaching it in a self-sufficient manner leads to bondage.

"For this Agar is mount Sinai in Arabia, and answereth to Jerusalem which now is, and is in bondage with her children." Galatians 4:25. Old Jerusalem with her children, the Jews, was in bondage. The system of human works and lives of hypocrisy were a spiritual bondage. "But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all." Galatians 4:26. We are to be children of the New Jerusalem—the heavenly Jerusalem. When Jesus said to Nicodemus, "You need to be born from above," He was talking about this heavenly rebirth.

"Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman. So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free." Galatians 4:30, 31. We are to be free people. The slave or the bondman cannot possess anything. He has no control over himself. This is the dis-

tinguishing characteristic of a slave. In a spiritual sense, he is like a person with no self-control. He is a slave to sin and inevitably will perform the acts of sin. On the other hand, the freeborn son is the heir to all things. He has dominion over everything. In a spiritual sense, he has victory over himself. He has self-control. He is free from sin, and his destiny is the assurance of eternal life.

"The apostle when speaking of Hagar and Sarah says: 'These women are two covenants.' These two covenants exist today. The two covenants are not matters of time, but of condition. Let no one flatter himself that he cannot be bound under the old covenant, thinking that its time has passed." —E.J. Waggoner, *The Glad Tidings*, pp. 100, 101.

We can be bound under the old covenant. It only takes a moment for us to lose our way and turn our eyes away from Christ. Some think they can generate righteousness of some kind on their own and mingle this with expressions of faith. The Scriptures tell us that this is hopeless. There is much written in the Scriptures about regeneration, being born again, and being a renewed man. The real work of the Holy Spirit must take place in the heart for there to be genuine righteousness.

The Pharisees sought to make themselves righteous. They did this with pride in their hearts. Spiritual pride caused them to take the law a step further than their neighbors. They had no concept of righteousness by faith in Christ. They believed that they were righteous by fulfilling the actions which they had been commanded to do. They thought that if they stretched and extended the law they would be even more righteous. They considered themselves superior to their neighbors who were not as "advanced." They created a legal minefield that was painful and perilous to negotiate and set neighbor against neighbor in a spirit of judgment and criticism. It took their minds far from God and His love for them.

This proud spirit of clothing oneself in one's own righteousness extended to Sabbath keeping to the point where the Pharisees believed that the Messiah violated the Sabbath—according to their manmade precepts. Matthew 12:10; Mark 3:2; John 9:14-16. Jesus died without sin, so therefore the "standards" of the Pharisees were proven

to be out of touch with the Author of the law. They considered their own righteousness to be superior to that of God Himself. Their attempts to define how God's law should be kept were a complete failure.

A truly righteous person would never claim to be holier than others. "The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank Thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess." Luke 18:11, 12. The Pharisee tells God how he's so much better than others, especially because he does lots of extra things, such as fasting not only on the Sabbath but also on one other day of the week. He pays the tithe on herbs (Matthew 23:23), the growth of mint, parsley, and other small herbs in his garden. He goes the extra mile. Yet God resists him, and he is not justified or even counted as righteous. Luke 18:14. "God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." James 4:6. God resisted the spiritual pride of the Pharisees. If we have any element of spiritual pride, God will also resist us and we will be left to ourselves to make the same experience as did the Pharisees.

It is only by the grace of Christ that we can be righteous people. If we think we can improve ourselves and do not seek help from Heaven, we are no better than any other sinner. If we fail to look in faith to Jesus for righteousness, we have nowhere else to turn. Trying to generate righteousness from within ourselves will prove hopeless.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth." Romans 10:3, 4. The subject of these verses is righteousness. How are we going to be righteous? Christ is the end by which we can be righteous. There is no other way to be righteous.

We must go to Christ and ask Him to change us. Let us petition Him earnestly to give us His Holy Spirit so we can develop characters prepared to enter the eternal heavenly courts. This is the whole point of Christianity. Christ holds the supply of righteousness, and we can obtain it only from Him. **SW**

It is only by the grace of Christ that we can be righteous people. If we think we can improve ourselves and do not seek help from Heaven, we are no better than any other sinner.



The Sacred Word The Bible

By Ellen G. White

During the first twenty-five hundred years of human history, there was no written revelation. Those who had been taught of God, communicated their knowledge to others, and it was handed down from father to son, through successive generations. The preparation of the written word began in the time of Moses. Inspired revelations were then embodied in an inspired book. This work continued during the long period of sixteen hundred years—from Moses, the historian of creation and the law, to John, the recorder of the most sublime truths of the gospel.

The Bible points to God as its author; yet it was written by human hands; and in the varied style of its different books it presents the characteristics of the several writers. The truths revealed are all "given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16); yet they are expressed in the words of men. The Infinite One by His Holy Spirit has shed light into the minds and hearts of His servants. He has given dreams and visions, symbols and figures; and those to whom the truth was thus revealed have themselves embodied the thought in human language.

The Ten Commandments were spoken by God Himself, and were written by His own hand. They are of divine, and not of human composition. But the Bible, with its God-given truths

Before the entrance of sin, Adam enjoyed open communion with his Maker; but since man separated himself from God by transgression, the human race has been cut off from this high privilege. By the plan of redemption, however, a way has been opened whereby the inhabitants of the earth may still have connection with heaven. God has communicated with men by His Spirit, and divine light has been imparted to the world by revelations to His chosen servants. "Holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost." 2 Peter 1:21.

expressed in the language of men, presents a union of the divine and the human. Such a union existed in the nature of Christ, who was the Son of God and the Son of man. Thus it is true of the Bible, as it was of Christ, that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." John 1:14.

Written in different ages, by men who differed widely in rank and occupation, and in mental and spiritual endowments, the books of the Bible present a wide contrast in style, as well as a diversity in the nature of the subjects unfolded. Different forms of expression are employed by different writers; often the same truth is more strikingly presented by one than by another. And as several writers present a subject under varied aspects and relations, there may appear, to the superficial, careless, or prejudiced reader, to be discrepancy or contradiction, where the thoughtful, reverent student, with clearer insight, discerns the underlying harmony.

As presented through different individuals, the truth is brought out in its varied aspects. One writer is more strongly impressed with one phase of the subject; he grasps those points that harmonize with his experience or with his power of perception and appreciation; another seizes upon a different phase; and each, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, presents what is most forcibly impressed upon his own mind—a different aspect of the truth in each, but a perfect harmony through all. And the truths thus revealed unite to form a perfect whole, adapted to meet the wants of men in all the circumstances and experiences of life.

God has been pleased to communicate His truth to the world by human agencies, and He Himself, by His Holy Spirit, qualified men and enabled them to do this work. He guided the mind in the selection of what to speak and what to write. The treasure was entrusted to earthen vessels, yet it is, nonetheless, from Heaven. The testimony is conveyed through the imperfect expression of human language, yet it is the testimony of God; and the obedient, believing child of God beholds in it the glory of a divine power, full of grace and truth.

In His Word, God has committed to men the knowledge necessary for salvation. The Holy Scriptures are to be accepted as an authoritative,

infallible revelation of His will. They are the standard of character, the revealer of doctrines, and the test of experience. "Every scripture inspired of God is also profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction which is in righteousness; that the man of God may be complete, furnished completely unto every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17, R.V.

Yet the fact that God has revealed His will to men through His word, has not rendered needless the continued presence and guiding of the Holy Spirit. On the contrary, the Spirit was promised by our Saviour, to open the Word to His servants, to illuminate and apply its teachings. And since it was the Spirit of God that inspired the Bible, it is impossible that the teaching of the Spirit should ever be contrary to that of the Word.

The Spirit was not given—nor can it ever be bestowed—to supersede the Bible; for the Scriptures explicitly state that the word of God is the standard by which all teaching and experience must be tested. Says the apostle John, "Believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world." 1 John 4:1. And Isaiah declares, "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." Isaiah 8:20. —*The Great Controversy*, pp. v-vii.

If the mind is set to the task of studying the Bible for information, the reasoning faculties will be improved. Under study of the Scriptures the mind expands and becomes more evenly balanced than if occupied in obtaining general information from the books that are used which have no connection with the Bible. No knowledge is so firm, so consistent and far-reaching, as that obtained from a study of the Word of God. It is the foundation of all true knowledge.

The Bible is like a fountain. The more you look into it, the deeper it appears. The grand truths of sacred history possess amazing strength and beauty and are as far-reaching as eternity. No science is equal to the science that reveals the character of God.

Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, yet he said, "Behold, I have taught you statutes and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me, that ye should do so in the

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land whither ye go to possess it. Keep therefore and do them; for this is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the nations, which shall hear all these statutes, and say, Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people." —(*Review and Herald*, February 25, 1896; *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 393) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 97.

The Bible with its precious gems of truth was not written for the scholar alone. On the contrary, it was designed for the common people; and the interpretation given by the common people, when aided by the Holy Spirit, accords best with the truth as it is in Jesus. The great truths necessary for salvation are made clear as the noonday, and none will mistake and lose their way except those who follow their own judgment instead of the plainly revealed will of God. —(*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 331 (1885).

In the Scriptures thousands of gems of truth lie hidden from the surface seeker. The mine of truth is never exhausted. The more you search the Scriptures with humble hearts, the greater will be your interest, and the more you will feel like exclaiming with Paul: "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!..."

Every day you should learn something new from the Scriptures. Search them as for hid treasures, for they contain the words of eternal life. Pray for wisdom and understanding to comprehend these holy writings. If you would do this, you would find new glories in the Word of God; you would feel that you had received new and precious light on subjects connected with the truth, and the Scriptures would be constantly receiving a new value in your estimation.

The great truths necessary for salvation are made as clear as noonday.... A single text has proved in the past, and will prove in the future, to be a savor of life unto life to many a soul. As men diligently search, the Bible opens new treasures of truth, which are as bright jewels to the mind.

You must dig deep in the mine of truth if you would find its richest treasures. Comparing scripture with scripture, you may find the true meaning of the text; but if you do not make the sacred teachings of God's Word the rule and guide of your life, the truth will be nothing to

you.... If any part of God's Word condemns any habit you have cherished, any feeling you have indulged, any spirit you have manifested, turn not from the Word of God; but turn away from the evil of your doings, and let Jesus cleanse and sanctify your heart. —*My Life Today*, p. 22.

The student of the Bible should be taught to approach it in the spirit of a learner. We are to search its pages, not for proof to sustain our opinions, but in order to know what God says. —*Education*, p. 189 (1903).

In its wide range of style and subjects the Bible has something to interest every mind and appeal to every heart.... In it the most simply stated truths are involved—principles that are as high as heaven and that encompass eternity.

There is no position in life, no phase of human experience, for which the Bible does not contain valuable instruction. Ruler and subject, master and servant, buyer and seller, borrower and lender, parent and child, teacher and student—all may here find lessons of priceless worth.

But above all else, the Word of God sets forth the plan of salvation: shows how sinful man may be reconciled to God, lays down the great principles of truth and duty which should govern our lives, and promises us divine aid in their observance.... —*My Life Today*, p. 23.

Why should not this book—this precious treasure—be exalted and esteemed as a valued friend? This is our chart across the stormy sea of life. It is our guidebook showing us the way to the eternal mansions and the character we must have to inhabit them. There is no book the perusal of which will so elevate and strengthen the mind as the study of the Bible. Here the intellect will find themes of the most elevated character to call out its powers. There is nothing that will so endow with vigor all our faculties as bringing them in contact with the stupendous truths of revelation. The effort to grasp and measure these great thoughts expands the mind. We may dig down deep into the mine of truth and gather precious treasures with which to enrich the soul. Here we may learn the true way to live, the safe way to die. —(*Review and Herald*, January 4, 1881) *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 97.

We all need a guide through the many strait places in life as much as the sailor needs a pilot

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over the sandy bar or up the rocky river, and where is this guide to be found? We point you, dear brethren, to the Bible. Inspired of God, written by holy men, it points out with great clearness and precision the duties of both old and young. It elevates the mind, softens the heart, and imparts gladness and holy joy to the spirit. The Bible presents a perfect standard of character; it is an infallible guide under all circumstances, even to the end of the journey of life. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 264.

We cannot be complete in Christ and yet be ready to grasp those things that come from the so-called great men of the earth, and place their wisdom before the wisdom of the greatest Teacher the world has ever known. To seek knowledge from such sources is represented in the Word as seeking to drink from broken cisterns that can hold no water. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 299.

We have a Bible full of the most precious truth. It contains the alpha and omega of knowledge. The Scriptures, given by inspiration of God, are "profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works." 2 Timothy 3:16, 17. Take the Bible as your study book. All can understand its instruction. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 299.

The nature of one's religious experience is revealed by the character of the books one chooses to read in one's leisure moments.... Pointing out the way of salvation through Christ, the Bible is our guide to a higher, better life. It contains the most interesting and the most instructive history and biography that were ever written. Those whose imagination has not become perverted by the reading of fiction will find the Bible the most interesting of books.

The Bible is the book of books. If you love the word of God, searching it as you have opportunity, that you may come into possession of its rich treasures, and be thoroughly furnished unto all good works, then you may be assured that Jesus is drawing you to Himself. But to read the Scriptures in a casual way, without seeking to comprehend Christ's lesson that you may comply with His requirements, is not enough.

There are treasures in the Word of God that can be discovered only by sinking the shaft deep into the mine of truth.

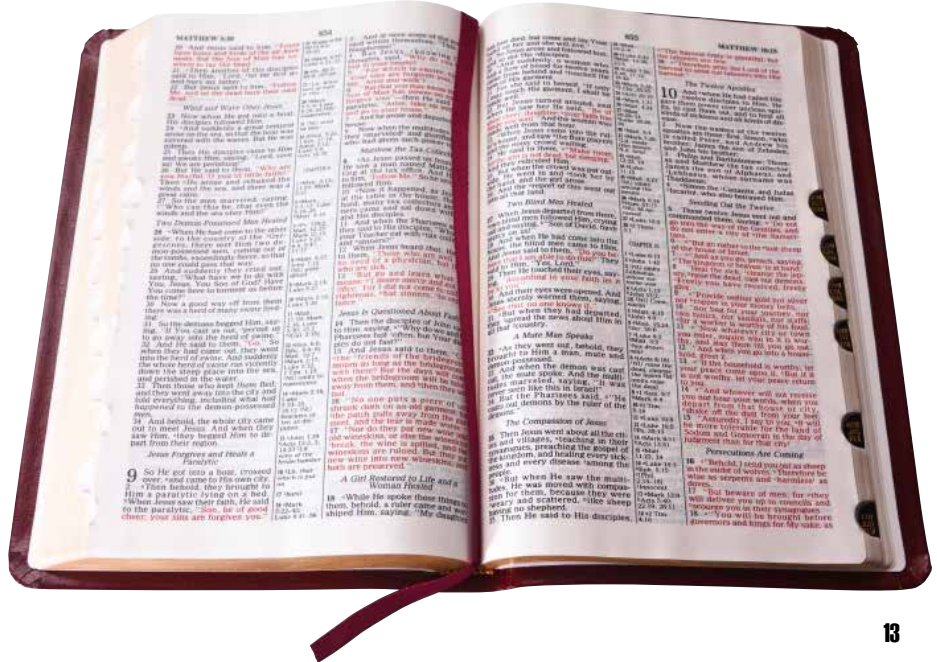
The carnal mind rejects the truth; but the soul that is converted undergoes a marvelous change. The book that before was unattractive because it revealed truths which testified against the sinner, now becomes the food of the soul, the joy and consolation of the life. The Sun of righteousness illuminates the sacred pages, and the Holy Spirit speaks through them to the soul....

Let all who have cultivated a love for light reading, now turn their attention to the sure word of prophecy. Take your Bibles, and begin to study with fresh interest the sacred records of the Old and New Testaments. The oftener and more diligently you study the Bible, the more beautiful will it appear, and the less relish you will have for light reading. Bind this precious volume to your hearts. It will be to you a friend and guide. —(*The Youth's Instructor*, October 9, 1902) *Messages to Young People*, pp. 273, 274.

"Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ. For in Him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. And ye are complete in Him." Colossians 2:8-10.

Let the truth of God be the subject for contemplation and meditation. Read the Bible, and regard it as the voice of God speaking directly to you. Then will you find inspiration and that wisdom which is divine. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 204, 205. **SW**

We cannot be complete in Christ and yet be ready to grasp those things that come from the so-called great men of the earth, and place their wisdom before the wisdom of the greatest Teacher the world has ever known.



Prophetic Signs of Two Great Events and Their Fulfillment

Compiled by Lencha Tekle

"... When He was alone, Peter, John, James, and Andrew came to Him as He sat upon the Mount of Olives. 'Tell us,' they said, 'when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of Thy coming, and of the end of the world?' Jesus did not answer His disciples by taking up separately the destruction of Jerusalem and the great day of His coming.

He mingled the description of these two events. Had He opened to His disciples future events as He beheld them, they would have been unable to endure the sight. In mercy to them He blended the description of the two great crises, leaving the disciples to study out the meaning for themselves." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 628.

The Destruction of Jerusalem

	Sign	Fulfillment	Proof	Remarks
1	"For many shall come in My name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." "... And false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders;..." Matthew 24:5, 24.	A.D. 31-67	<i>The Desire of Ages</i> , pp. 628, 631.	"The same deceptions practiced prior to the destruction of Jerusalem have been practiced through the ages, and will be practiced again." — <i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 628.
2	"And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars:... famines, and pestilences,..." Matthew 24:6, 7.	Prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70	<i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 628.	
3	"Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you:..." Matthew 24:9.	Beginning A.D. 31	<i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 628	Stephen, James, and others died as martyrs.
4	"... Ye shall see Jerusalem compassed with armies,..." Luke 21:20-24. See Matthew 24:15.	A.D. 66/67	<i>The Great Controversy</i> , pp. 30, 31.	"The Christians obeyed the warning, and not a Christian perished in the fall of the city." — <i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 630.

Jesus' Coming and the End of the World

	Sign	Fulfillment	Proof	Remarks
1	"For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be..." Matthew 24:21, 22. See Mark 13:19, 20.	538-1798	<i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 630; <i>The Great Controversy</i> , pp. 54, 55.	
2	Earthquake. Matthew 24:7.	1755	<i>The Great Controversy</i> , pp. 304, 305.	"Ninety thousand persons are supposed to have been lost on that fatal day." — <i>The Great Controversy</i> , p. 305.
3	"And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars;..." "... The sun shall be darkened,..." Luke 21:25; Mark 13:24-26.	May 19, 1780	<i>The Great Controversy</i> , pp. 305-308.	"May 19, 1780, stands in history as 'The Dark Day.' Since the time of Moses no period of darkness of equal density, extent, and duration, has ever been recorded." — <i>The Great Controversy</i> , p. 308.
4	"But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." "... Before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." Matthew 24:37-39. See Luke 21:34-36.	Today	We are eyewitnesses	
5	"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.	The church's responsibility today	"Before the fall of Jerusalem, Paul, writing by the Holy Spirit, declared that the gospel was preached to 'every creature which is under heaven.' Colossians 1:23. So now, before the coming of the Son of man, the everlasting gospel is to be preached 'to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people.' Revelation 14:6, 14." — <i>The Desire of Ages</i> , p. 633.	

"... When ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand." Luke 21:28-31.

"Verily I say unto you, that this generation shall not pass, till all these things be done." Mark 13:30. See Luke 21:32; Matthew 24:34.

"Christ has given signs of His coming. He declares that we may know when He is near, even at the doors. He says of those who see these signs, 'This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. These signs have appeared. Now we know of a surety that the Lord's

coming is at hand. 'Heaven and earth shall pass away,' He says, 'but My words shall not pass away.'...

"By giving the gospel to the world it is in our power to hasten our Lord's return. We are not only to look for but to hasten the coming of the day of God. 2 Peter 3:12, margin. Had the church of Christ done her appointed work as the Lord ordained, the whole world would before this have been warned, and the Lord Jesus would have come to our earth in power and great glory." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 632, 633.

Therefore let us sacrifice everything for the fulfillment of the hope of the church in all ages!



"And the Lord said unto Gideon, The people are yet too many; bring them down unto the water, and I will try them for thee there: and it shall be, that of whom I say unto thee, This shall go with thee, the same shall go with thee; and of whomsoever I say unto thee, This shall not go with thee, the same shall not go." Judges 7:4.

According to Jesus' words in the New Testament, "the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind." Obviously the fisherman who puts out his net and takes in a huge haul of fish is delighted at his success. But, as Jesus pointed out, at this point there is another work to be done. "Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away." Matthew 13:47, 48. In the next verse, Jesus said that that process is an illustration of what the angels will do at the end of the world—gather the good into vessels and cast the bad away.

Explanations such as "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be My son"; "And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Revelation 21:7, 27); "Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:3); and the beatitudes in Matthew 5:1-12 are provided to show the holy principles and the end result for that holy place. But there are also some very interesting accounts in the Scriptures

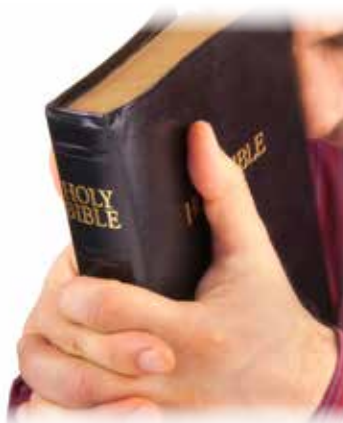
showing how Heaven does more than simply determine who will inhabit that holy place. God turns sinners into saints.

What were the characteristics that God was looking for in those who would join Gideon to fight against the huge force of the Midianites and Amalekites? It was Israel's following false gods that caused God to withdraw His protection from them and allow the enemies to ravage the land. How was He to find anyone who would view matters as He did? Viewed humanly by numbers, even after tens of thousands of Israelites came in response to the call for soldiers to come and fight for Israel, Gideon was at a huge disadvantage. But God saw things differently. He said the soldiers were too many for Him to entrust the victory over the Midianites to them. Why? Because they would "vaunt themselves against Me, saying, Mine own hand hath saved me." Judges 7:2.

So the tests began. The first one was about courage, or faith. All who were fearful or afraid were dismissed. Twenty-two thousand soldiers went home, leaving ten thousand. But God said they were still too many.

The next test was to take the soldiers to the water and see how they drank. Those who got down on their knees to drink, as opposed to those who quickly drank from their hand, were dismissed. Nine thousand seven hundred soldiers were dismissed, leaving three hundred to fight the battle of the Lord. "Those who in time of peril were intent upon supplying their own wants were not the men to be trusted in an

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emergency. The Lord has no place in His work for the indolent and self-indulgent. The men of His choice were the few who would not permit their own wants to delay them in the discharge of duty. The three hundred chosen men not only possessed courage and self-control, but they were men of faith. They had not defiled themselves with idolatry. God could direct them, and through them He could work deliverance for Israel." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 549, 550. After God gained the victory for Israel with this little band of faithful men, others in Israel joined to drive the Midianites from the land. But they were followers, not leaders.

God placed the men of Gideon's time in circumstances to reveal their inner character. For sure, He knew already whom He could use to do His bidding, but He carried out a process through circumstances—giving everyone a chance to make a choice—so that all Israel could see who was best suited for the battle of the Lord. This story is for us today, giving us the opportunity to examine our own hearts and to trust God to determine and reveal to whom He can entrust responsibility.

Now let's look at another example, for a similar process occurred after Saul was selected to be Israel's first king. Viewed outwardly, he was qualified to be king. But when tested, his inner character was revealed for all to see. He had been king for about two years when a time came to face the Philistines in battle. The prophet Samuel had given Saul exact instructions from God what to do. The king had the opportunity to choose one of two ways. God "brought them [the king and people] into close places, that they might be convicted of the folly of depending on man, and that they might turn to Him as their only help. The time for the proving of Saul had come. He was now to show whether or not he would depend on God and patiently wait according to His command, thus revealing himself as one whom God could trust in trying places as the ruler of His people, or whether he would be vacillating and unworthy of the sacred responsibility that had devolved upon him. Would the king whom Israel had chosen, listen to the Ruler of all kings? Would he turn the attention of his faint-hearted soldiers to the One in whom is everlasting strength and deliverance?

"With growing impatience he awaited the arrival of Samuel and attributed the confusion and distress and desertion of his army to the absence of the prophet. The appointed time came, but the man of God did not immediately appear. God's providence had detained His servant. But Saul's restless, impulsive spirit would no longer be restrained." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 618.

As if deep spiritual preparation for such a sacred service were unnecessary, Saul called the soldiers and offered sacrifice to God. Samuel came right after that and asked Saul what he had done. His dishonest answer not only demonstrated a complete lack of faith but also included the lie, "I forced myself therefore, and offered a burnt offering." 1 Samuel 13:12. He viewed the sacrifices in the same way as idolaters viewed their pagan sacrifices—as something to gain the favor of a deity, not in repentance, faith in, and full dependence on God, to whom all glory belongs.

"If Saul had shown a regard for the requirements of God in this time of trial, God could have worked His will through him. His failure now proved him unfit to be the vicegerent of God to His people. He would mislead Israel. His will, rather than the will of God, would be the controlling power. If Saul had been faithful, his kingdom would have been established forever; but since he had failed, the purpose of God must be accomplished by another. The government of Israel must be committed to one who would rule the people according to the will of Heaven." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 621.

Saul's lack of humility and spirituality here and ever afterward presented "a sad example of the power of early wrong habits. In his youth Saul did not love and fear God; and that impetuous spirit, not early trained to submission, was ever ready to rebel against divine authority. Those who in their youth cherish a sacred regard for the will of God, and who faithfully perform the duties of their position, will be prepared for higher service in afterlife. But men cannot for years pervert the powers that God has given them, and then, when they choose to change, find these powers fresh and free for an entirely opposite course." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 622.

It is the same now. It is natural for a church to rejoice when someone wants to join its ranks.

"The three hundred chosen men not only possessed courage and self-control, but they were men of faith. They had not defiled themselves with idolatry. God could direct them, and through them He could work deliverance for Israel."

Heaven itself rejoices "over one sinner that repenteth." Luke 15:7. However, everyone who comes to a knowledge of God and links up with the church brings with him or her a whole set of inherited and cultivated characteristics. He may agree with the teachings of the church, but that agreement is worthless if it does not link him to God for the transformation of character. Soul winners and church leaders have an enormous responsibility to connect every soul to Heaven so that he chooses of his own free will to love, obey, and depend fully on God.

Throughout his life, everyone is brought by circumstances to one testing point after another so he can see who he really is and cast his helpless soul at the feet of Jesus. Each circumstance is divine training and preparation for eternity. As in the time of Gideon, as in the time of King Saul, and all down through history to our day, "too many" glorify themselves, other human beings, or even governments—not God—for the great things He has done, thus darkening their own souls and the souls of others. Every victory belongs solely God; it is not attributable to any person or even to one's God-given abilities. The Creator and Sustainer of all things alone is to be glorified and exalted every moment.

In summary, the "too many" are fearful, faithless, lacking in principle, self-indulgent, rebellious, and proud. Such people center in self, not God. For sure, God would love to take the whole world into His eternal kingdom. But it won't happen. If it did, the eternal kingdom would be just like this world. "But the fearful, and unbelieving, and the abominable, and murderers, and whoremongers, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone: which is the second death." Revelation 21:8.

Furthermore, God will not change sinners into saints without their choosing. He invites everyone to come to Him and drink of the living water. He performs miracles of all kinds for those who accept that invitation—divine cleansing from sin, the righteous character of Jesus implanted in the soul through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, and many, many more. Whether this happens, or not, is up to every person. But one thing is for sure: All praise belongs to Him alone! **SW**

Man cannot show greater weakness than by allowing men to ascribe to him the honor for gifts that are Heaven-bestowed. The true Christian will make God first and last and best in everything. No ambitious motives will chill his love for God; steadily, perseveringly, will he cause honor to redound to his heavenly Father. It is when we are faithful in exalting the name of God that our impulses are under divine supervision, and we are enabled to develop spiritual and intellectual power.

Jesus, the divine Master, ever exalted the name of His heavenly Father. He taught His disciples to pray, "Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be Thy name." Matthew 6:9, A.R.V. And they were not to forget to acknowledge, "Thine is ... the glory." Verse 13. So careful was the great Healer to direct attention from Himself to the Source of His power, that the wondering multitude, "when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see," did not glorify Him, but "glorified the God of Israel." Matthew 15:31. In the wonderful prayer that Christ offered just before His crucifixion, He declared, "I have glorified Thee on the earth." "Glorify Thy Son," He pleaded, "that Thy Son also may glorify Thee." "O righteous Father, the world hath not known Thee: but I have known Thee, and these have known that Thou hast sent Me. And I have declared unto them Thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith Thou hast loved Me may be in them, and I in them." John 17:4, 1, 25, 26.

"Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 9:23, 24.

"I will praise the name of God,... And will magnify Him with thanksgiving."

"Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power."

"I will praise Thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: And I will glorify Thy name forevermore."

"O magnify the Lord with me, And let us exalt His name together." Psalm 69:30; Revelation 4:11; Psalm 86:12; 34:3.

—Prophets and Kings, pp. 68-70.

Jesus and FREE WILL

"God's government is a government of free will, and there is no act of rebellion or obedience which is not an act of free will."
—*Signs of the Times*, June 5, 1901.

"Every man wants to be free." Songs are written with such titles, but what is freedom? For that matter, what is the liberty made so famous in the Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness"?

Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary gives a primary definition of "liberty" with a few refinements: The quality or state of being free (the power to do as one pleases; freedom from physical restraint; freedom from arbitrary or despotic control; the positive enjoyment of various social,

political, or economic rights and privileges; the power of choice).

The meanings of "freedom" are similar: The absence of necessity, coercion, or constraint in choice or action; liberation from slavery or restraint or from the power of another.

In Greek culture, freedom is synonymous with independent self-determination, while popular western culture has over the last few decades been moving more and more in the direction of "No one can tell me how I am going to live my life." Obviously, the more people there are who have this attitude, the more chaotic society will become. "Tolerance" then means that people cannot object to whatever someone else feels like doing, regardless of the impact on others. At this point, the concept moves closer to "license," or an abuse of freedom.

In the Holy Scriptures, freedom often referred to release from some kind of bondage or involuntary servitude. In fact, after Israel left Egypt under God's direction, they were given definite statutes concerning relationships; these included the command that a person was not to be kept in involuntary servitude for more than six years. He was to be released the seventh year, just as the land was to be left to lie fallow the seventh year! See Exodus 21:2; Deuteronomy 15:12.

By virtue of creation, God says, "the world is Mine, and the fulness thereof." Psalm 50:12. "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,..." Haggai 2:8. On that basis alone, He is in charge. But notice that He gives man, who was created in His image, the responsibility for making decisions concerning his own life. In Deuteronomy 30:15-19, He had Moses lay out the alternatives and the consequences for the people of Israel before they crossed over the Jordan River into the promised land: "See, I have set before thee this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command thee this day to love the Lord thy God, to walk in His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, that thou mayest live and multiply: and the Lord thy God shall bless thee in the land whither thou goest to possess it. But if thine heart turn away, so that thou wilt not hear, but shalt be drawn away, and worship other gods, and serve them; I denounce unto you this day,

that ye shall surely perish, and that ye shall not prolong your days upon the land, whither thou passest over Jordan to go to possess it. I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

These are solid principles relating to freedom—and life. Jesus put it this way: "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 the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed." John 8:31-36.

This theme is what John alludes to in his gospel, chapter 1:12, 13: "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God [the king's sons are free], even to them that believe on His name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

And the apostle Paul presents the same thing: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" Romans 6:16.

Jesus' entire mission was about freeing people from the bondage of sin—actually putting them in the position where they can make a choice. "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." 1 Timothy 2:4. He wants to communicate with man, to have an intelligent conversation with him. "Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before Mine eyes; cease to do evil; Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." Isaiah 1:16-18.

But when a person is tied up in his own knots because of self-centeredness, addiction,

lust, or pleasure seeking, no such conversation is possible; there is no free will. He is not free to communicate with the Almighty, much less to do righteous things. All of the distractions of this world are designed to keep this conversation from taking place and hence to keep a person enslaved by his own instincts, impulses, and desires—actually, by the wicked one. Author and consultant Skip Moen puts it this way: "Whatever freedom we have is a gift, not a right. He [God] is the master and the owner, not us. True freedom is not that delusion of self-determination. True freedom is remembering who we are and who God is, and choosing to serve Him."

A child is fully dependent on his or her parents and happily goes about his life, knowing that he will be taken care of. That is the picture Jesus gives of how one should trust the God of heaven, who lovingly cares for and shelters the human family. "Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child shall in no wise enter therein." Luke 18:17.

"Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall He not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof." Matthew 6:30-34.

Divinity forces no one. But what wonderful freedom, joy, and fulfillment one may have when he loves God's kingdom and makes it primary in his life! Then he gives the really important things the attention they deserve; the mind and heart grow through their connection with Infinity; and everything that one needs is added to that by the Father, who provides what is best for every person. That is real life, both temporal and eternal!

—*Hope of the Ages*, pp. 43-46. This book is available from Religious Liberty Publishing Assn. **SW**

Jesus' entire mission was about freeing people from the bondage of sin—actually putting them in the position where they can make a choice.

News to inspire



Attendees at the first Liberian camp meeting

Liberia update

By the grace of God, we successfully held our first camp meeting December 24-30, 2012. Nightly PowerPoint presentations were given to the community on health and prophecy based on Daniel 2. On Sabbath, December 29, 2012, seven souls who have been studying with us and one visitor from the nightly lectures were baptized by Pastor Gwina. The membership in Liberia is now 101 with 36 interested souls.

—John K. Mussah
Mission Field Secretary

Visit to Haiti

On Monday, December 10, 2012, I climbed the hills for two hours to meet the second group of Fond Michel. There the leader, Brother Renold, meets with nine members and visitors and many children. I was surprised to see a school with 25 eager young students. But they hold classes in a place with no roof, benches, or shelter. They need at least \$900 to supply basic needs. They asked if you would please submit a request for this to the Good Samaritan and find out if they can contribute to help us build the shelter. (The request has been sent, but more aid is needed.)

Kind regards,
Simon Beaubrun

Help received in Congo

Greetings in the name of Jesus Christ!

The funds sent from the Good Samaritan Department to support our brethren and sisters in the war-torn state of North Kivu have been received with much thanks to God. We are indebted to you for your great interest toward us in our urgent need of shelter, food, and clothing in these restless days.

May God help you and bless you till His appearing!

—Brother C. Mukendi

In January, new interested souls came from Namibia and Guinea Bissau.

Message from Myanmar

In Myanmar, according to our people's request, I am translating the history of the International Missionary Society into Tedim, my mother tongue, and after that I will translate it into Burmese. When the translation is com-



Two of the beautiful children in Haiti

pleted, people will know how to respond to those who question the foundation of the IMS. We are few in number, but we are strong in faith and enjoy the Lord's present truth.

May the peace and the joy of the Lord be upon you all!

—Suan Kam Thang

with Brother Douglas Francis on his last visit in India.

Peace and love be unto you and greetings with Galatians 6:10: "As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith."



News from India

January 11-18, 2013, missionary visits were made in the states of Kerala and Tamil Nadu to follow up on contacts referred by our brethren in Berlin, Germany. Church dedication services were held in Chattaram and Ambur, Tamil Nadu, and plans for evangelism in 2013 were made with the believers and leaders in India.

During part of this visit, Sister Marianne from Germany traveled

BAMI classes begin

On February 1, 2013, Berea Adventist Missionary Institute in Nairobi, Kenya, began its fourth class. We have ten students—two from Burundi, one from Malawi, four from Tanzania, and three from Zimbabwe. We expect more students, by God's grace, but some of them need sponsors.

Pray for the success of BAMI's fourth class. We have emphasized humility in service. Almost all of the



Church dedication in Chattaram, Tamil Nadu, India



Brother Crosswell Rimsu sent this picture of a conference in northern India

previous graduates are now working in the mission fields of Burundi, Rwanda, and other countries. We thank God that we can advance the work by training workers for His vineyard. God remember us.

Sevith Moyo, BAMl Director

A contribution to BAMl will change, not just one life, but many lives, and hasten the day of the Lord. Donate today. School fees are US \$400 per semester, and the full course is for two years (four semesters).

Aid for Philippines after the typhoon

We had the opportunity to visit our brethren in northeastern Mindanao who were severely impacted

by super typhoon Pablo, which destroyed their houses and livelihood in just two hours. They told us that their only safety was in earnest prayer to our dear Saviour Jesus Christ. Government relief projects provided food and shelter, but it was very hard for our people, because the food relief was mostly canned fish and meat. Our leaders from Mindanao, led by Pastor Arnolfo Cortes, visited the believers and distributed food and clothing bought with funds given by the General Conference Good Samaritan Department. We are very thankful for this support.

All that was left of the church building were a few pieces of wood. So, a few weeks before our visit, the Mindanao Field

used funds from the Good Samaritan Department to purchase lumber, cement, blocks, and roofing. By the time we arrived, the foundation had been completed by the members; we were able to begin construction of the walls, beams, and roof and then gather for worship.

While we were there, we conducted a health clinic. We checked the participants' blood glucose, blood cholesterol, and blood pressure, offered free consultations, and provided information concerning prevention and treatment with natural medicine. We also distributed clothing and food and gave needed supplies to both members and non-members. Funds for this assistance were provided by the generous brethren of the Timog Church, Angeles City, Luzon.

May the Lord bless His work in the Philippines and help our distressed brethren to rise up and continue to be strong in the faith after the tempest. We also pray for the furtherance of the worldwide work being done by all the faithful servants of God as we wait patiently for the glorious coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in the clouds of heaven.

*—Dr. Roland de la Paz
GC Medical Missionary Leader*



The church in northern Mindanao is being rebuilt after the typhoon

Report from Ivory Coast

From Tuesday to Sabbath, January 1-5, 2013, interested souls studied lessons on the seven churches. On January 12, Brother Kouadio Goke Francois, a 57-year-old Ivorian, was baptized. He is inviting some of his friends to the church to receive the present truth taught by the IMS.

On January 17, Brother Agbobli Yawo and I traveled from Ivory Coast to meet up with Brother Idel Suárez, Jr., General Conference President, in Ashaiman, Ghana, on Sabbath, January 19. For the next two days, Brother Suárez shared many subjects, including church history, true and false reformations, the message of Christ Our Righteousness, Seventh-day Adventists and war, the '51 movement, and more. He stressed the importance of loyalty and commitment to God's work. We thank the General Conference for these clear studies.

Before leaving on Tuesday, January 22, Brother Suarez completed the purchase of a building to be used as headquarters in Ghana as well as the location of the West African Missionary School.

May God bless us all as we labor together with Him in His vineyard!

—Theo T. Animley

Monks attack churches in southern Sri Lanka

On December 9, 2012, a mob of about 1,000 people, led by about eighty Buddhist monks, stormed the Jeevanalokaya Sabhawa church in the Weeraketiya area of Southern Province's Hambantota district during worship on Sunday morning, vandalized the property, and assaulted the pastor and two police officers. The day before, the Buddhist monks had given notice that the church must close

News to inspire

down. Estimated damage to the church was US \$4,000.

Earlier, Buddhist monks forcibly occupied a Seventh-day Adventist Church and converted it into a Buddhist temple. On August 9, 2012, a mob attacked the pastor of an Assemblies of God Church, his wife, and a female worker of the Methodist Church in Deniyaya.

More than 70 percent of the 20.4 million people in Sri Lanka are Buddhist, mostly from the dominant Sinhalese ethnic group, according to Operation World. Christians are estimated to be 8.4 percent of the population, with more than 40 percent of Protestant Christians being from the minority Tamil ethnic group.

New believers in Benin

Before leaving for Ghana, we held a seminar in Potor Morvo with a new group of 23 interested souls. This was the first time I had met them, as they

attend different churches. A pastor from one of their churches was the one who organized this seminar. Pray with us to see what God will do for this group.

—Brother Mohammed

From the Morning Star News

It is not currently possible to do any evangelization work in Sri Lanka, since Buddhist extremists have issued a warning to all Christians that they cannot conduct any religious or missionary activity, including house-to-house visits, prayer meetings, etc. These extremists are not against the Catholics and mainstream churches but are angry with small groups, believing that a lot of Buddhists have joined these churches.

One of our brothers had a narrow escape recently. A group of Buddhists found him distributing leaflets at a bus stop. They



A group of believers in Benin

wanted to beat him, but the police arrived in time and took him to the Police station. He was treated well by the police, but they told him not to engage in any religious activity in public, even though the country's constitution provides for freedom of religion. By the grace of God, our

brother returned home with the help of the police. Let us pray for the Christians in Sri Lanka, especially those of the household of faith. May God bless you.

—Douglas Francis
GC Treasurer/
Director, Asia Division

The Greatest Missionary Work



We should remember that God has honored the young. He chose Joseph in his youth to do a special work in behalf of His people. He accepted Samuel when his mother dedicated him to His service, and passed by the aged priest who had neglected to fulfill his solemn, sacred charge, and had failed to train his children in the right way. The Lord communicated a

solemn message to the boy Samuel. The Lord has died for children, and He is ready to do a great work for them if parents will cooperate with Him in training and educating their children according to the instruction that He has given. The character in childhood of John the Baptist should be an encouragement to parents in the training of their children.

To bring up the children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord is the greatest missionary work that parents can perform. The mother is entrusted with a greater work than is the king upon his throne. She has a class of duty to perform in connection with her children

that no other one can perform. If she daily learns in the school of Christ, she will discharge her duty in the fear of God, and care for the children as the Lord's beautiful flock.

Mothers should forbear from fretting and scolding. It is not safe to practice habits of fretting and scolding, for you will become unpleasant and harsh in your home, and will be likely to burst into a passion at anything that displeases you. This would greatly injure your soul, and injure the souls of your family. Be patient, be kind, be gentle. Gain the confidence and love of your children, and it will not be difficult to control them. Never fret,

never threaten, never make a promise to your children that you cannot fulfill. Your lack of fulfilling your word will weaken the confidence of your children in you.

Children are exhorted to obey their parents in the Lord, but parents are also enjoined, "Provoke not your children to wrath, lest they be discouraged." Do not treat them in such a way that they will think that there is no use trying to be good and to do right, for they are treated with injustice and in an unreasonable manner. Children born into the world in this age have many difficulties to encounter. Sin will lie at the door of parents unless they

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take themselves in hand and qualify themselves to become wise, safe, Christian teachers.

No doubt you will see faults and waywardness on the part of your children. Some parents will tell you that they talk to and punish their children, but they cannot see that it does them any real good. Let such parents try new methods. Let them mingle kindness and affection and love with their family government, and yet let them be as firm as a rock to right principles. Oftentimes the waywardness of children is due to the mismanagement of parents.

When children have done wrong, they themselves are convicted of their sin and feel humiliated and distressed. To scold them for their faults will

often result in making them stubborn and secretive. Like unruly colts, they seem determined to make trouble, and scolding will do them no good. Parents should seek to divert their minds into some other channel.

But the trouble is, parents are not uniform in their management, but move more from impulse than from principle. They fly into a passion and do not set an example before their children that Christian parents should. One day they pass over the wrongdoings of their children, and the next day they manifest no patience or self-control. They do not keep the way of the Lord to do justice and judgment. They are often more guilty than are their children.

Some children will soon forget a wrong that is done to them by father and mother, but other children who are differently constituted cannot forget severe, unreasonable punishment which they did not deserve. Thus their souls are injured, and their minds bewildered. The mother loses her opportunities to instill right principles into the mind of the child, because she did not maintain self-control and manifest a well-balanced mind in her deportment and words.

Let fathers and mothers make a solemn promise to God whom they profess to love and obey, that by His grace they will not disagree between themselves, but will in their own life and temper manifest the spirit that they wish their children

to cherish. The manifestation of anger on account of the misdeeds of your children will never help them to reform. Parents may manifest sorrow on account of the wrongs of their little ones, and at the same time show love for their children. Let parents set before their children their errors and wrongs not in a spirit of harshness, but in love. Let them seek to reach the tender heart of the erring one, that he may feel he has grieved Jesus who loves him more than his earthly parents can. But while it is the duty of parents to teach love to their children, they are not to indulge them in wrong habits, or in yielding to their evil inclinations. The manifestation of this kind of love is cruel.

—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 2, pp. 278-280.

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