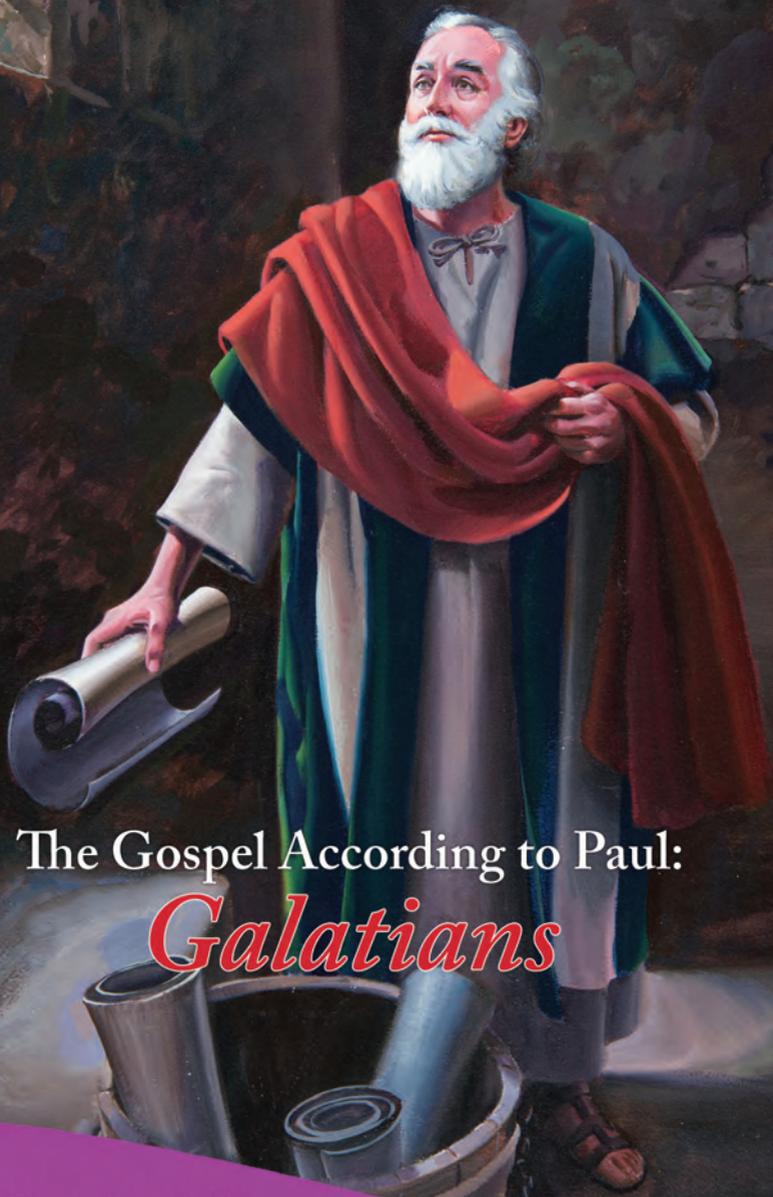


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS

Senior Division



The Gospel According to Paul:

Galatians

Vol. 97, No. 4

October–December, 2021

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

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Foreword

This quarter, Sabbath school students around the world will be studying about the gospel according to Paul as revealed in his epistle to the Galatians. What can we learn from this brief, yet powerful epistle?

“[In Galatia,] many taught that it was necessary to observe the Jewish customs and ceremonies; that a mere observance of the law, without faith in the blood of Christ, was sufficient for salvation.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 553.

“Paul pleaded with those who had once known in their lives the power of God, to return to their first love of gospel truth. With unanswerable arguments he set before them their privilege of becoming free men and women in Christ, through whose atoning grace all who make full surrender are clothed with the robe of His righteousness. He took the position that every soul who would be saved must have a genuine, personal experience in the things of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 388.

“The apostle saw that if these believers in Galatia were saved from the dangerous influences which threatened them, the most decisive measures must be taken, the sharpest warnings given.”—*Ibid.*, p. 387.

“Redemption in Christ means to cease the transgression of the law of God and to be free from every sin; no heart that is stirred with enmity against the law of God is in harmony with Christ, who suffered on Calvary to vindicate and exalt the law before the universe.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 95.

“[Christ’s] gushing blood, His broken body, satisfy the claims of the broken law, and thus He bridges the gulf which sin has made. He suffered in the flesh that with His bruised and broken body He might cover the defenseless sinner. The victory gained at His death on Calvary broke forever the accusing power of Satan over the universe and silenced his charges that self-denial was impossible with God and therefore not essential in the human family.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 153.

“God desires that heaven’s plan shall be carried out, and heaven’s divine order and harmony prevail, in every family, in every church, in every institution. Did this love leaven society, we should see the outworking of noble principles in Christian refinement and courtesy, and in Christian charity toward the purchase of the blood of Christ. Spiritual transformation would be seen in all our families, in our institutions, in our churches. When this transformation takes place, these agencies will become instrumentalities by which God will impart heaven’s light to the world and thus, through divine discipline and training, fit men and women for the society of heaven. Jesus has gone to prepare mansions for those who are preparing themselves through His love and grace, for the abodes of bliss.”—*Ibid.*, p. 250.

May the Lord help us to be among those to truly appreciate this privilege!

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for a church building in Odessa, Ukraine

Odessa, the 4th largest city in Ukraine, has a population of 1,017,699 (2020). Situated on the northwest shore of the Black Sea at the crossroads of Europe, the Middle East and Asia, this multicultural transport hub is known for its resorts, beaches and recreational complexes. Odessa attracts a large number of tourists, especially in summertime. The seaport city is also a major scientific and educational center of the country, drawing students from both Ukraine and abroad.



Historically, the dominant religion in Odessa has long been Orthodox, yet other Christian denominations, as well as Judaism, are numerous as well. It is quite obvious that this city has plenty of opportunities for preaching the Gospel. The favorable time is coming to an end, and so much work needs to be done for the salvation of souls!

The message of Reformation is progressing in Odessa, and the interest is growing; there are church members and people searching for the truth, and in the autumn of 2018, a minister with his family moved to Odessa to carry out further missionary labors. Yet, unfortunately, we still do not have a permanent place for worship.

Dear brethren, we kindly ask you to support with your prayers (Luke 10:2) the proclamation of the everlasting gospel in our city. The servant of the Lord also gives timely messages that are especially relevant when considering Odessa: "A special work is to be done in places where people are constantly coming and going. Christ labored in Capernaum much of the time, because this was a place through which travelers were constantly passing, and where many often tarried."—*Evangelism*, p. 585. "The light comes, 'Go forward, enter new territories, and the ministering angels will go before you. . . . Erect memorials in humble houses of worship, and secure a place for the Lord's little flock who shall be cast out from the nominal churches.'" *Letters and Manuscripts*, vol. 14, Letter 260, 1899.

We believe that for the salvation of many, God desires to establish a lighthouse of truth in Odessa; therefore, we are asking for your generous offerings for the construction of a house of prayer in our city. We are grateful beforehand to you and to the Lord, and we pray that He may abundantly bless all of you.

Your brethren and sisters from Odessa

Paul's Conversion and Call

MEMORY TEXT: “To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins” (Acts 26:18, first part).

“From among the most bitter and relentless persecutors of the church of Christ, arose the ablest defender and most successful herald of the gospel.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 9.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 112–124.

Sunday

September 26

1. IN ZEALOUS FURY

- a. Who was Saul of Tarsus, and what misguided mission was he zealously carrying out? **Philippians 3:5, 6; Acts 26:4, 5, 9–11.**

“[Saul] had no personal knowledge of Jesus of Nazareth or of His mission, but he readily imbibed the scorn and hatred of the rabbis toward one who was so far from fulfilling their ambitious hopes; and after the death of Christ, he eagerly joined with priests and rulers in the persecution of His followers as a proscribed and hated sect.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 10.

- b. Yet, what scene had somehow troubled Saul's mind? **Acts 6:8–12; 7:57–60.**

“There had been no legal sentence passed upon Stephen; but the Roman authorities were bribed by large sums of money to make no investigation of the case. Saul seemed to be imbued with a frenzied zeal at the scene of Stephen's trial and death. He seemed to be angered at his own secret convictions that Stephen was honored of God at the very period when he was dishonored of men.”—*Ibid.*, p. 20.

2. ABRUPTLY ARRESTED

- a. Explain Saul's perspective and aim on the way to Damascus. Acts 9:1, 2.
-
-

"Saul was greatly esteemed by the Jews for his zeal in persecuting the believers. After the death of Stephen, he was elected a member of the Sanhedrim council, in consideration of the part he had acted on that occasion. This learned and zealous rabbi was a mighty instrument in the hand of Satan to carry out his rebellion against the Son of God."—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 20.

"Saul was about to journey to Damascus upon his own business; but he was determined to accomplish a double purpose, by searching out, as he went, all the believers in Christ. For this purpose he obtained letters from the high priest to read in the synagogues, which authorized him to seize all those who were suspected of being believers in Jesus, and to send them by messengers to Jerusalem, there to be tried and punished."—*Ibid.*, p. 21.

- b. What suddenly halted the fury of Saul—and how did he respond in fear? Acts 9:3–5 (first part).
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- c. What was Saul shocked to discover? Acts 9:5 (middle part).
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"What a humiliation it was to Paul to know that all the time he was using his powers against the truth, thinking he was doing God's service, he was persecuting Christ. When the Saviour revealed Himself to Paul in the bright beams of His glory, he was filled with abhorrence for his work and for himself. The power of Christ's glory might have destroyed him, but Paul was a prisoner of hope. He was made physically blind by the glory of the presence of Him whom he had blasphemed, but it was that he might have spiritual sight, that he might be awakened from the lethargy that had stupefied and deadened his perceptions. His conscience, aroused, now worked with self-accusing energy. The zeal of his work, his earnest resistance of the light shining upon him through God's messengers, now brought condemnation to his soul."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1058.

3. AWAKENED AS FROM A DREAM

a. What did Jesus mean by His concluding remark? Acts 9:5 (last part).

“The Saviour had spoken to Saul through Stephen, whose clear reasoning could not be controverted. The learned Jew had seen the face of the martyr reflecting the light of Christ’s glory—appearing as if ‘it had been the face of an angel’ (Acts 6:15). He had witnessed Stephen’s forbearance toward his enemies and his forgiveness of them. He had also witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of many whom he had caused to be tormented and afflicted. He had seen some yield up even their lives with rejoicing for the sake of their faith.

“All these things had appealed loudly to Saul and at times had thrust upon his mind an almost overwhelming conviction that Jesus was the promised Messiah. At such times he had struggled for entire nights against this conviction.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 116.

“Every effort to stay the onward progress of the gospel results in injury and suffering to the opposer. Sooner or later his own heart will condemn him; he will find that he has, indeed, been kicking against the pricks.”—*The Review and Herald*, March 16, 1911.

b. How did Saul react upon seeing he had been wrong? Acts 9:6 (first half).

“[Saul] was filled with bitter remorse. He no longer saw himself as righteous, but condemned by the law in thought, in spirit, and in deeds. He saw himself a sinner, utterly lost, without the Saviour he had been persecuting.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1058.

c. What followed in Saul’s experience? Acts 9:6 (last half), 9.

“In the days and nights of [Saul’s] blindness he had time for reflection, and he cast himself all helpless and hopeless upon Christ, the only one who could pardon him and clothe him with righteousness.”—*Ibid.*

4. DRASTIC CHANGE AT DAMASCUS

a. How did Christ bless Saul in Damascus? Acts 9:10, 15–18; 22:13–16.

“How different from what [Saul] had anticipated was his entrance into that city! In proud satisfaction he had neared Damascus, expecting on his arrival to be greeted with ostentation and applause because of the honor conferred upon him by the high priest, and the great zeal and penetration he had manifested in searching out the believers, to carry them as captives to Jerusalem, there to be condemned, and punished without mercy. . . . He had determined that no Christian should escape his vigilance; he would inquire of men, women, and children concerning their faith, and that of those with whom they were connected; he would enter houses, with power to seize their inmates, and to send them as prisoners to Jerusalem.

“But how changed was the scene from that which he had anticipated! Instead of wielding power and receiving honor, he was himself virtually a prisoner, being deprived of sight, and dependent upon the guidance of his companions. Helpless, and tortured by remorse, he felt himself to be under the sentence of death. . . .

“He seemed to be utterly shut out from human sympathy; and he reflected, and prayed with a thoroughly broken and repentant spirit.

“Those three days were like three years to the blind and conscience-smitten Jew.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, pp. 25, 27.

“The faith of Saul was severely tested during the three days of fasting and prayer at the house of Judas, in Damascus. He was totally blind, and in utter darkness of mind as to what was required of him. . . . In his uncertainty and distress he cried earnestly to God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 29.

“Saul becomes a learner of the disciples. In the light of the law he sees himself a sinner. He sees that Jesus, whom in his ignorance he had considered an imposter, is the author and foundation of the religion of God’s people from the days of Adam, and the finisher of the faith now so clear to his enlightened vision. . . .

“By the light of the moral law, which he had believed himself to be zealously keeping, Saul saw himself a sinner of sinners. He repented, that is, died to sin, became obedient to the law of God, exercised faith in Jesus Christ as his Saviour, was baptized, and preached Jesus as earnestly and zealously as he had once denounced Him.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 30, 31.

“This wonderful conversion of Saul demonstrates in a startling manner the miraculous power of Christ in convicting the mind and heart of man.”—*Ibid.*, p. 27.

“Saul the persecutor was converted and became Paul the apostle to the Gentiles.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 699.

5. A DIVINE COMMISSION

a. Explain the distinct calling given to Saul—whose Hebrew name meaning “asked for, prayed for”—was later known by his name as a Roman citizen, “Paul,” meaning “small” or “humble.” Acts 26:16–18.

b. What central theme was he to emphasize—and why? Galatians 1:3.

“ ‘Grace be to you’ (Ephesians 1:2). We owe everything to God’s free grace. Grace in the covenant ordained our adoption. Grace in the Saviour effected our redemption, our regeneration, and our exaltation to heirship with Christ. Not because we first loved Him did God love us; but ‘while we were yet sinners,’ Christ died for us. . . . Although by our disobedience we have merited God’s displeasure and condemnation, yet He has not forsaken us, leaving us to grapple with the power of the enemy. Heavenly angels fight our battles for us, and cooperating with them, we may be victorious over the powers of evil.

“We should never have learned the meaning of this word ‘grace’ had we not fallen. God loves the sinless angels, who do His service and are obedient to all His commands, but He does not give them grace. These heavenly beings know nought of grace; they have never needed it, for they have never sinned. Grace is an attribute of God shown to undeserving human beings. We ourselves did not seek after it, but it was sent out in search of us. God rejoices to bestow this grace upon all who hunger for it, not because we are worthy, but because we are so utterly unworthy. Our need is the qualification which gives us the assurance that we shall receive this gift.

“God’s supply of grace is waiting the demand of every sinsick soul. It will heal every spiritual disease. By it hearts may be cleansed from all defilement. It is the gospel remedy for everyone who believes.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 34.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How may the Lord be sending me pricks of conscience as He did to Saul?
2. What happens when we either accept or reject those pricks of conscience?
3. How is the Lord wanting me to benefit from Saul’s early experience?
4. Why were the three days of blindness so essential to Saul’s future?
5. How can I be encouraged by the central theme of Paul’s message?

To the Churches in Galatia

MEMORY TEXT: “[Jesus Christ] gave himself for our sins, that he might deliver us from this present evil world, according to the will of God and our Father: to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Galatians 1:4, 5).

“Those who heard [Paul] knew that he had been with Jesus. Endued with power from on high, he was able to compare spiritual things with spiritual and to tear down the strongholds of Satan. Hearts were broken by his presentation of the love of God, as revealed in the sacrifice of His only-begotten Son, and many were led to inquire, What must I do to be saved?”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 208.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 123–127, 386, 387.

Sunday

October 3

1. DELIVERANCE FROM SIN

a. How did Paul introduce his epistle to the Galatians? Galatians 1:1–5.

“Paul and his fellow workers proclaimed the doctrine of righteousness by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ. They presented Christ as the one who, seeing the helpless condition of the fallen race, came to redeem men and women by living a life of obedience to God’s law and by paying the penalty of disobedience.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 207.

“By giving His life for the life of the world, Christ bridged the gulf that sin had made, joining this sin-cursed earth to the universe of heaven as a province. God chose this world to be the theater of His mighty works of grace. While the sentence of condemnation was suspended over it because of the rebellion of its inhabitants, while the clouds of wrath were accumulating because of the transgression of the law of God, a mysterious voice was heard in heaven, ‘Lo, I come . . . to do thy will, O God’ (Psalm 40:7, 8). Our substitute and surety came from heaven declaring that He had brought with Him the vast and inestimable donation of eternal life.”—*This Day With God*, p. 84.

2. DISTRACTION, SENSUALITY, SLANDER

a. What had occurred in Galatia that caused Paul concern? Galatians 1:6, 7.

“While tarrying at Corinth, Paul had cause for serious apprehension concerning some of the churches already established. Through the influence of false teachers who had arisen among the believers in Jerusalem, division, heresy, and sensualism were rapidly gaining ground among the believers in Galatia. These false teachers were mingling Jewish traditions with the truths of the gospel. Ignoring the decision of the general council at Jerusalem, they urged upon the Gentile converts the observance of the ceremonial law.

“The situation was critical. The evils that had been introduced threatened speedily to destroy the Galatian churches.

“Paul was cut to the heart, and his soul was stirred by this open apostasy on the part of those to whom he had faithfully taught the principles of the gospel. He immediately wrote to the deluded believers, exposing the false theories that they had accepted and with great severity rebuking those who were departing from the faith.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 383, 384.

b. What can cause such things to happen? Proverbs 16:28; Amos 2:4.

“In almost every church there were some members who were Jews by birth. To these converts the Jewish teachers found ready access, and through them gained a foothold in the churches. It was impossible, by scriptural arguments, to overthrow the doctrines taught by Paul; hence they resorted to the most unscrupulous measures to counteract his influence and weaken his authority. They declared that he had not been a disciple of Jesus, and had received no commission from Him; yet he had presumed to teach doctrines directly opposed to those held by Peter, James, and the other apostles. Thus the emissaries of Judaism succeeded in alienating many of the Christian converts from their teacher in the gospel. Having gained this point, they induced them to return to the observance of the ceremonial law as essential to salvation. Faith in Christ, and obedience to the law of ten commandments, were regarded as of minor importance. Division, heresy, and sensualism were rapidly gaining ground among the believers in Galatia.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1108.

3. FOLLOWING GOD'S WAY

- a. Why should we all heed the strong words Paul was constrained to declare to the churches in Galatia? Galatians 1:8, 9.
-

“Many have invented a gospel of their own in the same manner as they have substituted a law of their own for God’s law.”—*The Review and Herald*, September 3, 1901.

“To substitute external forms of religion for holiness of heart and life is still as pleasing to the unrenewed nature as it was in the days of these Jewish teachers. Today, as then, there are false spiritual guides, to whose doctrines many listen eagerly. It is Satan’s studied effort to divert minds from the hope of salvation through faith in Christ and obedience to the law of God. In every age the archenemy adapts his temptations to the prejudices or inclinations of those whom he is seeking to deceive. In apostolic times he led the Jews to exalt the ceremonial law and reject Christ; at the present time he induces many professing Christians, under pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt on the moral law and to teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every servant of God to withstand firmly and decidedly these perverters of the faith and by the word of truth fearlessly to expose their errors.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 387.

- b. Explain Paul’s position as God’s servant—and how it was reminiscent of Christ’s words on the Sermon on the Mount. Galatians 1:10; Luke 6:26, 22, 23 (first half).
-

“The truth of God has never been popular with the world. The natural heart is ever averse to the truth. I thank God that we must renounce the love of the world, and pride of heart, and everything which tends to idolatry, in order to be followers of the Man of Calvary. Those who obey the truth will never be loved and honored by the world. From the lips of the divine Teacher, as He walked in humility among the children of men, were heard the words: Whosoever will be My disciple, let him take up his cross, and follow Me. Yes, follow our Exemplar. Was He seeking for praise and honor of men? Oh, no! Shall we then seek for honor or praise from worldlings? Those who have no love for God will not love the children of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 491.

4. FOUNDED UPON THE ROCK

- a. **How was Paul's faith in Jesus established—and, while we may not have met Christ in a visible way as the apostle did—upon what is our faith likewise to be firmly grounded? Galatians 1:11, 12; Romans 16:25–27.**
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“It was through instruction received from God Himself that Paul was led to warn and admonish the Galatians in so solemn and positive a manner. He wrote, not in hesitancy and doubt, but with the assurance of settled conviction and absolute knowledge.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 386.

“The creative energy that called the worlds into existence is in the word of God. This word imparts power; it begets life. Every command is a promise; accepted by the will, received into the soul, it brings with it the life of the Infinite One. It transforms the nature and re-creates the soul in the image of God.

“The life thus imparted is in like manner sustained. ‘By every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God’ (Matthew 4:4) shall man live.”—*Education*, p. 126.

- b. **Why did Paul emphasize the life-changing transformation involved in his calling? Galatians 1:1, 13–16.**
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-

“In his effort to regain the confidence of his brethren in Galatia, Paul ably vindicated his position as an apostle of Christ. He declared himself to be an apostle, ‘not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.’ Not from men, but from the highest Authority in heaven, had he received his commission. And his position had been acknowledged by a general council at Jerusalem, with the decisions of which Paul had complied in all his labors among the Gentiles.

“It was not to exalt self, but to magnify the grace of God, that Paul thus presented to those who were denying his apostleship, proof that he was ‘not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles’ (2 Corinthians 11:5). Those who sought to belittle his calling and his work were fighting against Christ, whose grace and power were manifested through Paul. The apostle was forced, by the opposition of his enemies, to take a decided stand in maintaining his position and authority.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 387, 388.

5. ALONE WITH GOD

- a. Explain God's leading not long after Paul's conversion—and what we can learn from the benefit of it. Galatians 1:17; Job 22:21.
-

“As Paul continued to appeal to his astonished hearers to ‘repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance’ (Acts 26:20), he ‘increased the more in strength, and confounded the Jews which dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is very Christ.’ But many hardened their hearts, refusing to respond to his message, and soon their astonishment at his conversion was changed into intense hatred like that which they had shown toward Jesus.

“The opposition grew so fierce that Paul was not allowed to continue his labors at Damascus. A messenger from heaven bade him leave for a time, and he ‘went into Arabia’ (Galatians 1:17), where he found a safe retreat.

“Here, in the solitude of the desert, Paul had ample opportunity for quiet study and meditation. He calmly reviewed his past experience and made sure work of repentance. He sought God with all his heart, resting not until he knew for a certainty that his repentance was accepted and his sin pardoned. He longed for the assurance that Jesus would be with him in his coming ministry. He emptied his soul of the prejudices and traditions that had hitherto shaped his life, and received instruction from the Source of truth. Jesus communed with him and established him in the faith, bestowing upon him a rich measure of wisdom and grace.

“When the mind of man is brought into communion with the mind of God, the finite with the Infinite, the effect on body and mind and soul is beyond estimate. In such communion is found the highest education. It is God's own method of development.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 125, 126.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important for all to know the main purpose of Christ's mission?
2. How is the type of treatment Paul faced in Galatia often repeated today?
3. What is often the hidden motive behind criticism among God's people?
4. Why and how did Paul vindicate his authority as an apostle of Christ?
5. How can I arrange to have a period of greater quietude alone with God?

Onward to Antioch

MEMORY TEXT: “And [the Lord] said unto me, Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles” (Acts 22:21).

“How many act as if they realized the peril of sinners? How many take those whom they know to be in peril, presenting them to God in prayer and supplicating Him to save them?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 413.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 128–130, 155–159.

Sunday

October 10

1. EAGER TO SHARE HIS CONVERSION

a. What had Paul experienced upon his return to Damascus? Acts 9:22–25.

“The Jews could not withstand the wisdom of [Paul’s] arguments, and they therefore counseled together to silence his voice by force—the only argument left to a sinking cause. They decided to assassinate him. The apostle was made acquainted with their purpose. The gates of the city were vigilantly guarded, day and night, to cut off his escape. The anxiety of the disciples drew them to God in prayer; there was little sleeping among them, as they were busy in devising ways and means for the escape of the chosen apostle. Finally they conceived a plan by which he was let down from a window and lowered over the wall in a basket by night. In this humiliating manner Paul made his escape from Damascus.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 276.

b. Where had he gone next—and why? Galatians 1:18.

“[Paul] now proceeded to Jerusalem, wishing to become acquainted with the apostles there, and especially with Peter. He was very anxious to meet the Galilean fishermen who had lived, and prayed, and conversed with Christ upon earth.”—*Ibid.*

2. AN ODD RECEPTION

- a. Describe Paul's long-awaited introduction to the disciples. Acts 9:26–28.
-

“[Paul] attempted to join himself to his brethren, the disciples; but great was his grief and disappointment when he found that they would not receive him as one of their number. They remembered his former persecutions, and suspected him of acting a part to deceive and destroy them. True, they had heard of his wonderful conversion, but as he had immediately retired into Arabia, and they had heard nothing definite of him further, they had not credited the rumor of his great change.

“Barnabas, who had liberally contributed of his means to sustain the cause of Christ and to relieve the necessities of the poor, had been acquainted with Paul when he opposed the believers. He now came forward and renewed that acquaintance, heard the testimony of Paul in regard to his miraculous conversion, and his experience from that time. He fully believed and received Paul, took him by the hand, and led him into the presence of the apostles. He related his experience which he had just heard—that Jesus had personally appeared to Paul while on his way to Damascus; that He had talked with him; that Paul had recovered his sight in answer to the prayers of Ananias, and had afterward maintained in the synagogue of the city that Jesus was the Son of God.

“The apostles no longer hesitated; they could not withstand God. Peter and James, who at that time were the only apostles in Jerusalem, gave the right hand of fellowship to the once-fierce persecutor of their faith; and he was now as much beloved and respected as he had formerly been feared and avoided.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1058, 1059.

- b. How had Paul been received by others in Jerusalem? Acts 9:29.
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“Paul felt sure that these teachers in Israel, with whom he had once been so well acquainted, were as sincere and honest as he had been. But he had miscalculated the spirit of his Jewish brethren, and in the hope of their speedy conversion he was doomed to bitter disappointment. . . . Sorrow filled his heart. He would willingly have yielded up his life if by that means he might bring some to a knowledge of the truth.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 129.

3. TIME TO MOVE

- a. **What had the Lord told Paul in vision at Jerusalem? Acts 22:17–21.**
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“Paul . . . hesitated to leave Jerusalem without convincing the obstinate Jews of the truth of his faith; he thought that, even if his life should be sacrificed for the truth, it would not more than settle the fearful account which he held against himself for the death of Stephen. . . . But the reply was more decided than before: ‘Depart: for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.’

“When the brethren learned of the vision of Paul, and the care which God had over him, their anxiety on his behalf was increased; for they realized that he was indeed a chosen vessel of the Lord, to bear the truth to the Gentiles. They hastened his secret escape from Jerusalem, for fear of his assassination by the Jews.”—*The Story of Redemption*, pp. 279, 280.

- b. **As a result of this situation, what did Paul relate about how limited his time was among the disciples? Galatians 1:19, 20, 22.**
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- c. **How did God provide for Paul—while smoothing the way for the church in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria to grow also? Galatians 1:21; Acts 9:30, 31.**
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- d. **Relate the history of the rise and progress of the church at Antioch, the commercial resort metropolis of Syria. Acts 11:19–26 (first part).**
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“In the populous city of Antioch, Paul found an excellent field of labor. His learning, wisdom, and zeal exerted a powerful influence over the inhabitants and frequenters of that city of culture; and he proved just the help that Barnabas needed.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 156.

“While it is in the order of God that chosen workers of consecration and talent should be stationed in important centers of population to lead out in public efforts, it is also His purpose that the church members living in these cities shall use their God-given talents in working for souls.”—*Ibid.*, p. 158.

4. THE CHURCH AT ANTIOCH

- a. What was distinctive about the church at Antioch? Acts 11:26 (last part).
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“It was in Antioch that the disciples were first called Christians. The name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, their teaching, and their conversation. Continually they were recounting the incidents that had occurred during the days of His earthly ministry, when His disciples were blessed with His personal presence. Untiringly they dwelt upon His teachings and His miracles of healing. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He had endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He had prayed for those who persecuted Him. His resurrection and ascension, and His work in heaven as the Mediator for fallen man, were topics on which they rejoiced to dwell. Well might the heathen call them Christians, since they preached Christ and addressed their prayers to God through Him.

“It was God who gave to them the name of Christian. This is a royal name, given to all who join themselves to Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 157.

- b. How does Scripture reveal the name “Christian” to be a badge of honor? James 2:7; 1 Peter 4:16, 14.
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- c. Living as we do in a world where the vast majority are unbelievers, how can we be inspired by the early disciples? Acts 4:13.
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“Living, as [the believers at Antioch] were, in the midst of a people who seemed to care but little for the things of eternal value, they sought to arrest the attention of the honest in heart, and to bear positive testimony concerning Him whom they loved and served. In their humble ministry they learned to depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit to make effective the word of life. And so, in the various walks of life, they daily bore testimony of their faith in Christ.”—*Ibid.*, p. 158.

5. GLORIFYING GOD

- a. How can we be encouraged and motivated by the report the churches in Judaea received about the labors of Paul? Galatians 1:23, 24.
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“The apostle Paul could say of the early church: ‘They glorified God in me.’ Galatians 1:24. Shall we not strive to live so that the same words can be said of us? The Lord will provide ways and means for those who will seek Him with the whole heart. He desires us to acknowledge the divine superintendence shown in preparing fields of labor and preparing the way for these fields to be occupied successfully.

“Let ministers and evangelists have more seasons of earnest prayer with those who are convicted by the truth. Remember that Christ is always with you. The Lord has in readiness the most precious exhibitions of His grace to strengthen and encourage the sincere, humble worker. Then reflect to others the light which God has caused to shine upon you. Those who do this bring to the Lord the most precious offering. The hearts of those who bear the good tidings of salvation are aglow with the spirit of praise.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 413.

“The cause of God in the earth today is in need of living representatives of Bible truth. The ordained ministers alone are not equal to the task of warning the great cities. God is calling not only upon ministers, but also upon physicians, nurses, colporteurs, Bible workers, and other consecrated laymen of varied talent who have a knowledge of the word of God and who know the power of His grace, to consider the needs of the unwarned cities. Time is rapidly passing, and there is much to be done. Every agency must be set in operation, that present opportunities may be wisely improved.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 158, 159.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should I learn from Paul’s reason for moving from place to place?
2. In my sphere of influence, how can I be more like Barnabas was to Paul?
3. What can I do to help my local church to shine as the one in Antioch did?
4. In reading Paul’s story in Galatians 1:11–24, what should I observe from how he did not murmur or complain about all that he actually suffered?
5. What might I be allowing to prevent me from glorifying God more fully?

Growing in Harmony

MEMORY TEXT: “And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter” (Acts 15:6).

“The middle wall of partition between the Jew and Gentile was broken down. They were no longer in separate rooms; the unbelieving Gentile has been united with the believing Jew. The Gentile did not crowd the Jews from their original position, but he became a partaker with them of their blessings. Thus was fulfilled the mission of Christ.”—*The Signs of the Times*, August 25, 1887.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 160–165, 188–200.

Sunday

October 17

1. SENT OUT ON A MISSION

- a. After the one year of Paul and Barnabas in Antioch, how did the local church acknowledge their calling in an official way—urging them to enter new fields? Acts 13:1–3. What should this teach us?

“God had abundantly blessed the labors of Paul and Barnabas during the year they remained with the believers in Antioch. But neither of them had as yet been formally ordained to the gospel ministry. . . .

“Before being sent forth as missionaries to the heathen world, these apostles were solemnly dedicated to God by fasting and prayer and the laying on of hands.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 160, 161.

“Place after place is to be visited; church after church is to be raised up. Those who take their stand for the truth are to be organized into churches, and then the minister is to pass on to other equally important fields.

“Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members to work. The newly-formed churches will need to be educated. The minister should devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. He should teach the people how to extend the knowledge of the truth.”—*Pacific Union Recorder*, April 24, 1902.

2. CONVEYING AND CONSULTING

- a. **What could Paul and Barnabas testify about their missionary labors? Acts 14:27. How are we to seek a similar experience today? Zechariah 10:1.**

“Decided efforts should be made to open new fields in the north, the south, the east, and the west.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 19, 20.

“Our ministers are not to hover over the churches, regarding the churches in some particular place as their special care. And our churches should not feel jealous and neglected if they do not receive ministerial labor. They should themselves take up the burden, and labor most earnestly for souls. Believers are to have root in themselves, striking firm root in Christ, that they may bear fruit to His glory. As one man, they are to strive to attain one object—the saving of souls.

“All who know the truth should impart this knowledge to others. We need now to train men, and set them at work, giving them every facility for the impartation of truth. There is at this time a great dearth of laborers. Scores of men and women might be set at work.”—*Australasian Union Conference Record*, August 1, 1902.

“Soon the time to labor will be past. Who does not want to have a part in this closing work? All can do something.”—*Historical Sketches*, p. 173.

- b. **Describe the challenge that eventually came to Paul and Barnabas—and the response they took. Acts 15:1, 2; Galatians 2:1–5.**

“Paul . . . describes the visit which he made to Jerusalem to secure a settlement of the very questions which are now agitating the churches of Galatia, as to whether the Gentiles should submit to circumcision and keep the ceremonial law.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1108.

- c. **What did the general meeting of believers consider—and what example does this also provide for us? Acts 15:4–6.**

“Brethren are to counsel together, for we are just as much under the control of God in one part of His vineyard as in another.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 233.

3. ASSEMBLING TO UNITE ON GOD'S WILL

- a. How did the general council of believers proceed and what did they conclude? Galatians 2:7–10; Acts 15:7–14, 19, 20.
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“[Paul’s visit to Jerusalem] was the only instance in which he had deferred to the judgment of the other apostles as superior to his own. He had first sought a private interview, in which he set the matter in all its bearings before the leading apostles, Peter, James, and John. With far-seeing wisdom, he concluded that if these men could be led to take a right position, everything would be gained. Had he first presented the question before the whole council, there would have been a division of sentiment. The strong prejudice already excited because he had not enforced circumcision on the Gentiles, would have led many to take a stand against him. Thus the object of his visit would have been defeated, and his usefulness greatly hindered. But the three leading apostles, against whom no such prejudice existed, having themselves been won to the true position, brought the matter before the council, and won from all a concurrence in the decision to leave the Gentiles free from the obligations of the ceremonial law.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1108.

- b. What response was then sent back to Antioch? Acts 15:22–31.
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- c. Why are all believers to be vigilant in prayerfully studying and sharing the truths of God’s word? 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Timothy 2:15; 4:2–4.
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“In every age the archenemy adapts his temptations to the prejudices or inclinations of the people. In apostolic times he led the Jews to exalt the ceremonial law, and reject Christ; at the present day he induces many professed Christians, under the pretense of honoring Christ, to cast contempt upon the moral law, and teach that its precepts may be transgressed with impunity. It is the duty of every faithful servant of God, to firmly and decidedly withstand these perverters of the faith, and to fearlessly expose their errors by the word of truth.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 192.

4. A LEARNING CURVE

- a. What happened when Peter (coming from Jerusalem, where he had to deal with the Jews and their prejudices) visited Antioch? Galatians 2:11–13.
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“Jerusalem was the metropolis of the Jews, and it was there that the greatest exclusiveness and bigotry were found. The Jewish Christians living within sight of the temple naturally allowed their minds to revert to the peculiar privileges of the Jews as a nation. When they saw the Christian church departing from the ceremonies and traditions of Judaism, and perceived that the peculiar sacredness with which the Jewish customs had been invested would soon be lost sight of in the light of the new faith, many grew indignant with Paul as the one who had, in a large measure, caused this change. Even the disciples were not all prepared to accept willingly the decision of the council. Some were zealous for the ceremonial law, and they regarded Paul with disfavor because they thought that his principles in regard to the obligations of the Jewish law were lax.

“The broad and far-reaching decisions of the general council brought confidence into the ranks of the Gentile believers, and the cause of God prospered. . . .

“When Peter, at a later date, visited Antioch, he won the confidence of many by his prudent conduct toward the Gentile converts. For a time he acted in accordance with the light given from heaven. He so far overcame his natural prejudice as to sit at table with the Gentile converts. But when certain Jews who were zealous for the ceremonial law, came from Jerusalem, Peter injudiciously changed his deportment toward the converts from paganism. A number of the Jews ‘dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation.’ This revelation of weakness on the part of those who had been respected and loved as leaders, left a most painful impression on the minds of the Gentile believers. The church was threatened with division.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 197, 198.

- b. How did Paul rectify the matter? Galatians 2:14.
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“Paul, who saw the subverting influence of the wrong done to the church through the double part acted by Peter, openly rebuked him for thus disguising his true sentiments.”—*Ibid.*, p. 198.

5. A LESSON FOR ALL

- a. What should we learn from the way Peter accepted Paul's rebuke—and why the correction was done publicly? Psalm 141:5; Proverbs 27:5.

“At Antioch Peter failed in the principles of integrity. Paul had to withstand his subverting influence face to face. This is recorded that others may profit by it, and that the lesson may be a solemn warning to the men in high places, that they may not fail in integrity, but keep close to principle. . . .

“May God give every man a sense of his own personal helplessness to steer his own vessel straight and safely into the harbor. The grace of Christ is essential every day. His matchless grace alone can save our feet from falling.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1108, 1109.

“Peter saw the error into which he had fallen, and immediately set about repairing the evil that had been wrought, so far as was in his power. God, who knows the end from the beginning, permitted Peter to reveal this weakness of character in order that the tried apostle might see that there was nothing in himself whereof he might boast. Even the best of men, if left to themselves, will err in judgment. God also saw that in time to come some would be so deluded as to claim for Peter and his pretended successors the exalted prerogatives that belong to God alone. And this record of the apostle's weakness was to remain as a proof of his fallibility and of the fact that he stood in no way above the level of the other apostles. . . .

“The greater the responsibilities placed upon the human agent, and the larger his opportunities to dictate and control, the more harm he is sure to do if he does not carefully follow the way of the Lord and labor in harmony with the decisions arrived at by the general body of believers in united council.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 198, 199.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What should we learn from the seemingly short time Paul was at Antioch?
2. Why does God direct His people to gather at times and scatter at times?
3. What can I learn when a council of believers decides differently than I hoped?
4. How might I be in danger of slipping in the trap into which Peter tripped?
5. What should I keep in mind if reproved as Peter was, even publicly?

Living Entirely by Grace

MEMORY TEXT: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

“Genuine faith appropriates the righteousness of Christ, and the sinner is made an overcomer with Christ; for he is made a partaker of the divine nature, and thus divinity and humanity are combined.”—*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 177.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 219–231.

Sunday

October 24

1. GOD’S REGENERATING GRACE

- a. How does Paul present God’s grace in the plan of salvation—and the attitude with which we are to accept it? Galatians 2:15–18; Ephesians 2:8–10.

“The Chief Shepherd is Judge and illustrates the great principles which are to regulate the proceedings of the reckoning with His servants who are justified by faith, judged by their works. Faith works by love and purifies the soul of moral defilement that it may become a temple for the Lord.”—*This Day With God*, p. 208.

“Without faith it is impossible to please God. Living faith enables its possessor to lay hold on the merits of Christ, enables him to derive great comfort and satisfaction from the plan of salvation.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 364.

“While we are to be in harmony with God’s law, we are not saved by the works of the law, yet we cannot be saved without obedience. The law is the standard by which character is measured. But we cannot possibly keep the commandments of God without the regenerating grace of Christ. Jesus alone can cleanse us from all sin. He does not save us by law, neither will He save us in disobedience to law.”—*Faith and Works*, pp. 95, 96.

2. UNDERSTANDING GRACE

- a. To what is any attempt to obtain salvation by our own strength—or through any supposed achievement of our own—compared? Genesis 4:3–5.
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“If a man could save himself by his own works, he might have something in himself in which to rejoice. The effort that man makes in his own strength to obtain salvation is represented by the offering of Cain.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.

- b. What does God’s grace actually do for us? Titus 2:11–14; 3:4–7.
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“Jesus stands in the holy of holies, now to appear in the presence of God for us. There He ceases not to present His people moment by moment, complete in Himself. But because we are thus represented before the Father, we are not to imagine that we are to presume upon His mercy and become careless, indifferent, and self-indulgent. Christ is not the minister of sin. We are complete in Him, accepted in the Beloved, only as we abide in Him by faith.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 107.

- c. Explain the great depth of our tremendous need of God’s grace continually. 2 Corinthians 3:3–5; Galatians 2:19.
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“We are justified by faith. The soul who understand the meaning of these words will never be self-sufficient. We are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything of ourselves. The Holy Spirit is our efficiency in the work of character building, in forming characters after the divine similitude. When we think ourselves capable of molding our own experience, we make a great mistake. We can never of ourselves obtain the victory over temptation. But those who have genuine faith in Christ will be worked by the Holy Spirit. The soul in whose heart faith abides will grow into a beautiful temple for the Lord. He is directed by the grace of Christ. Just in proportion as he depends on the Holy Spirit’s teaching he will grow.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1109.

3. TRUSTING IN THE SUPPLIER OF GRACE

- a. How can we sustain the benefits of God's grace in our life? Hebrews 12:1-3.
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"All that man can do without Christ is polluted with selfishness and sin; but that which is wrought through faith is acceptable to God. When we seek to gain heaven through the merits of Christ, the soul makes progress. Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, we may go on from strength to strength, from victory to victory; for through Christ the grace of God has worked out our complete salvation."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 364.

"No one can be justified by any works of his own. He can be delivered from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation of the law, from the penalty of transgression, only by virtue of the suffering, death, and resurrection of Christ. Faith is the only condition upon which justification can be obtained, and faith includes not only belief but trust."—*Ibid.*, p. 389.

"When the sinner has a view of the matchless charms of Jesus, sin no longer looks attractive to him; for he beholds the Chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely. He realizes by a personal experience the power of the gospel, whose vastness of design is equaled only by its preciousness of purpose."—*Faith and Works*, p. 107.

- b. How are we to avoid frustrating God's grace? Galatians 2:21.
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"Solid faith will not lead anyone away into fanaticism or into acting the slothful servant. It is the bewitching power of Satan that leads men to look to themselves in the place of looking to Jesus. The righteousness of Christ must go before us if the glory of the Lord becomes our reward. If we do God's will, we may accept large blessings as God's free gift, but not because of any merit in us; this is of no value. Do the work of Christ, and you will honor God and come off more than conquerors through Him that has loved us and given His life for us, that we should have life and salvation in Jesus Christ."—*Ibid.*, pp. 27, 28.

"While true faith trusts wholly in Christ for salvation, it will lead to perfect conformity to the law of God. Faith is manifested by works."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1073.

4. STAYING PURE OR BECOMING TAINTED?

- a. How can we summarize the awesome experience of living by God's grace? Galatians 2:20.
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"Through the grace of Christ, we may accomplish everything that God requires."—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 94.

"The propensities that control the natural heart must be subdued by the grace of Christ before fallen man is fitted to enter heaven and enjoy the society of the pure, holy angels. When man dies to sin and is quickened to new life in Christ, divine love fills his heart; his understanding is sanctified; he drinks from an inexhaustible fountain of joy and knowledge, and the light of an eternal day shines upon his path, for with him continually is the Light of life."—*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 250.

"The touch of faith opens to us the divine treasure house of power and wisdom; and thus, through instruments of clay, God accomplishes the wonders of His grace. This living faith is our great need today. We must know that Jesus is indeed ours; that His Spirit is purifying and refining our hearts. If the followers of Christ had genuine faith, with meekness and love, what a work they might accomplish! What fruit would be seen to the glory of God!"—*Ibid.*, p. 265.

- b. Why did Paul become greatly alarmed for the believers living in Galatia, and what should we learn from this? Galatians 3:1; John 3:3.
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"The apostle urged the Galatians to leave the false guides by whom they had been misled, and to return to the faith that had been accompanied by unmistakable evidences of divine approval. The men who had attempted to lead them from their belief in the gospel were hypocrites, unholy in heart and corrupt in life. Their religion was made up of a round of ceremonies, through the performance of which they expected to gain the favor of God. They had no desire for a gospel that called for obedience to the word. 'Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3. They felt that a religion based on such a doctrine, required too great a sacrifice, and they clung to their own errors, deceiving themselves and others.

"To substitute external forms of religion for holiness of heart and life is still as pleasing to the unrenewed nature as it was in the days of these Jewish teachers. Today, as then, there are false spiritual guides, to whose doctrines many listen eagerly. It is Satan's studied effort to divert minds from the hope of salvation through faith in Christ and obedience to the law of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 386, 387.

5. KEEPING CHRIST AS OUR FOCUS

- a. What questions did Paul ask to open the eyes of the Galatians to see the specific type of “bewitching” that had deluded them? Galatians 3:2–5.

“Satan is the bewitcher, and he has wrought, that Christ may be expelled from the soul, and that he himself may be there enthroned.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 336.

- b. In contrast, what was the focus of Paul’s teaching? 2 Corinthians 4:5, 6.

“It was not to exalt self, but to magnify the grace of God, that Paul . . . presented to those who were denying his apostleship, proof that he was ‘not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.’ 2 Corinthians 11:5. Those who sought to belittle his calling and his work were fighting against Christ, whose grace and power were manifested through Paul. The apostle was forced, by the opposition of his enemies, to take a decided stand in maintaining his position and authority.

“Paul pleaded with those who had once known in their lives the power of God, to return to their first love of gospel truth. With unanswerable arguments he set before them their privilege of becoming free men and women in Christ, through whose atoning grace all who make full surrender are clothed with the robe of His righteousness. He took the position that every soul who would be saved must have a genuine, personal experience in the things of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 388.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do I need to realize about God’s grace?
2. How can I grow in grace?
3. How is faith manifested?
4. What was so dangerous about those who had bewitched the Galatians?
5. What might cause me to be in peril of losing my first love of the gospel?

First Sabbath Offering for literature for needy fields

We live in an age of information, yet also misinformation. There is so much rampant false information, it is often difficult and time-consuming to try to sift through the false in order to try to find the true. This is typically recognized in the realm of news, but how much more important is it in the realm of religion, where eternity is at stake and likewise “ ‘a lie will go around the world while truth is putting on his boots.’ ”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 463.



Even with all the valuable digital resources available with today’s technology, research shows an interesting pattern: People still consider information to be more reliable—more credible—when it is in print. This may be due to the fact that printed material is generally well-thought-out and has a certain permanence to it rather than being quite as susceptible to sensationalism as in quicker forms of media. But whatever the reason, people do tend to trust printed pages the most.

This is why tracts, pamphlets, magazines, and booklets containing present truth are vital tools in the proclamation of the everlasting gospel. The production of such materials incurs an expense that, sadly, many cannot afford to pay, either in their own behalf or to share with others. Therefore, entrusted as believers are with the task of bearing the truth to precious souls in darkness around the world, we all have a sacred duty and privilege to help them receive it.

The First Sabbath Offering today is for literature for needy countries. Your generous—even sacrificial—offering can go a long way to help others learn of and prepare for the return of Christ.

“All can aid the cause by giving unselfishly of their means to help the various branches of the work, to furnish means for the publication of tracts and periodicals to scatter among the people, and disseminate the truth. Those who give money to promote the cause, are bearing a part of the burden of the work; they are colaborers with Christ, for God has furnished men with means, in trust, that they may use it for wise and holy purposes. This is among the instrumentalities which Heaven has ordained for doing good, one of the talents which men are to put out to the exchangers.”—*The Review and Herald*, January 9, 1883.

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The General Conference Publishing Department

Following Which Master?

MEMORY TEXT: “For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Samuel 15:23, first half).

“Those who present a doctrine contrary to that of the Bible are led by the great apostate who was cast out of the courts of God.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 331.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 137–148; vol. 2, pp. 461–465; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 635.

Sunday

October 31

1. A PERPETUAL PROBLEM

- a. What is often the subtle, underlying reason why many believers today become “bewitched,” as the Galatians were? 1 Samuel 15:17–23 (first half).

“It is the bewitching power of Satan that leads men to look to themselves in the place of looking to Jesus.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 27.

“Our cases are pending in the court of heaven. We are rendering our accounts there day by day. Everyone will be rewarded according to his works. Burnt offerings and sacrifices were not acceptable to God in ancient times unless the spirit was right with which the gift was offered. Samuel said: ‘Hath the Lord as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams.’ All the money on earth cannot buy the blessing of God nor ensure you a single victory.

“Many would make any and every sacrifice but the very one they *should* make, which is to yield themselves, to submit their wills to the will of God. Said Christ to His disciples: ‘Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.’ Here is a lesson in humility. We must all become humble as little children in order to inherit the kingdom.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 84.

2. LOVESICK BLINDNESS

- a. **What snare often fosters a bewitching power today—sometimes even among professed believers? Proverbs 6:23–26; 7:4, 5; 2 Timothy 3:5, 6.**
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“When Satan’s bewitching power controls a person, God is forgotten, and man who is filled with corrupt purposes is extolled. Secret licentiousness is practiced by these deceived souls as a virtue. This is a species of witchcraft. The question of the apostle to the Galatians may well be asked: ‘Who hath bewitched you, that ye should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ hath been evidently set forth, crucified among you?’ There is always a bewitching power in heresies and in licentiousness. The mind is so deluded that it cannot reason intelligently, and an illusion is continually leading it from purity. The spiritual eyesight becomes blurred, and persons of hitherto untainted morals become confused under the delusive sophistry of those agents of Satan who profess to be messengers of light. It is this delusion which gives these agents power. Should they come out boldly and make their advances openly they would be repulsed without a moment’s hesitation; but they work first to gain sympathy and secure confidence in themselves as holy, self-sacrificing men of God. As His special messengers they then begin their artful work of drawing away souls from the path of rectitude by attempting to make void the law of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 142, 143.

- b. **How can certain types of books, videos, websites, and even musical styles trigger thoughts that gradually lead to such problems? Proverbs 23:6–8.**
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“Love stories and frivolous and exciting tales constitute [a] class of books that is a curse to every reader. The author may attach a good moral and all through his work may weave religious sentiments, yet in most cases Satan is but clothed in angel robes, the more effectually to deceive and allure. The mind is affected in a great degree by that upon which it feeds. The readers of frivolous, exciting tales become unfitted for the duties lying before them. They live an unreal life and have no desire to search the Scriptures, to feed upon the heavenly manna. The mind is enfeebled and loses its power to contemplate the great problems of duty and destiny.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 7, p. 165.

3. OTHER INFLUENCES

- a. Besides those promoting frivolity or romance, what other types of reading, listening, and/or viewing materials can bewitch us? Name some lures the enemy uses to hook us. 1 John 2:15–17, 21 (last part); Acts 17:21.
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“The heart-sickening relation of crimes and atrocities has a bewitching power upon many youth, exciting in them the desire to bring themselves into notice, even by the most wicked deeds. . . . Books that delineate the satanic deeds of human beings are giving publicity to evil works. The horrible details of crime and misery need not be lived over, and none who believe the truth for this time should act a part in perpetuating their memory.”—*The Colporteur Evangelist*, p. 75.

“Another source of danger against which we should be constantly on guard is the reading of infidel authors. Such works are inspired by the enemy of truth, and no one can read them without imperiling the soul. . . . With a fascinating, bewitching power unbelief and infidelity fasten themselves upon the mind.”—*The Adventist Home*, p. 413.

- b. Describe one ploy of the enemy and how it was targeted at Jesus without success—yet too often succeeds with us. Luke 4:5–8; John 14:30.
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“It is the purpose of Satan to make the world very attractive. He has a bewitching power which he exercises to allure the affections of even the professed followers of Christ. There are many professedly Christian men who will make any sacrifice in order to gain riches. . . .

“It is alarming that so many are deluded by Satan. He excites the imagination with brilliant prospects of worldly gain, and men become infatuated, and think that before them is a prospect of perfect happiness. They are lured on by the hope of obtaining honor and riches and position. Satan says to the soul, ‘All this will I give thee, all this power and wealth with which you may do good to your fellow men;’ but when the object for which they seek is gained, they find themselves with no connection with the self-denying Redeemer. . . .

“It is often found that the change from godliness to worldliness has been made so imperceptibly by the wily insinuations of the evil one, that the deceived soul is not aware that he has parted company with Christ, and is His servant only in name.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, pp. 213–215.

4. FATAL DECEPTIONS

- a. Why must we earnestly contend for the Christian faith? Jude 3, 4, 8, 11.
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“Rebellion originated with Satan, and all rebellion against God is directly due to satanic influence. Those who set themselves against the government of God have entered into an alliance with the archapostate, and he will exercise his power and cunning to captivate the senses and mislead the understanding. He will cause everything to appear in a false light. Like our first parents, those who are under his bewitching spell see only the great benefits to be received by transgression.

“No stronger evidence can be given of Satan’s delusive power than that many who are thus led by him deceive themselves with the belief that they are in the service of God. . . .

“[King] Saul had manifested great zeal in suppressing idolatry and witchcraft; yet in his disobedience to the divine command he had been actuated by the same spirit of opposition to God and had been as really inspired by Satan as are those who practice sorcery; and when reproved, he had added stubbornness to rebellion. He could have offered no greater insult to the Spirit of God had he openly united with idolaters.

“It is a perilous step to slight the reproofs and warnings of God’s word or of His Spirit. Many, like Saul, yield to temptation until they become blind to the true character of sin. They flatter themselves that they have had some good object in view, and have done no wrong in departing from the Lord’s requirements. Thus they do despite to the Spirit of grace, until its voice is no longer heard, and they are left to the delusions which they have chosen.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 635.

“Every man, woman, and child that is not under the control of the Spirit of God is under the influence of Satan’s sorcery, and by his words and example he will lead others away from the path of truth.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 278.

“My brethren, God is grieved with your envying and jealousies, your bitterness and dissension. In all these things you are yielding obedience to Satan and not to Christ. . . . When men . . . are proud, vain, frivolous, worldly-minded, avaricious, unkind, censorious, we need not be told with whom they are associating, who is their most intimate friend. They may not believe in witchcraft; but, notwithstanding this, they are holding communion with an evil spirit.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 224, 225.

“Rebellion and apostasy are in the very air we breathe. We shall be affected by them unless we by faith hang our helpless souls upon Christ.”—*Lift Him Up*, p. 21.

5. TAKING ACTION

- a. In the days of the early apostles, what danger lurked in Samaria and how was it solved? Acts 8:9–13. Why can we especially be inspired by the step taken by some believers at Ephesus? Acts 19:17–20.

“Satan has a masterly mind, and he has his chosen agents by which he works to exalt men, and clothe them with honor above God. But God is clothed with power; He is able to take those who are dead in trespasses and sins, and by the operation of the Spirit which raised Jesus from the dead, transform the human character, bringing back to the soul the lost image of God.”—*The Youth’s Instructor*, February 7, 1895.

“The path to freedom from sin is through crucifixion of self, and conflict with the powers of darkness.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 321.

“Could a large share of the books published be consumed, a plague would be stayed that is doing a fearful work in weakening the mind and corrupting the heart. None are so confirmed in right principles as to be secure from temptation. All this trashy reading should be resolutely discarded.”—*The Colporteur Evangelist*, p. 76.

“The infidel, when converted, will abhor the books that led him to doubt the word of God. The dissolute man who has purified his soul by obedience to the truth, will not venture into the haunts of dissipation, from curiosity or habit. Neither will he permit his mind to dwell upon such scenes, portrayed in the pages of the sensualist. He will be awake to his danger, shunning temptation himself, and earnestly warning others of its bewitching power. Whatever the idol previously cherished, the converted man will not only resist evil, but will, so far as possible, place himself beyond the power of Satan. Again we would ask the followers of Christ, ‘Have you burned the magical books?’ ”—*The Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1882.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why would the enemy seek to stir up rebellion in Sabbathkeepers?
2. What must we realize about how adultery is portrayed in society today?
3. How can I follow more closely in Jesus’ steps when facing temptation?
4. In what areas of life might I be vulnerable to becoming bewitched?
5. What items of mine perhaps may best be discarded or even destroyed?

The Covenant of Grace

MEMORY TEXT: “That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith” (Galatians 3:14).

“Before the foundations of the earth were laid, the covenant was made that all who were obedient, all who should through the abundant grace provided, become holy in character, and without blame before God, by appropriating that grace, should be children of God. This covenant, made from eternity, was given to Abraham hundreds of years before Christ came.”—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 403.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 363–373.

Sunday

November 7

1. CHRIST IN PATRIARCHAL TIMES

- a. Addressing the Galatians influenced by Judaizers, how did Paul introduce the connection between Abraham—whom the Hebrews all claimed as their father by lineage—and Christ? Galatians 3:6–8.

“Not alone at the Saviour’s advent, but through all the ages after the Fall and the promise of redemption, ‘God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.’ 2 Corinthians 5:19. Christ was the foundation and center of the sacrificial system in both the patriarchal and the Jewish age. Since the sin of our first parents there has been no direct communication between God and man. The Father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through His mediatorial work He may redeem man and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God. All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 366.

- b. Who are the ones blessed in contrast to the cursed? Galatians 3:9, 10.
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2. CHRIST AND THE TWO LAWS

- a. Explain the connection between Christ and His eternal moral law of Ten Commandments. Isaiah 42:21; Galatians 3:11–14.
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“The law of God existed before man was created. It was adapted to the condition of holy beings; even angels were governed by it. After the Fall, the principles of righteousness were unchanged. Nothing was taken from the law; not one of its holy precepts could be improved. And as it has existed from the beginning, so will it continue to exist throughout the ceaseless ages of eternity. . . .

“By this law, which governs angels, which demands purity in the most secret thoughts, desires, and dispositions, and which shall ‘stand fast for ever’ (Psalm 111:8), all the world is to be judged in the rapidly approaching day of God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 220.

“Christ and the Father, standing side by side upon the mount, with solemn majesty proclaimed the Ten Commandments.”—*Evangelism*, p. 616.

“If the law of God could have been changed or abrogated, then Christ need not have suffered the consequences of our transgression. He came to explain the relation of the law to man, and to illustrate its precepts by His own life of obedience.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 307, 308.

- b. Explain the contrast in the ceremonial law that pointed forward to the sacrificial Lamb of God. Hebrews 9:27, 28 (first part); 10:1, 4–10.
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“The promise of a Saviour was given, and sacrificial offerings pointing forward to the death of Christ as the great sin offering were established. But had the law of God never been transgressed, there would have been no death, and no need of a Saviour; consequently there would have been no need of sacrifices.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 363.

“There are many who try to blend these two systems, using the texts that speak of the ceremonial law to prove that the moral law has been abolished; but this is a perversion of the Scriptures. The distinction between the two systems is broad and clear. The ceremonial system was made up of symbols pointing to Christ, to His sacrifice and His priesthood. This ritual law, with its sacrifices and ordinances, was to be performed by the Hebrews until type met antitype in the death of Christ, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world. Then all the sacrificial offerings were to cease.”—*Ibid.*, p. 365.

3. GRACE

- a. **When was the covenant of grace first needed and immediately provided, pointing to the Saviour to come? Genesis 3:9–11, 14, 15, 21.**
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“As soon as there was sin, there was a Saviour.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 210.

“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. To all men this covenant offered pardon and the assisting grace of God for future obedience through faith in Christ. It also promised them eternal life on condition of fidelity to God’s law. Thus the patriarchs received the hope of salvation.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 370.

- b. **How was this covenant renewed to Abraham—and when was it ratified? Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:14–18.**
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“[Abraham] trusted in Christ for the forgiveness of sins. It was this faith that was accounted unto him for righteousness. The covenant with Abraham also maintained the authority of God’s law. The Lord appeared unto Abraham, and said, ‘I am the Almighty God; walk before Me, and be thou perfect.’ Genesis 17:1. The testimony of God concerning His faithful servant was, ‘Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.’ Genesis 26:5. And the Lord declared to him, ‘I will establish My covenant between Me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations, for an *everlasting covenant*, to be a God unto thee and to thy seed after thee.’ Genesis 17:7.

“Though this covenant was made with Adam and renewed to Abraham, it could not be ratified until the death of Christ. It had existed by the promise of God since the first intimation of redemption had been given; it had been accepted by faith; yet when ratified by Christ, it is called a *new* covenant. The law of God was the basis of this covenant, which was simply an arrangement for bringing men again into harmony with the divine will, placing them where they could obey God’s law.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 370, 371.

4. THE TWO COVENANTS

- a. What was the “old” covenant, who broke it—and why could it not be trusted? Exodus 24:6–8; 32:1, 31.
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“Another compact—called in Scripture the ‘old’ covenant—was formed between God and Israel at Sinai, and was then ratified by the blood of a sacrifice. . . .

“In their bondage the people had to a great extent lost the knowledge of God and the principles of the Abrahamic covenant. . . .

“Living in the midst of idolatry and corruption, they had no conception of the holiness of God, of the exceeding sinfulness of their own hearts, their utter inability, in themselves, to render obedience to God’s law, and their need of a Saviour. All this they must be taught.

“God brought them to Sinai; He manifested His glory; He gave them His law, with the promise of great blessings on condition of obedience: ‘If ye will obey My voice indeed, and keep My covenant, then . . . ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation.’ Exodus 19:5, 6. 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. They had witnessed the proclamation of the law in awful majesty, and had trembled with terror before the mount; and yet only a few weeks passed before they broke their covenant with God, and bowed down to worship a graven image. They could not hope for the favor of God through a covenant which they had broken.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 371, 372.

- b. How did the Lord mercifully renew the original covenant given to Abraham, calling it the “new” covenant? Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Psalm 40:8.
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“The same law that was engraved upon tables of stone is written by the Holy Spirit upon the tables of the heart. Instead of going about to establish our own righteousness we accept the righteousness of Christ. His blood atones for our sins. His obedience is accepted for us. Then the heart renewed by the Holy Spirit will bring forth ‘the fruits of the Spirit.’ Through the grace of Christ we shall live in obedience to the law of God written upon our hearts. Having the Spirit of Christ, we shall walk even as He walked.”—*Ibid.*, p. 372.

5. CHRIST SHINING FROM WITHIN

- a. How does the New Testament describe the same covenant of grace for us today? Hebrews 8:10–13; James 2:18–23.
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“Abraham believed God. How do we know that he believed? His works testified to the character of his faith, and his faith was accounted to him for righteousness.

“We need the faith of Abraham in our day, to lighten the darkness that gathers around us, shutting out the sweet sunlight of God’s love, and dwarfing spiritual growth. Our faith should be prolific of good works; for faith without works is dead. Every duty performed, every sacrifice made in the name of Jesus, brings an exceeding great reward. In the very act of duty, God speaks and gives His blessing.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 79.

“The transforming power of Christ’s grace molds the one who gives himself to God’s service. Imbued with the Spirit of the Redeemer, he is ready to deny self, ready to take up the cross, ready to make any sacrifice for the Master. No longer can he be indifferent to the souls perishing around him. He is lifted above self-serving. He has been created anew in Christ, and self-serving has no place in his life. . . .

“Have you so deep an appreciation of the sacrifice made on Calvary that you are willing to make every other interest subordinate to the work of saving souls? The same intensity of desire to save sinners that marked the life of the Saviour marks the life of His true follower. The Christian has no desire to live for self. He delights to consecrate all that he has and is to the Master’s service. He is moved by an inexpressible desire to win souls to Christ. Those who have nothing of this desire might better be concerned for their own salvation. Let them pray for the spirit of service.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, pp. 9, 10.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Where was Christ in the Old Testament era?
2. What is the difference between the moral and ceremonial laws?
3. How long has the new covenant existed—and why is it called “new”?
4. By what means are we enabled to keep the moral law of a holy God?
5. What would you explain to someone accusing you of being “under the law”?

The Gospel in Its Purity

MEMORY TEXT: “Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ” (Galatians 4:7).

“God has given man a complete rule of life in His law. Obeyed, he shall live by it, through the merits of Christ. Transgressed, it has power to condemn. The law sends men to Christ, and Christ points them back to the law.”—*Our High Calling*, p. 138.

Suggested Readings: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 233–235, 340–344;
Manuscript Releases, vol. 9, pp. 181–187.

Sunday

November 14

1. OUR ONLY HOPE

- a. What should we learn from Paul’s focus, especially when sharing unpopular truth with others? 2 Corinthians 4:5; Galatians 3:19–22.

“To the Gentiles, [Paul] preached Christ as their only hope of salvation but did not at first have anything definite to say upon the law. But after their hearts were warmed with the presentation of Christ as the gift of God to our world, and what was comprehended in the work of the Redeemer in the costly sacrifice to manifest the love of God to man, in the most eloquent simplicity he showed that love for all mankind—Jew and Gentile—that they might be saved by surrendering their hearts to Him. Thus when, melted and subdued, they gave themselves to the Lord, he presented the law of God as the test of their obedience. This was the manner of working—adapting his methods to win souls. Had he been abrupt and unskillful in handling the Word, he would not have reached either Jew or Gentile.

“He led the Gentiles along to view the stupendous truths of the love of God. . . . The question was asked why such an immense sacrifice was required, and then he went back to the types, and down through the Old Testament Scripture, revealing Christ in the law, and they were converted to Christ and to the law.”—*The Southern Work*, p. 77.

2. BEING BROUGHT TO CHRIST

- a. To what is the law compared in relation to Christ and our great need of Him? Galatians 3:23–26; John 15:5.
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“As the sinner looks into the great moral looking glass, he sees his defects of character. He sees himself just as he is, spotted, defiled, and condemned. But he knows that the law cannot in any way remove the guilt or pardon the transgressor. He must go farther than this. The law is but the schoolmaster to bring him to Christ. He must look to his sin-bearing Saviour. And as Christ is revealed to him upon the cross of Calvary, dying beneath the weight of the sins of the whole world, the Holy Spirit shows him the attitude of God to all who repent of their transgressions. [John 3:16 quoted.]”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 213.

“I am asked concerning the law in Galatians. What law is the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ? I answer: Both the ceremonial and the moral code of ten commandments.”—*Ibid.*, p. 233.

“Through Christ, and Christ alone, the springs of life can vitalize man’s nature, transform his tastes, and set his affections flowing toward heaven.”—*Ibid.*, p. 341.

“[Galatians 3:24 quoted.] In this scripture, the Holy Spirit through the apostle is speaking especially of the moral law. The law reveals sin to us, and causes us to feel our need of Christ, and to flee unto Him for pardon and peace by exercising repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“The law of ten commandments is not to be looked upon as much from the prohibitory side as from the mercy side. Its prohibitions are the sure guarantee of happiness in obedience. As received in Christ, it works in us the purity of character that will bring joy to us through eternal ages. To the obedient it is a wall of protection. We behold in it the goodness of God, who by revealing to men the immutable principles of righteousness seeks to shield them from the evils that result from transgression. . . .

“The law is an expression of God’s idea. When we receive it in Christ, it becomes our idea. It lifts us above the power of natural desires and tendencies, above temptations that lead to sin.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1110.

- b. How is our pledge to Christ through baptism designed to confirm a transformation in our lives? Galatians 3:27; Romans 13:14.
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3. BLENDING IN HARMONY

a. Name one key aspect of Christ's true followers. Galatians 3:28.

“Whoever of the human family give themselves to Christ, whoever hear the truth and obey it, become children of one family. The ignorant and the wise, the rich and the poor, the heathen and the slave, white or black—Jesus paid the purchase money for their souls. If they believe on Him, His cleansing blood is applied to them. The black man's name is written in the book of life beside the white man's. All are one in Christ. Birth, station, nationality, or color cannot elevate or degrade men. The character makes the man. If a red man [American Indian], a Chinese, or an African gives his heart to God, in obedience and faith, Jesus loves him none the less for his color. He calls him His well-beloved brother.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 342.

“As the children of God are one in Christ, how does Jesus look upon caste, upon society distinctions, upon the division of man from his fellow man, because of color, race, position, wealth, birth, or attainments? The secret of unity is found in the equality of believers in Christ.”—*Ibid.*, bk. 1, p. 259.

b. Explain our Christian duty as disparities exist in society. Ephesians 6:5–9.

“Christ and His mission have been misrepresented and multitudes feel that they are virtually shut away from the ministry of the gospel. But let them not feel that they are shut away from Christ. There are no barriers which man or Satan can erect but that faith can penetrate.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

“There is no person, no nation, that is perfect in every habit and thought. One must learn of another. Therefore God wants the different nationalities to mingle together, to be one in judgment, one in purpose. Then the union that there is in Christ will be exemplified. . . .

“Look to Jesus, brethren; copy His manners and spirit, and you will have no trouble in reaching these different classes.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 180, 181.

“Christianity makes a strong bond of union between master and slave, king and subject, the gospel minister and the degraded sinner who has found in Christ cleansing from sin. They have been washed in the same blood, quickened by the same Spirit; and they are made one in Christ Jesus.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 460.

4. PURITY OF FAITH IN HIS SACRIFICE

- a. Explain the privilege of adoption into God's family. Galatians 3:29; 4:1–7. How does this happen? John 1:12, 13.
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“Through this simple act of believing God, the Holy Spirit has begotten a new life in your heart. You are as a child born into the family of God, and He loves you as He loves His Son.”—*Steps to Christ*, p. 52.

“How wonderful is the plan of redemption in its simplicity and fullness. It not only provides for the full pardon of the sinner but also for the restoration of the transgressor, making a way whereby he may be accepted as a son of God. Through obedience he may be the possessor of love and peace and joy. His faith may unite him in his weakness to Christ, the source of divine strength, and through the merits of Christ he may find the approval of God, because Christ has satisfied the demands of the law, and He imputes His righteousness to the penitent, believing soul.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 96.

- b. Due to the evil of pride in our human nature, what new ordinance did Christ give His church—yet how did the Galatians instead show a failure even to appreciate His crucifixion? John 13:14; Galatians 4:8–10.
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“This ordinance [of humility] does not speak so largely to man's intellectual capacity as to his heart. His moral and spiritual nature needs it. If His disciples had not needed this, it would not have been left for them as Christ's last established ordinance in connection with, and including, the last supper. It was Christ's desire to leave to His disciples an ordinance that would do for them the very thing they needed—that would serve to disentangle them from the rites and ceremonies which they had hitherto engaged in as essential, and which the reception of the gospel made no longer of any force. To continue these rites would be an insult to Jehovah.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 5, pp. 1139, 1140.

“In the Galatian churches, open, unmasked error was supplanting the faith of the gospel. Christ, the true foundation, was virtually renounced for the obsolete ceremonies of Judaism.” —*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 190.

5. A LABOR OF LOVE

a. What can we all learn from Paul's tender appeals? Galatians 4:11–18.

“To deal wisely with different classes of minds, under varied circumstances and conditions, is a work requiring wisdom and judgment, enlightened and sanctified by the Spirit of God. The minister of Christ should learn the importance of adapting his labors to the condition of those whom he seeks to benefit. Tenderness, patience, decision, and firmness are alike needful; but they are to be exercised with proper discrimination. It is only by maintaining a close connection with God that his servants can hope to meet judiciously the trials and difficulties that still arise in the churches.

“Paul had presented to the Galatians the gospel of Christ in its purity. His teachings were in harmony with the Scriptures; and the Holy Spirit had witnessed to his labors. Hence he warned his brethren to listen to nothing that should contradict the truth which they had been taught.”—*Sketches From the Life of Paul*, p. 190.

b. How do the law and the gospel merged give hope? Galatians 4:19–21.

“No one who believes in Jesus Christ is under bondage to the law of God; for His law is a law of life, not of death, to those who obey its precepts. All who comprehend the spirituality of the law, all who realize its power as a detector of sin, are in just as helpless a condition as is Satan himself, unless they accept the atonement provided for them in the remedial sacrifice of Jesus Christ. . . . Through faith in Christ obedience to every principle of the law is made possible.”—*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 98.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why is it vital to share Christ when talking about God's moral law?
2. How do those who reject either Christ or the law hurt their own selves?
3. How can I better promote the oneness of Christ with those unlike me?
4. What is wrong when Christians perpetuate the Jewish rituals today?
5. How can I be more like Paul in my approach to soul-winning?

Christian Liberty

MEMORY TEXT: “For in Jesus Christ neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision; but faith which worketh by love” (Galatians 5:6).

“The faith that works by love and purifies the soul is the holy, uplifting sanctifying agency which is to soften and subdue jarring human nature. The love of Christ is to constrain the believers, causing them to blend in harmonious action at the cross of Calvary.”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 316.

Suggested Reading: *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 145–147.

Sunday

November 21

1. THE BONDWOMAN BY FLESH

- a. How does Abraham’s experience show the spiritual bondage of living in our own finite strength? Genesis 16:1–4, 11, 12, 15; Galatians 4:22–25.

“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. Thinking it impossible that a child should be given her in her old age, Sarah suggested, as a plan by which the divine purpose might be fulfilled, that one of her handmaidens should be taken by Abraham as a secondary wife. Polygamy had become so widespread that it had ceased to be regarded as a sin, but it was no less a violation of the law of God, and was fatal to the sacredness and peace of the family relation. Abraham’s marriage with Hagar resulted in evil, not only to his own household, but to future generations.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 145.

“The lack of faith on the part of Abraham and Sarah had resulted in the birth of Ishmael, the mingling of the righteous seed with the ungodly. . . .

“Ishmael was driven to choose the wild, marauding life of the desert chief. . . . The powerful nation descended from him were a turbulent, heathen people.”—*Ibid.*, p. 174.

2. THE FREEWOMAN BY PROMISE

- a. **When Abraham and Sarah fully trusted in God’s promise of a son—what happened, and why? Genesis 18:11–14; 21:1, 2; Hebrews 11:11.**
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- b. **Like the miracle of elderly Sarah giving birth, describe the miraculous privilege available to the children of faith. Galatians 4:26–28.**
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“Christ is able to lift the most sinful out of the pit of degradation, and to place them where they will be acknowledged as children of God, heirs with Christ to an immortal inheritance.

“Many are utterly discouraged. Because they have been despised and forsaken they have become stoical. They are looked upon as unable to comprehend or to receive the gospel of Christ. Yet by the miracle of divine grace they may be changed. Under the ministration of the Holy Spirit the stupidity that makes their uplifting appear so hopeless will pass away. The dull, clouded mind will awake. The slave of sin will be set free. Spiritual life will revive and strengthen. Vice will disappear, and ignorance will be overcome. Through the faith that works by love the heart will be purified and the mind enlightened.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 229.

- c. **Why did Hagar and Ishmael have to be utterly cast out of Abraham’s household—and what are some deep spiritual lessons we can learn from this? Genesis 21:9–12; Galatians 4:29–31; Romans 13:12.**
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“If God had sanctioned polygamy, He would not have thus directed Abraham to send away Hagar and her son. He would teach all a lesson in this, that the rights and happiness of the marriage relation are to be ever respected and guarded, even at a great sacrifice. Sarah was the first and only true wife of Abraham. She was entitled to rights, as a wife and mother, which no other could have in the family. She revered her husband, calling him lord, but she was jealous lest his affections should be divided with Hagar. God did not rebuke Sarah for the course she pursued. Abraham was reproved by the angels for distrusting God’s power, which had led him to take Hagar as his wife and to think that through her the promise would be fulfilled.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 80.

3. DELIVERANCE

- a. How does Paul invite us to accept deliverance through Christ? Galatians 5:1.
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“Those who believe on Christ and obey His commandments are not under bondage to God’s law; for to those who believe and obey, His law is not a law of bondage, but of liberty. Everyone who believes on Christ, everyone who relies on the keeping power of a risen Saviour that has suffered the penalty pronounced upon the transgressor, everyone who resists temptation and in the midst of evil copies the pattern given in the Christ life, will through faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ become a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. Everyone who by faith obeys God’s commandments will reach the condition of sinlessness in which Adam lived before his transgression.”—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 146.

- b. What appeal does Paul make to keep our focus and avoid dissension caused by going beyond what is written? Galatians 5:2–4.
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“Judaizing teachers . . . urged that converts to Christianity should observe the ceremonial law in the matter of circumcision. They still maintained that the original Israel were the exalted and privileged children of Abraham, and were entitled to all the promises made to him. They sincerely thought that in taking this medium ground between Jew and Christian, they would succeed in removing the odium which attached to Christianity, and would gather in large numbers of Jews.

“They vindicated their position, which was in opposition to that of Paul, by showing that the course of the apostle, in receiving the Gentiles into the church without circumcision, prevented more Jews from accepting the faith than there were accessions from the Gentiles. Thus, they excused their opposition to the results of the calm deliberations of God’s acknowledged servants. They refused to admit that the work of Christ embraced the whole world. They claimed that He was the Saviour of the Hebrews alone; therefore they maintained that the Gentiles should receive circumcision before being admitted to the privileges of the church of Christ.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, pp. 1110, 1111.

4. FAITH MISUNDERSTOOD

a. What summarized the humble, faithful position of Paul? Galatians 5:5.

“Rest your case with the Lord, and believe in His Word. Believe, oh, believe the Word of the Lord, and walk by faith, not by sight. Consecrate yourself anew to God. Be loyal and true to a ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ and stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ doth make you free.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 337.

b. How was the apostle often misunderstood by dissenters both in Galatia and elsewhere in the church? Galatians 5:7–12; 1 Corinthians 1:10–13.

“The council [of disciples at Jerusalem] had . . . decided that the converts from the Jewish church might observe the ordinances of the Mosaic law if they chose, while those ordinances should not be made obligatory upon converts from the Gentiles. The opposing class now took advantage of this, to urge a distinction between the observers of the ceremonial law and those who did not observe it, holding that the latter were farther from God than the former.

“Paul’s indignation was stirred. His voice was raised in stern rebuke: ‘If ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing.’ The party maintaining that Christianity was valueless without circumcision arrayed themselves against the apostle, and he had to meet them in every church which he founded or visited: in Jerusalem, Antioch, Galatia, Corinth, Ephesus, and Rome. God urged him out to the great work of preaching Christ, and Him crucified; circumcision or uncircumcision was nothing. The Judaizing party looked upon Paul as an apostate, bent upon breaking down the partition wall which God had established between the Israelites and the world. They visited every church which he had organized, creating divisions. Holding that the end would justify the means, they circulated false charges against the apostle, and endeavored to bring him into disrepute. As Paul, in visiting the churches, followed after these zealous and unscrupulous opposers, he met many who viewed him with distrust, and some who even despised his labors.

“These divisions in regard to the ceremonial law, and the relative merits of the different ministers teaching the doctrine of Christ, caused the apostle much anxiety and hard labor [1 Corinthians 1:10–13 quoted].”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1111.

5. WHICH KIND OF ACTION?

- a. While the ceremonial law and circumcision were given by God for a purpose within the ancient Hebrew economy, what are all who accept Christ as the only Source of eternal life to realize? Galatians 5:6.

“Genuine faith always works by love. When you look to Calvary it is not to quiet your soul in the nonperformance of duty, not to compose yourself to sleep, but to create faith in Jesus, faith that will work, purifying the soul from the slime of selfishness. When we lay hold of Christ by faith, our work has just begun. Every man has corrupt and sinful habits that must be overcome by vigorous warfare. Every soul is required to fight the fight of faith. If one is a follower of Christ, he cannot be sharp in deal, he cannot be hard-hearted, devoid of sympathy. He cannot be coarse in his speech. He cannot be full of pomposity and self-esteem. He cannot be overbearing, nor can he use harsh words, and censure and condemn.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 20.

“The labor of love springs from the work of faith. Bible religion means constant work. ‘Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.’ ‘Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in you, both to will and to do of his good pleasure.’ We are to be zealous of good works; be careful to maintain good works. And the true Witness says, ‘I know thy works.’

“While it is true that our busy activities will not in themselves ensure salvation, it is also true that faith which unites us to Christ will stir the soul to activity.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1111.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How do we similarly err as when Hagar was to bear a son for Abraham?
2. What blessing and duty came when Abraham and Sarah trusted God more?
3. How might I be in danger of either adding or subtracting from what God has written in order to possibly gain a larger number of converts—and why would this be wrong to do?
4. In what ways might I be causing dissent over issues that are not salvational?
5. What needs to be the real motivation behind all that I do in life?

First Sabbath School Offering for the church building in Szentes, Hungary

Hungary is one of the 50 countries in the multicultural continent of Europe. In the history of the Reform Movement, Hungary played a significant role. As the situation developed in Europe by 1915, the Reform Movement started expanding from this country. The fourth General Conference Session was also held here in 1934.

During World War II, our brethren suffered tremendously and some even laid down their life for their faith.

Our membership has grown, and thanks to many of our ancestors' efforts we have five church buildings in this country. In past years, we were able to renovate a church through one of the First Sabbath Offerings and we are grateful to our brethren all around the world for their generosity.

One of our biggest problems here in Hungary is that two generations are missing from our ranks—and because of this, the burden to care for and renovate the church buildings is excessive and beyond our capabilities. By the grace of God, we would like to avoid passing on these burdens to the next generation and instead we would like to help them focus and invest all their means and capabilities toward the missionary work in this country.

One of the church buildings most in need of renovation is in Szentes, where we have 15 members and many young people of all ages who zealously take part in all the missionary activities. This building was built with old technology and it is small. There is a need not only to renovate the building but also to modernize and expand it, or perhaps buy or build a new one. What we will be able to accomplish will depend on your generosity.

“Look at the stream flowing from the mountainside, refreshing the thirsty land through which it passes. What blessing it brings! One would think that in giving so liberally it would exhaust its resources. But not so. It is a part of God’s great plan that the stream that gives shall never lack; and day by day and year by year it flows on its way, ever receiving and ever giving.”—*My Life Today*, p. 223.

We pray for God’s blessing upon you and trust that your offering may return to you by God tenfold.

Your brethren and sisters from the Hungarian Mission Field



Walking in the Spirit

MEMORY TEXT: “This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

“If we were all walking in the footsteps of the Man of Calvary, our proud hearts would be subdued by the grace of Christ. There would be no contention existing among the brethren, but in lowliness of mind each would esteem others better than himself. Your love for one another would be expressed in words and acts of tenderness, and this cold hard-heartedness would be melted away by the love of Jesus.”—*The Signs of the Times*, March 9, 1888.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 612–620.

Sunday

November 28

1. A CALL TO SERVE

- a. In contrast to having a mere profession of religion, what is the strongest evidence that we have allowed God’s law to be truly written in our hearts? Galatians 5:13, 14; Matthew 5:43–48.

“A legal religion is insufficient to bring the soul into harmony with God. The hard, rigid orthodoxy of the Pharisees, destitute of contrition, tenderness, or love, was only a stumbling block to sinners. They were like the salt that had lost its savor; for their influence had no power to preserve the world from corruption. The only true faith is that which ‘worketh by love’ (Galatians 5:6) to purify the soul. It is as leaven that transforms the character.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 53.

“Faith works by love and purifies the soul, and with faith there will be corresponding obedience, a faithful doing of the words of Christ. Christianity is always intensely practical, adapting itself to all the circumstances of actual life. ‘Ye are My witnesses.’ To whom?—To the world; for you are to bear about with you a holy influence. Christ is to abide in your soul, and you are to talk of Him and make manifest the charms of His character.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 200.

2. WATCHING OUR OWN ATTITUDE

- a. What warning is given against the vicious habit of harshly criticizing others—and why does this occur? Galatians 5:15; Psalm 59:12.
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“Self will ever cherish a high estimate of self. As men lose their first love, they do not keep the commandments of God, and then they begin to criticize one another. This spirit will be constantly striving for the mastery to the close of time. Satan is seeking to foster it in order that brethren in their ignorance may seek to devour one another. God is not glorified but greatly dishonored; the Spirit of God is grieved.

“Satan exults because he knows that if he can set brother to watch brother in the church and in the ministry, some will be so disheartened and discouraged as to leave their post of duty. This is not the work of the Holy Spirit; a power from beneath is working in the chambers of the mind and in the soul temple to place his attributes where the attributes of Christ should be.”—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, pp. 636, 637.

- b. How can we be delivered from the root of divisiveness—unkind thoughts? Ephesians 5:8; Colossians 3:12–15.
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“Let all who profess to be Christians open the door of their hearts to His Spirit and to His grace; then the peace of Christ will so rule in their hearts and be revealed in their characters that there will be no discord, no strife, no emulation, no biting and devouring one another, no seeking for the supremacy. The great and earnest effort will be to live the life of Christ. We are to represent His spirit of mercy and give no occasion for anyone to follow our example in doing evil.

“Jesus was courteous, benevolent. He was obedient to all of His Father’s commandments, implicitly and without questioning convenience or any selfish interest.”—*This Day With God*, p. 207.

“To walk in the light means to resolve, to exercise thought, to exert will-power, in an earnest endeavor to represent Christ in sweetness of character. It means to put away all gloom. You are not to rest satisfied simply in saying, ‘I am a child of God.’ Are you beholding Jesus, and, by beholding, becoming changed into His likeness? To walk in the light means advancement and progress in spiritual attainments. . . .

“What a terrible thing it is to darken the pathway of others by bringing shadow and gloom upon ourselves! Let each one take heed to himself. Charge not upon others your defections of character.”—*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 200.

3. IF TREATED UNKINDLY . . .

- a. **How are Christians in all generations warned against a serious wrong that occurred in Paul's day? 1 Corinthians 6:1–8.**
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"[Paul] had trials such as you have never experienced nor ever will be called upon to endure, and yet he turns away from these; he does not dwell upon them but magnifies the grace of God."—*Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 461.

"When troubles arise in the church we should not go for help to lawyers not of our faith. God does not desire us to open church difficulties before those who do not fear Him. He would not have us depend for help on those who do not obey His requirements. Those who trust in such counselors show that they have not faith in God. By their lack of faith the Lord is greatly dishonored, and their course works great injury to themselves. In appealing to unbelievers to settle difficulties in the church they are biting and devouring one another, to be 'consumed one of another' (Galatians 5:15).

"These men cast aside the counsel God has given, and do the very things He has bidden them not to do. They show that they have chosen the world as their judge, and in heaven their names are registered as one with unbelievers. Christ is crucified afresh, and put to open shame. Let these men know that God does not hear their prayers. They insult His holy name, and He will leave them to the buffetings of Satan until they shall see their folly and seek the Lord by confession of their sin.

"Matters connected with the church are to be kept within its own borders. If a Christian is abused, he is to take it patiently; if defrauded, he is not to appeal to courts of justice. Rather let him suffer loss and wrong."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, pp. 299, 300.

- b. **If unfairly or unkindly mistreated in the church, what do we need to keep in mind? Romans 12:19; Hebrews 12:14, 15.**
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"God will deal with the unworthy church member who defrauds his brother or the cause of God; the Christian need not contend for his rights. God will deal with the one who violates these rights. [Romans 12:19 quoted.] An account is kept of all these matters, and for all the Lord declares that He will avenge."—*Ibid.*, p. 300.

"Let every root of bitterness be removed."—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 241.

4. A FOUNDATION FOR VICTORY

- a. In the ladder of Christian sanctification, what comes before patience—and why? 2 Peter 1:3–7.
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“An intemperate man cannot be a patient man. It is not necessary to drink alcoholic liquors in order to be intemperate. The sin of intemperate eating, eating too frequently, too much, and of rich, unwholesome food, destroys the healthy action of the digestive organs, affects the brain, and perverts the judgment, preventing rational, calm, healthy thinking and acting. And this is a fruitful source of church trials. Therefore in order for the people of God to be in an acceptable state with Him, where they can glorify Him in their bodies and spirits which are His, they must with interest and zeal deny the gratification of their appetites, and exercise temperance in all things.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 618, 619.

- b. How did Paul summarize the key to victory in this area? Galatians 5:16.
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“We are commanded to crucify the flesh, with the affections and lusts. How shall we do it? Shall we inflict pain on the body? No; but put to death the temptation to sin. The corrupt thought is to be expelled. Every thought is to be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. All animal propensities are to be subjected to the higher powers of the soul. The love of God must reign supreme; Christ must occupy an undivided throne. Our bodies are to be regarded as His purchased possession. . . .

“In the experience of Daniel and his companions we have an instance of the triumph of principle over temptation to indulge the appetite. It shows us that through religious principle young men may triumph over the lusts of the flesh, and remain true to God’s requirements, even though it cost them a great sacrifice. . . .

“We should consider the words of the apostle in which he appeals to his brethren, by the mercies of God, to present their bodies ‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.’ This is true sanctification. It is not merely a theory, an emotion, or a form of words, but a living, active principle, entering into the everyday life. It requires that our habits of eating, drinking, and dressing be such as to secure the preservation of physical, mental, and moral health, that we may present to the Lord our bodies—not an offering corrupted by wrong habits, but—‘a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God.’ ”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 144.

5. HEEDING THE SPIRIT'S GUIDANCE

- a. What can we learn from the principles of Christ that guided Paul's way of dealing with the friction at Galatia? Matthew 5:23, 24; 13:27–29.
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“False teachers had brought to the Galatians doctrines that were opposed to the gospel of Christ. Paul sought to expose and correct these errors. He greatly desired that the false teachers might be separated from the church, but their influence had affected so many of the believers that it seemed hazardous to take action against them. There was danger of causing strife and division which would be ruinous to the spiritual interests of the church. He therefore sought to impress upon his brethren the importance of trying to help one another in love. He declared that all the requirements of the law setting forth our duty to our fellow men are fulfilled in love to one another. He warned them that if they indulged hatred and strife, dividing into parties, and like the brutes biting and devouring one another, they would bring upon themselves present unhappiness and future ruin. There was but one way to prevent these terrible evils and that was, as the apostle enjoined upon them, to ‘walk in the Spirit.’ They must by constant prayer seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit, which would lead them to love and unity.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 243.

“My brother, my sister, when trouble arises between you and another member of God's family, do you follow the Bible directions? Before presenting to God your offering of prayer, do you go to your brother, and in the spirit of Christ talk with him. . . . [Matthew 5:23, 24 quoted.] Then you can offer it with a clear conscience; for you have cast out the root of bitterness.”—*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 1, 1903.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How is God's law fulfilled in daily life, even in this present generation?
2. What does the inspired apostle declare to be the bond of perfectness?
3. Why is it important to avoid harboring a root of bitterness against others?
4. How does self-control in appetite promote better relationships?
5. How can I foster greater harmony with people who seem to be difficult?

The Flesh vs. the Spirit

MEMORY TEXT: “And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts” (Galatians 5:24).

“The conditions of salvation brought to view in the word of God are reasonable, plain, and positive, being nothing less than perfect conformity to the will of God and purity of heart and life. We must crucify self with the lusts thereof. We must cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 440.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 133–136.

Sunday

December 5

1. THE STRUGGLE

- a. Describe the struggle of the natural human heart in need of deliverance from condemnation by full, constant surrender to Christ. Galatians 5:17, 18.

“Our love to Christ will be in proportion to the depth of our conviction of sin, and by the law is the knowledge of sin. But as we see ourselves, let us look away to Jesus, who gave Himself for us that He might redeem us from all iniquity. By faith take hold of the merits of Christ, and the soul-cleansing blood will be applied. The more clearly we see the evils and perils to which we have been exposed, the more grateful shall we be for deliverance through Christ. The gospel of Christ does not give men license to break the law, for it was through transgression that the floodgates of woe were opened upon our world.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 96.

“Sanctification is a daily work. Let none deceive themselves with the belief that God will pardon and bless them while they are trampling upon one of His requirements. The willful commission of a known sin silences the witnessing voice of the Spirit and separates the soul from God. Whatever may be the ecstasies of religious feeling, Jesus cannot abide in the heart that disregards the divine law. God will honor those only who honor Him.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 92.

2. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH

- a. Name the works of the flesh mentioned by Paul—and explain why we need to be seriously warned against them. Galatians 5:19–21.
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“[Christ] bore the guilt of transgression, and the hiding of His Father’s face, until His heart was broken and His life crushed out. . . . And every soul that refuses to become a partaker of the atonement provided at such a cost, must bear, in his own person the guilt and punishment of transgression.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 540.

- b. Why is adultery (sexual intercourse between a married man and a woman not his wife, or between a married woman and a man not her husband) a violation of the law of God? Exodus 20:14; Hebrews 13:4.
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- c. What must we realize about fornication (similar to adultery, but involving unmarried persons) and the uncleanness and lasciviousness that leads to it? 1 Corinthians 6:18; Matthew 5:27, 28.
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“The most solemn message ever committed to mortals has been entrusted to this people, and they can have a powerful influence if they will be sanctified by it. They profess to be standing upon the elevated platform of eternal truth, keeping all of God’s commandments; therefore, if they indulge in sin, if they commit fornication and adultery, their crime is of tenfold greater magnitude than is that of the classes I have named, who do not acknowledge the law of God as binding upon them.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 450, 451.

“[The seventh] commandment forbids not only acts of impurity, but sensual thoughts and desires, or any practice that tends to excite them. Purity is demanded not only in the outward life but in the secret intents and emotions of the heart.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.

- d. How is God willing to help us overcome? Matthew 5:8; Psalm 51:5–7, 10.
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“It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

3. THE WORKS OF THE FLESH (CONTINUED)

- a. **What is wrong with idolizing something? Exodus 20:1–6.**
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“By idolatry [Paul] meant not only the worship of idols, but self-serving, love of ease, the gratification of appetite and passion. A mere profession of faith in Christ, a boastful knowledge of the truth, does not make a man a Christian. A religion that seeks only to gratify the eye, the ear, and the taste, or that sanctions self-indulgence, is not the religion of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 317.

- b. **What must we realize about how much God has always hated all kinds of witchcraft and sorcery? Exodus 22:18; Malachi 3:5; Revelation 21:8.**
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“The very name of witchcraft is now held in contempt. The claim that men can hold intercourse with evil spirits is regarded as a fable of the Dark Ages. But spiritualism, which numbers its converts by hundreds of thousands, yea, by millions, which has made its way into scientific circles, which has invaded churches, and has found favor in legislative bodies, and even in the courts of kings—this mammoth deception is but a revival, in a new disguise, of the witchcraft condemned and prohibited of old.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 557.

- c. **Why are hatred, variance (discord), emulations (ardent desires for superiority arising from competition), wrath, strife, seditions (stirring up of discontent or rebellion), envyings, and murders so evil? 1 John 3:15.**
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- d. **In what strong language did Christ condemn heresies (doctrines contrary to a “thus saith the Lord”)? Matthew 15:9; John 8:44.**
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- e. **With what type of occasions are drunkenness and revellings associated? Daniel 5:1–6, 26–28, 30; Matthew 14:6–11.**
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4. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

- a. In contrast to the works of the flesh, what does Paul reveal as the fruits of the Spirit—and why can't we pick and choose which fruit might come more easily to us? Galatians 5:22, 23.

“When we live by faith on the Son of God, the fruits of the Spirit will be seen in our lives; not one will be missing.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 676.

- b. What type of “love” is the fruit cited here? 1 Corinthians 13:4–8, 13.

“No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 318.

- c. What type of “joy” is the fruit cited here? Psalm 51:12; John 15:10, 11; Hebrews 12:2.

“There are souls to be revived; many to receive the joy of salvation into their own souls. They have erred, they have not been building a right character, but God has joy to restore to them, even the joy of His anointed.”—*The Upward Look*, p. 287.

- d. Why is true peace needed, and how is it obtained? Romans 5:1; John 14:27.

“ ‘All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution’ (2 Timothy 3:12). But this should not intimidate one soul. What can give such sunshine to the soul as the evidence of sins forgiven? What can impart true nobility if it is not the restoration of the moral image of God in man? Whence can peace come if not from the Prince of Peace? To what source can we look for help, but to Him who can give us light in the midst of darkness?”—*The Review and Herald*, February 28, 1899.

“The joy that was set before [Jesus] was that of seeing souls redeemed by the sacrifice of His glory, His honor, His riches, and His own life. The salvation of man was His joy.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 686.

5. THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT (CONTINUED)

- a. Why is longsuffering (patience) so valuable? Luke 21:19; Hebrews 10:36; Revelation 14:12.
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“The Christian who manifests patience and cheerfulness under bereavement and suffering, who meets even death itself with the peace and calmness of an unwavering faith, may accomplish for the gospel more than he could have effected by a long life of faithful labor.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 465.

- b. Why are gentleness, goodness, faith, and temperance all essential to the Christian? Psalm 18:35; Luke 7:50; Philippians 4:5.
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- c. What must we realize about meekness—and how only can we manifest the entire fruit of the Spirit? Matthew 5:5; Galatians 5:24; 1 Peter 2:21–24.
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“Meekness is a precious grace, willing to suffer silently, willing to endure trials. Meekness is patient and labors to be happy under all circumstances. Meekness is always thankful and makes its own songs of happiness, making melody in the heart to God. Meekness will suffer disappointment and wrong, and will not retaliate.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 335.

“Jesus, our Redeemer, walked the earth with the dignity of a king; yet He was meek and lowly of heart.”—*Child Guidance*, p. 141.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. We are not saved by obeying God’s law, yet what must we realize about it?
2. At what cost is indulgence in violating God’s law with regard to marriage?
3. At what cost is indulgence in dabbling in modern spiritism/the occult?
4. Contrast the love, joy, and peace of Christ with the counterfeits of the world.
5. Where shall we look in order to develop the complete fruit of the Spirit?

When Weakness and Wrongs Are Seen

MEMORY TEXT: “If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:25, 26).

“We need not be so zealous for our brethren and in this zeal neglect the work that needs to be done for ourselves. Another’s wrong will not make our cases any nearer right.”—*This Day With God*, p. 83.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 50–55; vol. 3, pp. 93, 94; vol. 5, pp. 246–248, 603–613.

Sunday

December 12

1. OURSELVES AND OTHERS

- a. What timeless appeal of Paul echoes down to our day? Galatians 5:25, 26.

“Those who are not spiritual often appear to have a zeal that far exceeds the zeal of the true children of God. This is because they are determined that their ways and their plans shall succeed. They say to themselves, I will put the whole force of my being into this plan, and I will work continually until I see it succeed. I will persist until I prevail. But all the religion that a man has is frequently found in this ambitious zeal which he thinks is after the Christlike order. Take away this, and nothing is left. They are like the Pharisees who tithed mint, and anise, and cummin, but neglected the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and the love of God.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 1374, 1375.

“All who would learn of Christ must be emptied of human wisdom. The soul must be cleansed from all vanity and pride, and vacated by all that has held it in prepossession, and Christ must be enthroned in the heart. The constant strife in the soul that results from selfishness and self-sufficiency must be rebuked, and humility and meekness must take the place of our natural self-esteem.”—*Sermons and Talks*, vol. 1, pp. 271, 272.

2. LEARNING GOD'S WAY

- a. What type of experience do nearly all face at times? Psalm 69:5, 16–19.
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“Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. Your spirit will be braced for endurance. The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 329.

- b. With that reality in mind, describe how we should proceed with regard to a person who has made a mistake. Galatians 6:1; Matthew 18:15.
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“If you are grieved because your neighbors or friends are doing wrong to their own hurt, if they are overtaken in fault, follow the Bible rule. ‘Tell him his fault between thee and him alone’ [Matthew 18:15]. As you go to the one you suppose to be in error, see that you speak in a meek and lowly spirit; for the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God. The erring can be restored in no other way than in the spirit of meekness, gentleness, and tender love. Be careful in your manner. Avoid anything in look or gesture, word or tone, that savors of pride or self-sufficiency. Guard yourself against a word or look that would exalt yourself, or place your goodness and righteousness in contrast with their failings. Beware of the most distant approach to disdain, overbearing, or contempt. With care avoid every appearance of anger; and though you use plainness of speech, let there be no reproach, no railing accusation, no token of warmth but that of earnest love. Above all, let there be no shadow of hate or ill will, no bitterness or sourness of expression. Nothing but kindness and gentleness can flow from a heart of love. Yet all these precious fruits need not hinder you from speaking in the most serious, solemn manner, as though angels were directing their eyes upon you, and you were acting in reference to the coming judgment. Bear in mind that the success of reproof depends greatly upon the spirit in which it is given. Do not neglect earnest prayer that you may possess a lowly mind, and that angels of God may go before you to work upon the hearts you are trying to reach, and so soften them by heavenly impressions that your efforts may avail. If any good is accomplished, take no credit to yourself. God alone should be exalted. God alone has done it all.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 52, 53.

3. THE GOLDEN RULE OF SPEECH

- a. What should help us resist the temptation to tell others about the faults of someone else? Luke 6:31; Proverbs 25:9.
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“You have excused yourself for speaking evil of your brother or sister or neighbor to others before going to him and taking the steps which God has absolutely commanded. You say: ‘Why, I did not speak to anyone until I was so burdened that I could not refrain.’ What burdened you? Was it not a plain neglect of your own duty, of a thus saith the Lord? You were under the guilt of sin because you did not go and tell the offender his fault between you and him alone. If you did not do this, if you disobeyed God, how could you be otherwise than burdened unless your heart was hardened while you were trampling the command of God underfoot, and in your heart hating your brother or neighbor? And what way have you found to unburden yourself? God reproves you for a sin of omission in not telling your brother his fault, and you excuse and comfort yourself by a sin of commission by telling your brother’s faults to another person! Is this the right way to purchase ease—by committing sin?”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 53.

- b. By approaching someone with their fault, how might that person react? Proverbs 14:16. Yet what is our duty regardless of the risk?
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“Help those who have erred, by telling them of your experiences. Show how, when you made grave mistakes, patience, kindness, and helpfulness on the part of your fellow workers gave you courage and hope.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 494, 495.

“All your efforts to save the erring may be unavailing. They may repay you evil for good. They may be enraged rather than convinced. What if they hear to no good purpose, and pursue the evil course they have begun? This will frequently occur. Sometimes the mildest and tenderest reproof will have no good effect. In that case the blessing you wanted another to receive by pursuing a course of righteousness, ceasing to do evil and learning to do well, will return into your own bosom. If the erring persist in sin, treat them kindly, and leave them with your heavenly Father. You have delivered your soul; their sin no longer rests upon you; you are not now partaker of their sin.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 53, 54.

4. HUMBLING BY OUR OWN FRAILTY

- a. Why must we overcome the culture of slander? Titus 3:2; James 4:11.
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“Speak evil of no man. Hear evil of no man. If there be no hearers, there will be no speakers of evil. If anyone speaks evil in your presence, check him. Refuse to hear him, though his manner be ever so soft and his accents mild. He may profess attachment, and yet throw out covert hints and stab the character in the dark.

“Resolutely refuse to hear, though the whisperer complains of being burdened till he speak. Burdened indeed! with a cursed secret which separateth very friends. Go, burdened ones, and free yourselves from your burden in God’s appointed way. First go tell your brother his fault between you and him alone.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 54.

- b. What happens only if the one at fault refuses to heed? Matthew 18:16, 17.
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“If this fail, next take with you one or two friends, and tell him in their presence. If these steps fail, then tell it to the church. Not an unbeliever is to be made acquainted with the slightest particular of the matter. Telling it to the church is the last step to be taken. Publish it not to the enemies of our faith.”—*Ibid.*

- c. Explain what can either make or break true restoration. Galatians 6:2, 3.
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“Bear in mind that the work of restoring is to be our burden. This work is not to be done in a proud, officious, masterly way. Do not say, by your manner, ‘I have the power, and I will use it,’ and pour out accusations upon the erring one. . . . The work set before us to do for our brethren is not to cast them aside, not to press them into discouragement or despair by saying: ‘You have disappointed me, and I will not try to help you.’ He who sets himself up as full of wisdom and strength, and bears down upon one who is oppressed and distressed and longing for help, manifests the spirit of the Pharisee, and wraps himself about with the robe of his own self-constituted dignity. In his spirit he thanks God that he is not as other men are, and supposes that his course is praiseworthy and that he is too strong to be tempted. [Galatians 6:3 quoted.]”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, pp. 398, 399.

5. LEARNING DEEPER HUMILITY

- a. How can we avoid spoiling our witness for Christ? Galatians 6:4, 5.

“One of the greatest curses in our world (and it is seen in churches and in society everywhere) is the love of supremacy. Men become absorbed in seeking to secure power and popularity. This spirit has manifested itself in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers, to our grief and shame. But spiritual success comes only to those who have learned meekness and lowliness in the school of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 397.

“He who considers himself superior in judgment and experience to his brethren and despises their counsel and admonition, evinces that he is in a dangerous delusion. The heart is deceitful. He should test his character and life by the Bible standard. . . . Every man must at last stand or fall for himself, not according to the opinion of the party that sustains or opposes him, not according to the judgment of any man, but according to his real character in the sight of God.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, pp. 247, 248.

- b. How can our influence bring real hope to others? Galatians 6:6–10.

“Until the judgment you will never know the influence of a kind, considerate course toward the inconsistent, the unreasonable, the unworthy. When we meet with ingratitude and betrayal of sacred trusts, we are roused to show our contempt or indignation. This the guilty expect; they are prepared for it. But kind forbearance takes them by surprise and often awakens their better impulses and arouses a longing for a nobler life.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 495.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What characteristic of Lucifer must be uprooted from every Christian?
2. Before thinking to correct someone else, what must I first consider?
3. Why can't I take credit even if my words appear to help someone?
4. At what times may I have been guilty of aiding a culture of slander?
5. Why may have the most humbling times in my life been the best for me?

Uplifting the Cross

MEMORY TEXT: “God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14).

“Hanging upon the cross Christ was the gospel. . . . Will not our church members keep their eyes fixed on a crucified and risen Saviour, in whom their hopes of eternal life are centered? This is our message, our argument, our doctrine, our warning to the impenitent, our encouragement for the sorrowing, the hope for every believer.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1113.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 201–210.

Sunday

December 19

1. THE MEANING OF AN ABLE MINISTRY

a. What is notable about the ministry of Paul? 2 Corinthians 3:2, 6–9.

“Though in this age there are many preachers, there is a great scarcity of able, holy ministers—men filled with the love that dwelt in the heart of Christ. Pride, self-confidence, love of the world, faultfinding, bitterness, envy, are the fruit borne by many who profess the religion of Christ. Their lives, in sharp contrast to the life of the Saviour, often bear sad testimony to the character of the ministerial labor under which they were converted.

“A man can have no greater honor than to be accepted by God as an able minister of the gospel. But those whom the Lord blesses with power and success in His work do not boast. They acknowledge their entire dependence on Him, realizing that of themselves they have no power.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 328.

b. What happened in Galatia that revealed a lack of understanding of true ministry on the part of the false teachers? Galatians 6:12, 13.

2. PRESENTING THE CRUCIFIXION

- a. Explain what happens as we set our minds and hearts in contemplation of the sacrifice of Christ in our behalf. John 1:29.
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“If sinners can be led to give one earnest look at the cross, if they can obtain a full view of the crucified Saviour, they will realize the depth of God’s compassion and the sinfulness of sin.

“Christ’s death proves God’s great love for man. It is our pledge of salvation. To remove the cross from the Christian would be like blotting the sun from the sky. The cross brings us near to God, reconciling us to Him. With the relenting compassion of a father’s love, Jehovah looks upon the suffering that His Son endured in order to save the race from eternal death, and accepts us in the Beloved.

“Without the cross, man could have no union with the Father. On it depends our every hope. From it shines the light of the Saviour’s love, and when at the foot of the cross the sinner looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy, for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling in faith at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain.

“Through the cross we learn that the heavenly Father loves us with a love that is infinite.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 209, 210.

- b. Yet what did Paul face in presenting the cross? 1 Corinthians 1:22, 23.
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“To the minds of multitudes living at the present time, the cross of Calvary is surrounded by sacred memories. Hallowed associations are connected with the scenes of the crucifixion. But in Paul’s day the cross was regarded with feelings of repulsion and horror. To uphold as the Saviour of mankind one who had met death on the cross, would naturally call forth ridicule and opposition.

“Paul well knew how his message would be regarded by both the Jews and the Greeks of Corinth. ‘We preach Christ crucified,’ he admitted, ‘unto the Jews a stumbling block, and unto the Greeks foolishness.’ 1 Corinthians 1:23. Among his Jewish hearers there were many who would be angered by the message he was about to proclaim. In the estimation of the Greeks his words would be absurd folly. He would be looked upon as weak-minded for attempting to show how the cross could have any connection with the elevation of the race or the salvation of mankind.”—*Ibid.*, p. 245.

3. MORE POWERFUL THAN WE REALIZE

- a. In the face of opposition, what did Paul not only preach—but actually extol in the highest? Galatians 6:14. Why?
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“To Paul the cross was the one object of supreme interest. Ever since he had been arrested in his career of persecution against the followers of the crucified Nazarene he had never ceased to glory in the cross. At that time there had been given him a revelation of the infinite love of God, as revealed in the death of Christ; and a marvelous transformation had been wrought in his life, bringing all his plans and purposes into harmony with heaven. From that hour he had been a new man in Christ. He knew by personal experience that when a sinner once beholds the love of the Father, as seen in the sacrifice of His Son, and yields to the divine influence, a change of heart takes place, and henceforth Christ is all and in all.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 245.

“The cross, the cross; lift it . . . and in the act of raising it you will be astonished to find that it raises you, it supports you. In adversity, privation, and sorrow it will be a strength and a staff to you. You will find it all hung with mercy, compassion, sympathy, and inexpressible love. It will prove to you a pledge of immortality.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 47.

- b. How does the psalmist explain the achievement of the cross? Psalm 85:10.
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“As the sinner sees Jesus as He is, an all-compassionate Saviour, hope and assurance take possession of his soul. The helpless soul is cast without any reservation upon Jesus. None can bear away from the vision of Christ Jesus crucified a lingering doubt. Unbelief is gone. . . .

“This sacrifice was offered for the purpose of restoring man to his original perfection. Yea, more, it was offered to give him an entire transformation of character, making him more than a conqueror. . . .

“Christ declares, ‘I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me.’ If the cross does not find an influence in its favor, it creates an influence. Through generation succeeding generation, the truth for this time is revealed as present truth. Christ on the cross was the medium whereby mercy and truth met together, and righteousness and peace kissed each other. This is the means that is to move the world.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1113.

4. A PERSPECTIVE LIKE NONE OTHER

a. How does contemplation of the cross change our lives? John 12:32.

“When the mind is drawn to the cross of Calvary, Christ by imperfect sight is discerned on the shameful cross. Why did He die? In consequence of sin. What is sin? The transgression of the law. Then the eyes are open to see the character of sin. The law is broken but cannot pardon the transgressor. It is our schoolmaster, condemning to punishment. Where is the remedy? The law drives us to Christ, who was hanged upon the cross that He might be able to impart His righteousness to fallen, sinful man and thus present men to His Father in His righteous character.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 341.

“Jesus sees the guilt of the past, and speaks pardon, and we must not dishonor Him by doubting His love. This feeling of guiltiness must be laid at the foot of the cross of Calvary. The sense of sinfulness has poisoned the springs of life and of true happiness. Now Jesus says, ‘Lay it all on Me. I will take your sins; I will give you peace. Banish no longer your self-respect, for I have bought you with the price of My own blood. You are Mine. Your weakened will I will strengthen; your remorse for sin I will remove.’ Then turn your grateful heart, trembling with uncertainty, to Him and lay hold on the hope set before you. God accepts your broken, contrite heart, and extends to you free pardon. He offers to adopt you into His family, with His grace to help your weakness, and the dear Saviour will lead you on step by step, you placing your hand in His and letting Him guide you.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 241.

b. How does this affect our attitudes and uplift us spiritually? Job 23:16.

“Look, O look upon the cross of Calvary; behold the royal victim suffering on your account. . . .

“The Son of God was rejected and despised for our sakes. Can you, in full view of the cross, beholding by the eye of faith the sufferings of Christ, tell your tale of woe, your trials? Can you nurse revenge of your enemies in your heart while the prayer of Christ comes from His pale and quivering lips for His revilers, His murderers—‘Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34)?”—*Ibid.*, p. 65.

5. A NEW CREATURE

- a. How does Paul conclude his epistle to the Galatians? Galatians 6:15–18. What effect did it have on them?

“When Paul received the gospel of Jesus Christ, it made him a new creature. He was transformed; the truth planted in his soul gave him such faith and courage as a follower of Christ that no opposition could move him, no suffering daunt him.”—*Faith and Works*, p. 33.

“The apostle’s earnest words of entreaty were not fruitless. The Holy Spirit wrought with mighty power, and many whose feet had wandered into strange paths, returned to their former faith in the gospel. Henceforth they were steadfast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. In their lives were revealed the fruits of the Spirit—‘love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.’ The name of God was glorified, and many were added to the number of believers throughout that region.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 388.

- b. What is this epistle to impress upon our hearts today? Matthew 16:24–26.

“Can we wonder that Paul exclaimed, ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ’? Galatians 6:14. It is our privilege also to glory in the cross, our privilege to give ourselves wholly to Him who gave Himself for us. Then, with the light that streams from Calvary shining in our faces, we may go forth to reveal this light to those in darkness.”—*Ibid.*, p. 210.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

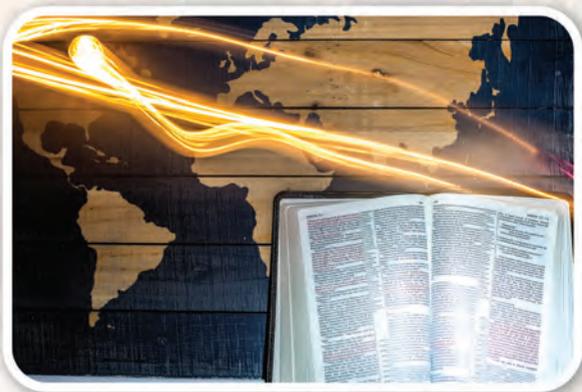
1. Contrast the ministry of Paul with that of the false teachers in Galatia.
2. How should the scenes of Calvary impact me in a mighty way?
3. Why is it a blessing to keep the cross constantly before the mind’s eye?
4. In viewing the cross, what happens to my problems and annoyances?
5. How can this message revive me as it did the Galatians?

First Sabbath Offerings



OCTOBER 2
for a church building in
Odessa, Ukraine
(see p. 4.)

NOVEMBER 6
literature for needy fields
(see p. 30.)



DECEMBER 4
for the church building
in Szentes, Hungary
(see p. 51.)