



the  
**REFORMATION**  
*herald*

Vol. 58, No. 3

Are You a  
*Church Member?*

Perfect | Are You a Church Member? | Sound Speech in the Twenty-First Century

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# Heaven Is for Winners

**A**dam and Eve enjoyed Eden while they were faithful to the commandments of God. After being defeated by Satan's temptations, they were expelled from Paradise to live a life of toil and suffering and, finally, to experience eternal death. By God's marvelous grace, they were granted a new chance to be loyal to the laws of heaven and again enjoy eternal life.

In Revelation chapters two and three, in the messages sent to the seven churches, we find seven promises to the overcomers:

1. Free access to the tree of life in the paradise of God.
2. Eternal life.
3. Hidden manna, a white stone, a new name (according to a new character).
4. The Morning Star (eternal companionship with Christ).
5. A white garment and having the name in the book of life for eternity.
6. Being a pillar in God's sanctuary, having God's name (God's character).
7. Sitting with Jesus on His throne.

We should take into serious consideration the fact that those promises are only for overcomers.

In Romans chapter 7 we learn that when we try to overcome our appetites and passions by ourselves—in our own weakness—we are severely defeated. In verses 14–23 the apostle expresses the frustration of such a life. Finally he concludes, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" (verse 24).

However, in Romans chapter 8, after surrendering his life fully to Christ and being guided by the Holy Spirit, the same person has an altogether different experience: "There is therefore

now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (verses 1–4).

Do we see the big difference? While we are trying our best, trusting in ourselves, putting forward our best efforts to overcome temptation and sin, we are big losers. When we distrust completely in ourselves and trust entirely in Christ, we are guided by the Holy Spirit to reach daily victory. At the end of Romans chapter 8, we find a wonderful song of victory: "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? . . . Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (verses 31, 32, 35–39).

"We can overcome. Yes; fully, entirely. Jesus died to make a way of escape for us, that we might overcome every fault, resist every temptation, and sit down at last with Him in His throne. It is our privilege to have faith and salvation. The power of God has not decreased. It would be just as freely bestowed now as formerly; but the church have lost their faith to claim, their energy to wrestle, as did Jacob, crying, 'I will not let thee go, except thou bless me' (Genesis 32:26). Enduring faith has been dying away. It must be revived in the hearts of God's people. They must claim the blessing. Faith, living faith, always leads upward to God and glory; unbelief, downward to darkness and death."<sup>1</sup>

"When we fall, all helpless, suffering in consequence of our realization of the sinfulness of sin; when we humble ourselves before God, afflicting our souls by true repentance and contrition; when we offer our fervent prayers to God in the name of Christ, we shall as surely be received by the Father, as we sincerely make a complete surrender of our all to God. We should realize in our inmost soul that all our efforts in and of ourselves will be utterly worthless; for it is only in the name and strength of the Conqueror that we shall be overcomers."<sup>2</sup>

Are these promises good news for us? Yes. In close connection with Christ every day, every moment, we can be more than conquerors.

Then we can say with the apostle: "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57).

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 367.

<sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, February 5, 1895.



# The Last *Hours of Christ*

*By D. P. Silva*

**S**oon after partaking of the Passover meal with His disciples, Thursday evening, Jesus headed to the Garden of Gethsemane, one of His habitual places of prayer. Many times He had spent the entire night at that very spot, in deep communion with His Father. Now, at the end of His mission in behalf of sinners, Christ left the upper chamber, and went to the garden located at the foot of Mount Olivet. With Him were His eleven disciples (Judas was absent, since he was away plotting the betrayal of his Master).

Before arriving there, Christ comforted His disciples with

the promise of His second coming and of sending the Holy Spirit as His representative to assist them. Along the way, He saw a grapevine which He used as an illustration of the relationship that must be maintained between Him and His disciples. He made clear that our spiritual life, our victory over temptation and sin depend on a vital connection with Him. He also emphasized the need of brotherly love among His followers. "Love one another," He repeated to His disciples. "A new commandment I give unto you, . . . that ye also love one another." And He gave them a pattern: "As I have loved you" (John 13:34).

Jesus dedicated time to stress the need of the Holy Spirit for all His followers. Like the Lord Jesus, the Holy Spirit who is the third Person of the Godhead and another Comforter, must be considered the “best Gift” sent by heaven to all who believe in Christ as their Saviour and Lord.

Before reaching Gethsemane, Christ offered an earnest intercessory prayer in behalf of His disciples. He declared: “This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). He had made clear that we cannot know the Father except by knowing the Son.

“The experimental knowledge of God and of Jesus Christ whom He has sent, transform man into the image of God. It gives to man the mastery of himself, bringing every impulse and passion of the lower nature under the control of the higher powers of the mind. It makes its possessor a son of God and heir of heaven. It brings him into communion with the mind of the Infinite, and opens to him the rich treasures of the universe.”<sup>1</sup>

In His prayer, Christ revealed His great desire that His disciples should be so united among themselves as He is united with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. . . . I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me” (John 17:21, 23).

After giving precious words of comfort and encouragement to His close followers, Christ arrived at the Garden of Gethsemane. As soon as He entered the garden, He felt deep anguish. At that moment, the sins of the entire world were imputed to Him. Although He had never committed a single sin, He took upon Himself the guilt of the whole of humanity—all your sins, and all my sins. “Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem

him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:4–6).

Paul summarizes the essence of the gospel with the following words, explaining that “[God] hath made him [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him [Jesus]” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

“He who through His own atonement provided for man an infinite fund of moral power, will not fail to employ this power in our behalf. We may take our sins and sorrows to His feet; for He loves us. His every look and word invites our confidence. He will shape and mold our characters according to His own will.”<sup>2</sup>

Deep anguish that we cannot imagine took possession of Christ. Because of our sins, He felt separated from His Father. Leaving eight of His disciples at a certain distance, the Lord invited Peter, James, and John to be closer to Him in His suffering. His human nature was being shaken before the terrible sacrifice. Then He prayed: “Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine, be done” (Luke 22:42). He had told His disciples: “My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me” (Matthew 26:38).

Jesus felt the need of human support and sympathy, and so He returned to His disciples. But He found them asleep. He said to Peter—the same person who had promised to be with Him even unto death—“What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.” But the Lord tried to excuse His disciples, adding the words: “The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (verses 40, 41).

Then He prayed the second time, saying: “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink

it, thy will be done” (verse 42). He offered that prayer three times, but no favorable answer came from the Father.

In that critical hour, when the plan of salvation of humanity was at risk, Gabriel, the most powerful angel of heaven, came to support the Son of God. He did not come to remove the cup but to strengthen Him to drink it. Then he presented in a panoramic view the millions of souls who would be saved by Christ’s sacrifice. Christ was comforted. Isaiah had foretold: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities” (Isaiah 53:11).

Paul, in his epistle to the Hebrew Christians, said: “Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame” (Hebrews 12:2).

“What sustained the Son of God during His life of toil and sacrifice? He saw the results of the travail of His soul and was satisfied. Looking into eternity, He beheld the happiness of those who through His humiliation had received pardon and everlasting life. His ear caught the shout of the redeemed. He heard the ransomed ones singing the song of Moses and the Lamb.”<sup>3</sup>

After this vision, Christ was comforted and encouraged to go ahead with a strong commitment to accept to suffer all the physical, mental, and spiritual sacrifices necessary to save human beings from eternal ruin.

## Jesus arrested

Soon after His prayer, Jesus led His disciples to meet their enemies. All that was done to the Lord that night was totally illegal. Before being judged, He was arrested and abused. Judas had agreed with the chief priests and the mob that made up the group, that he would kiss Jesus to identify Him to His persecutors. Christ received the kiss from His betrayer and uttered just a few words:

“Judas, are you betraying the Son of God with a kiss?” But the conscience of Judas was gone. He was under the direct control of the prince of darkness. Seeing that Christ didn’t resist Judas, the mob became bolder to arrest the Saviour.

At the beginning of the arrest, Peter tried to defend his Lord with a sword. The zealous disciple tried to behead one of the criminals, but he was only successful in cutting one ear off his target. Even at the arrest, Christ performed a miracle, restoring to the unhappy man his ear. After that, all the disciples ran away, leaving their Master at the hands of those “wolves” who were so thirsty for the blood of the Saviour.

### A mere pretense of justice

Before arriving at the palace of the high priest, Caiaphas, Christ was led to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Jesus was to be examined by that experienced and cunning fox. Annas was already retired but still highly respected among the Sanhedrin and was judged to be able to destroy anyone who, it was supposed, was undermining the leadership of that council. Annas would examine Christ before the “trial” of Caiaphas, who was a less experienced man than his father-in-law. Annas tried to trap Jesus with questions about:

1. His teachings, and
2. His disciples.

His intention was to insinuate that Christ had held some secret meetings and teachings that could be used as insurrection against the Roman government. He hoped to find some ground to accuse Jesus before the authorities as a leader of a subversive movement against Rome. Christ’s answer to Annas made it clear that His work and teachings were known by the public and that He had nothing to hide. Nothing had been taught in secret.

The same priests had previously sent spies to follow Jesus step by step

to find some ground for accusation and condemnation. Christ’s answer silenced Annas. His words also had greater meaning, for they condemned Annas for trying to condemn Jesus in a secretive way.

The so-called “judgment” of Christ was totally illegal because:

1. The Sanhedrin was not authorized to meet at night. Their meetings could only be held during the hours of the day.



2. All the members of the Council were required to be present.

3. The one who would be judged had the right to defend himself.

4. He couldn’t be arrested before being legally accused on the basis of strong evidence and testimony from credible witnesses.

All of these basic rules were disrespected. Christ had been arrested before the trial, at night, and mistreated before, during and after His condemnation.

Being a nation under the control of Rome, the Jews had no right to condemn anyone to death without the approval of the Romans. Their decision, to be valid, needed to be approved by the Roman government.

Since the Sanhedrin didn’t find any valid accusation against Christ, the innocent Victim was taken to Caiaphas, the high priest. It was a last attempt to condemn Jesus, and He was questioned about His relationship with the Father: “I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.” Until now, Christ had kept silence before Caiaphas in spite of all the false accusations against Him, but now He had to answer: “Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven” (Matthew 26:63, 64). Caiaphas lost his temper. Being a Sadducee, he didn’t believe in the resurrection, and hoped that all his own crimes would be buried by his death. He rent his sacred garment and accused Jesus of blasphemy. The Jews understood the expression “Son of God” as a clear statement meaning that Christ was a divine Being. Because of His identification with Divinity, Jesus was condemned to death. The action of Caiaphas of rending his garment was totally contrary to God’s commandment, and he revealed a burst of human passion that demonstrated that he was not worthy of being a high priest.

### Peter denies Jesus

Peter was one of the most faithful disciples of Jesus and was among the three disciples closest to the Master. He was willing to do whatever was necessary to fulfill Christ’s instruction. Before going to Gethsemane, the Lord had foretold that all His disciples would forsake Him during the soon-coming crisis. Peter had responded with the declaration that even if all would leave the Master, he would follow Jesus even to death. Peter was very sincere in his words and desires, but there was a very serious problem with this disciple. He trusted in himself and didn’t know his own character. Jesus revealed that unknown character to Peter by

mentioning that before the rooster would crow two times, the disciple would deny Jesus three times.

When Christ faced the most hostile environment in the palace of Caiaphas, Peter tried to follow the Master at a comfortable distance. Then a young lady asked him if he was a follower of Christ. Peter denied the Master for the first time. Again Peter was asked about his relationship with Jesus, and again he denied the Master. Finally, the third time, Peter was questioned about being part of the small group of Jesus' followers, and this time he used hard words to assert his ignorance about Christ. Peter looked to Christ and the Master looked to him. In the look of Jesus, Peter saw only love and forgiveness.

Peter was devastated when he remembered the words of Christ. He realized that Jesus knew him very well, while he didn't know himself. From that place Peter went to Gethsemane, where he wept bitterly. He sincerely repented of his wicked action against the Master. Christ had said to him ahead of time: "When you are converted, confirm your brothers."

### **Christ before Pilate, the Roman governor**

Early in the morning of Friday, Christ was taken to the palace of Pilate, the Roman procurator. The condemnation of Jesus by the Jews couldn't be implemented without the approval of the Romans. Pilate understood that the Jews were anxious to get rid of someone who was crossing their way. The members of the Sanhedrin were sure that Pilate would endorse their condemnation without preliminary actions or questions, but when the Roman judge saw Jesus, he was very favorably impressed. Even though he wasn't a righteous judge, Pilate demanded from the Jews grounds for the condemnation of Jesus. This request from a heathen judge was really embarrassing for the Jews. They insisted that, since the most important tribunal from the Jews had already condemned Christ, Pilate should

accept their decision as a final and undisputable action. But the purity and nobleness revealed in Christ's character was a clear index of His innocence.

Pilate declared that he couldn't find any guilt in Jesus. This declaration uttered by a Roman authority was a clear rebuke to the evil intentions of the Jews. When they accused Christ of perverting the nation from Judea to Galilee, Pilate found a way to get rid of such a difficult task, and he sent Jesus to Herod. The tetrarch of Galilee was eager to satisfy his curiosity about Jesus; He was the same Herod who had murdered John the Baptist because the prophet had rebuked him regarding his second marriage while the first husband of Herodias was still alive. His conscience was now hardened much more than before he became guilty of the murder of God's greatest prophet.

At first, Herod treated Jesus very kindly, expecting that Christ would satisfy his requests. But Christ had no word for this wicked and hardened man. The silence of Christ was the best message that He could give to the impenitent king. Herod became angry about Christ's behavior, and eventually the king started attacking Him physically and opened the way for the rabble to do the same to Him. Now the people behaved like demons as they attacked Christ, and the Saviour would have been killed right there if the Roman soldiers had not intervened. However, the Holy Spirit bore such a powerful influence over this situation that even Herod did not dare to condemn Christ. To Pilate's disappointment, Jesus was sent back to him. Pilate was in a great difficulty. He was sure that Christ was innocent, but he had also other political interests and therefore he was hesitant about what to do. The Roman official vacillated between being faithful to his conscience and satisfying the wicked desires of the people and their leaders.

Pilate was amazed at the calm, holy behavior of Christ when faced with the cruel treatment that He received from His bitter enemies. In

the midst of that crowd, Christ was the only one who revealed a perfect peace in His mind, and He did so in spite of that desperately antagonistic environment.

The Holy Spirit was working in the heart of Pilate and the governor was moved to ask a very important question to Jesus: "What is truth?" Christ was ready to instruct him in the whole truth, but Pilate had other interests. He was concerned about his own political power and didn't wait for Christ's answer.

On the other hand, the Jewish leaders were pressing the multitude to accuse Christ and demand His death. Pilate was trying to appease the Jews while still declaring the innocence of Christ, but they were eager to condemn the Saviour. Pilate tried to use several alternatives to release Jesus, but he wasn't successful. He decided to chastise Jesus to appease the Jews. Although he had declared Jesus innocent, he acted against his own conscience in ordering the scourging of a just Man. The Jews realized the Roman official's weakness and pressed more and more for the condemnation of Jesus. Finally, Pilate used a pagan custom of offering two condemned people to the multitude so that the people could choose one of them to be freed and the other to be executed. Pilate reasoned that the people—as they looked on the purity of Christ as revealed in His appearance and behavior—would release the Saviour and condemn another man, Barabbas, to death. To his great surprise, the mob instead decided to release Barabbas, a notorious criminal, and to crucify Christ. Pilate gave up. He symbolically washed his hands, declaring himself free from the guilt of condemning Christ but gave Him to the soldiers to be crucified.

### **Calvary**

Golgotha was a place outside of Jerusalem where criminals were executed. The cross that had been prepared for Barabbas was now put on the shoulders of Christ.

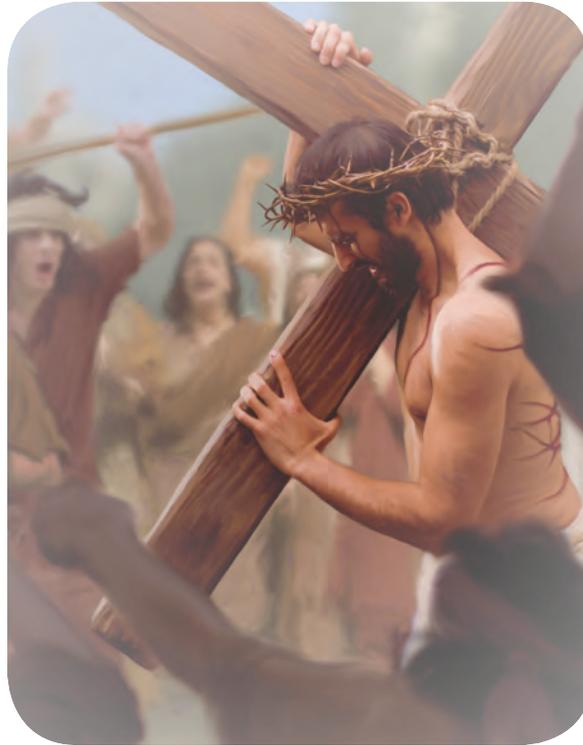
Carrying that cross was difficult for the Saviour. Since Thursday evening, Jesus hadn't eaten anything. The Redeemer had also passed through tremendous ordeals in Gethsemane and during the farce of a trial in the palace of Annas. He was pushed before Caiaphas, then twice before Pilate and once before Herod. Jesus had been scourged and beaten, and was the victim of the cruelest treatment. His human nature was totally exhausted and devastated. He had not enough strength to take the cross to the place of execution. After searching for someone to take the cross to Calvary, the Romans selected a man named Simon. Noticing the sympathy of this man from Cyrene, they decided that he should take the cross. Simon was really blessed from that experience. He learned to accept the cross of Christ as his only hope of salvation and to take up his own cross to represent Christ.

In the place of execution, Christ was crucified. Crucifixion was the most terrible form of torture. Now Christ took our place in spite of being innocent. His mental suffering was much worse than His physical suffering. He was feeling the terrible separation between Him and His father because of the sins of the world—your sins and my sins.

As He was crucified, Jesus became the main target of mockery, humiliation, and rejection. The whole universe was surprised when Jesus uttered His prayer in behalf of His enemies: "Forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing!" Not a word of retaliation came from the suffering Saviour's lips, but only a request for forgiveness toward his murderers.

The most comforting experience to the Saviour, even on the cross, was the prayer of the penitent thief: "Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom" (Luke 23:42, NKJV). While His own disciples manifested only disappointment with the capture and condemnation

of the Saviour; while the leaders and practically the whole nation despised Jesus, the repentant thief was one who recognized Christ as His Saviour and Lord. Christ answered promptly: "Today I say to you: You will be with Me in Paradise." The repentant thief



was totally saved in that moment and on that cross. He manifested a perfect peace that comes from the assurance of sins forgiven.

Before dying, Christ saw His mother close to the cross and near His disciple John. He said to her: Woman, here is your son. And to John: Here is your mother. From that time on, John received Mary in his home as a sacred legacy left by Christ.

Then, Christ uttered in loud voice: "My Father, why have You forsaken Me?" The separation between Christ and His heavenly Father was due to our sins, the just dying in the place of the sinners. That separation caused Jesus more suffering than any of His physical pain.

At the ninth hour Christ uttered words of deep meaning for the whole universe: "It is finished!" He died for you and for me. For your family and for my family. For the whole world.

The Bible declares that "the wages

of sin is [eternal] death, but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ" (Romans 6:23). Because of our sins, we deserve eternal death. But because Christ died in our stead, if we accept Him as our Saviour and Lord, we can have eternal life. Christ became our Substitute and Guarantee. He lived a perfect life and died on the cross in the midst of the basest criminals. Even though He never committed a sin, He accepted to take the sins of the whole world, so that all who would accept Him could have eternal life. "God hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Because Christ accepted to be sin for us, we can obtain righteousness through Him, if we fully believe in Him, repent of our sins, and, by His wonderful grace, obey His will.

John says about the repentant and obedient believers: "And they overcame . . . by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11). See also 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2; Hebrews 2:3; 3:13; Revelation 3:20, 21.

After being victorious on the cross, Christ resurrected and then ascended to the heavenly sanctuary where He is interceding in behalf of His children. When He finishes His work of intercession, He will come again to take His faithful followers to the heavenly home.

May the Lord help us so that we will be among the faithful to live eternally with our lovely and loving Saviour! In heaven, the strongest reason for our eternal happiness will be in living with Christ, followed by meeting those to whom we have presented the plan of salvation in Jesus Christ. May this be your and my experience today and forever!

## References

<sup>1</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 157.

<sup>3</sup> *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 601.

# The Mind of Christ and the War Within

By G. Robles

[Emphasis added throughout.]

## Introduction

An amazing statement is found in the epistles of Peter:

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin” (1 Peter 4:1).

Take another careful look at the last three words of that verse. Whatever “suffering in the flesh” and “arming ourselves” means—it contains the key to victory over sin—because it says that he that has suffered in the flesh has “ceased from sin.”

The language in this verse portrays a conflict. It says we are to “arm” ourselves and the weapon with which we are to arm ourselves is that “same mind” that Jesus had. What was that mind? It tells us, “forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind.” It is a mind to “suffer in the flesh.”

To understand what it means to “suffer in the flesh,” we need first to consider the state of the person we are dealing with in the verse. The nature

of that person before they “ceased from sin.”

What was it that captivated that person? and why did he or she sin? The reason we need to see this is because where sin enslaves us, that is, where the battle rages—is on the same ground. It is where sin dominates that sin must be defeated. So before we look at how the victory is gained, we need to consider this person in the verse before he or she gained the victory. That person is you and I in our unconverted, guilty, and Saviourless state.

## We are all sin-ravished

There isn’t an area of our life that sin has not marred with its foul, corrupting poison. We feel its effects in our minds, on our morals, and in our bodies. Yet because sin dims our understanding, we cannot appreciate how much we’ve been affected by it—until we turn to the scriptures. The extent of our moral disfigurement can only be truly understood in the light of divine revelation.

The Bible gives us a disturbing, yet accurate description of the natural condition of human nature.

The description is brief: “dead in trespasses and sins” (Ephesians 2:1).

To put it in perspective, Ellen White wrote, “We are not to seek to extenuate [lessen the seriousness of] the consequences of the original apostasy. It is not possible to overstate the degree of alienation from truth and righteousness entered into by those whose souls revolt from God.”<sup>1</sup>

That degree of alienation has left its mark on all of us. Sin not only drove us from the presence of God, but it changed the order of things in our humanity. It distorted and deranged the whole being. As mentioned, our mind, our body, and our spiritual nature are all infected by this poison. The apostle Paul wrote of those who were in this condition. Notice his description: “You, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works” (Colossians 1:21).

Once alienated from God, the controlling power of human nature—the mind—became the enemy of God. Our bodies then became just an instrument through which our sinful lusts and passions found fulfilment. Mind and body became a desperate slave to sin.

“For whatever overcomes a person, to that he is enslaved” (2 Peter 2:19, ESV).

Paul described his own slavery to sin when he wrote, “I am carnal, sold under sin” (Romans 7:14). This slavery of the mind to sinful lusts through the body, he labelled as being “in the flesh.”

“For while we were living **in the flesh, our sinful passions**, aroused by the law, **were at work in our members** to bear fruit for death” (Romans 7:5 ESV).

Paul used the word “flesh” in two ways:

To describe the physical body, and to describe the sinful, lower, corrupt nature of fallen humanity (or the carnal mind). His use of the word “flesh” to describe the unconverted slave-state of human nature to sin is used in most cases in his writings.

I like to think of the “flesh” as a powerful vacuum cleaner (but not in a good way). Being “in the flesh” is like being a vacuum that sucks up all manner of dirt and filth everywhere it goes. The “flesh” has a real emptiness, a barrenness that it desperately tries to fill. It slurps up moral muck and seeks to satisfy itself with forbidden pleasures at every turn. Its search for gratification is intense and unrelenting.

Whether sooner or later, this “in-the-flesh” state of being unsurprisingly leads to the performance of sin in the body. This is what Paul describes as the “works of the flesh.”

“Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like” (Galatians 5:19–21, NKJV).

## The mind is where the battle rages

The ground where sin dominates and enslaves the whole being is in the mind. It is in the sinful disposition of the mind—a mind that is only and continually inclined to sin.

Jesus refers to this corrupted mind as the “heart of man.” He said, “What comes out of a person is what defiles him. For from within, out of the heart of man, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, coveting, wickedness, deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride, foolishness. All these evil things come from within, and they defile a person” (Mark 7:20–23, ESV).



It is because sin resides in our mind that we are to take the following words of Jesus only in their figurative sense: “If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell” (Matthew 5:29, ESV).

Some have taken this advice literally, but obviously Jesus is using a figure of speech. The problem is not in the right eye, or the left eye, nor is it in our left hand or our right one, or any other part of our body. The problem is

the carnal mind, which is the state of being “in the flesh.”

## The fleshly mind cannot resist temptation

If we are in our natural state of being “in the flesh” and practicing sin, it means we are in slavery to sin and Satan. Jesus said,

“Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin” (John 8:34, ESV).

And if we are slaves to sin, then we are slaves to Satan because the scriptures say, “Whoever makes a practice of sinning **is of the devil**, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning” (1 John 3:8, ESV).

It is not in Satan’s interest to release his prisoners from his prison house. He does everything he can to keep them in there. The apostle Paul described the life of those who were enslaved to sin in this way: “**Ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience**” (Ephesians 2:2).

“Unless we become vitally connected with God, we can never resist the unhallowed effects of self-love, self-indulgence, and temptation to sin. . . . Without a personal acquaintance with Christ, and a continual communion, we are at the mercy of the enemy, and shall do his bidding in the end.”<sup>2</sup>

So we are at the mercy of the enemy, but the enemy has no mercy. If we are “in the flesh,” all Satan needs to do is suggest a sinful idea and “the desires of the flesh and of the mind” (Ephesians 2:3) are just too happy to oblige.

“Sin has degraded the faculties of the soul. Temptations from without find an answering chord within the heart, and the feet turn imperceptibly toward evil.”<sup>3</sup>

## Trapped like mice

Recently, I watched a video of a man that filmed his own homemade mousetrap. It was a clever design, using a bucket. The actual trap looked like an Olympic pool diving board and it was carefully attached to the rim of the bucket. But this board was designed to give way when the weight of a mouse was on top of it. Once he finished making it, he placed some peanut butter on the tip of the trap, set up the camera and waited.

Soon enough, a mouse appeared. The mouse was careful to sniff around, and once he smelled the butter, he promptly made his way to the edge of the trap and fell swiftly into the bucket. After a few attempts, he successfully jumped out—and where do you think he went? Did he run away with a scare in disgust? No, he headed straight back towards the peanut butter, at which point he fell in again, every time. This happened at least eight times until the video ended. He was as good as toast.

That mouse was “drawn away of his own lust, and enticed.” He could not help his own desires. He just could not help himself.

## Our help comes from the Lord

We are just like that mouse. I know this has been my experience many times, and I know it has most likely been yours. But let’s begin looking at what God does to help us out of this flesh-state, slavery to sin.

“God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved)” (Ephesians 2:4, 5).

I just praise God for these verses. They show us that God still loved us with “great love,” and although we were “dead” in sins He made us live again with Christ. He introduced a life principle within us. This makes a world of difference, because what we

were incapable of doing for ourselves in our utter weakness, He did for us by His divine power. Our help truly comes “from the Lord which made heaven and earth” (Psalm 121:2).

## Paul’s struggle—our struggle

People read through Romans chapter 7 and wonder if that was Paul in his unconverted or converted state. They cannot understand which. They then become discouraged because they see in themselves the same struggle. They begin to doubt if they have ever been converted or if this hopeless experience of when the flesh conquers the mind must be roughly what converted life is like.

To understand Romans 7, I encourage you to read the whole book of Romans, particularly chapters 6–8. However, I just want to highlight a few verses from there and explain why I believe the question as to whether this is Paul in his unconverted or converted state, is not the most relevant question to ask.

He writes, “For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not” (Romans 7:18).

“I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (verse 21).

There was a degree of willingness within Paul to do good. This desire for good came from God, because Paul confessed that in him, that is in his flesh dwelt “no good thing.” So, the desire for good came from God, as it is described in Philippians 2:13, “For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.”

But Paul had not in himself the power to do what he was convicted in his mind to do. Here, we see a man whose mind has been aroused by the Spirit of God—who has been convicted of the good, whose mind has been made willing but who is in a battle within between his willing mind and the sinful inclinations that dwelt in him. Often, sin had the victory and brought him into captivity again, as he explained: “I delight in the law of God

after the inward man: But I see another law in my members [flesh], warring against the law of my mind, and **bringing me into captivity to the law of sin** which is in my members. **O wretched man that I am!** who shall deliver me from the body of this death?” (Romans 7:22–24).

Paul sought deliverance from the body of death that controlled him. What did he mean? The terms that Paul uses: “flesh,” “fleshly,” “carnal,” “members,” and “body” are used in a figurative sense to describe a corrupt, selfish human nature. He sought deliverance from the corrupt, selfish lusts that controlled him.

I think we can mistake the message of the struggle in Romans 7 when we try to fit that experience into two boxes—either converted or unconverted. The fact is that there is a struggle and I thank God for such a struggle, between the natural, fleshly man and the Spirit-convicted mind. I thank God for that because this is a direct fulfillment of Genesis 3:15, where God promised to introduce into human nature a warring element against sin. Speaking to Satan, God said,

**“I will put enmity between thee and the woman,** and between thy seed and her seed” (Genesis 3:15).

So, praise God for that struggle! Paul summed up his thoughts in Romans 7:25, “I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.”

Now, don’t be confused by the above verse. Paul is not saying that he serves God and sin at the same time, for this would contradict so much of Scripture. What he is saying, though, is that there are two different natures that serve two different masters. One is corrupted, and the other is holy. One serves sin (the natural, flesh nature), and the other serves God (the “inner” or “inward” human).

## The mind of Christ—our only hope of victory

So how did Paul find deliverance from his fleshly nature? This is where 1 Peter 4:1 shines:

“Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin.”

What did the apostle Peter mean by Christ suffering in the flesh? He explains it in the previous chapter, “For Christ also hath **once suffered** for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, **being put to death in the flesh**, but quickened by the Spirit” (1 Peter 3:18).

The suffering that Christ underwent while on earth was not only because He was bearing our sin, but also because of the abuse and shame He bore at the hands of others. His suffering “in the flesh” was not only upon Him at His death, but throughout His life. Christ willingly suffered all this. His attitude was to look beyond the suffering, through self-denial, at the greater picture. He was laying down His life for the human race. This is His mind, and it is the mind we are to have if we are to cease from sin. It is a mental attitude of self-sacrifice.

**“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:** who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and **became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**” (Philippians 2:5–8).

Christ Himself said, “If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me” (Luke 9:23).

So Paul found deliverance from his selfish flesh-nature by having that same mind that Jesus had. As Jesus had a mind to lay down His life, so Paul had a mind to be crucified with Him. What exactly was it that Paul crucified with Christ?

“They that are Christ's **have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts**” (Galatians 5:24). “**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).

Paul practiced the advice Peter gave to us. He armed himself with the mind of Christ to “suffer in the flesh” and he ceased from sin. This he did daily, for he wrote, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). While he was crucified with Christ, self was dead, and Christ lived within him. This is why he wrote, “If Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin” (Romans 8:10). That was the body of sin that he so much longed to be free from. That body was now dead **because** there was a new life from Christ within him, and now he lived by the faith of the Son of God that loved him and gave Himself for him.

### The power is of the Spirit

How are we to put selfishness to death? How are we to crucify those powerful affections and lusts that often control us? It can only be done by the power of Christ. And this power He gives to all that are in need of it.

It is of no use to try to deny our selfish and sinful inclinations by just trying to. Experience has no doubt taught us that this is futile. What we need here is a power outside of ourselves—and that power is of the Spirit of God. “For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye **through the Spirit do mortify the deeds of the body**, ye shall live” (Romans 8:13).

We need a power far mightier than we possess to gain the victory in this warfare within us. Where the battle rages, where sin enslaves us, is where we will defeat the enemy—and that place is in the mind.

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but **mighty through God** to the pulling down of strong holds;) **casting down imaginations**, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and

**bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ**” (2 Corinthians 10:3–5).

The apostle's prayer to God for the believers is “that he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be **strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**” (Ephesians 3:16).

That “inner man” that God creates within us is the person that gains the victory over sin through the power of His Spirit. That person is the unity of humanity with the divine nature—and no power of sin can conquer a person that is held by the power of God.

“Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, **according as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that **by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature**, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:2–4).

Every one of us knows the frenzy of the battle within us. But as we have seen, there is abundant hope for all of us through the power of Christ. And that hope is found in the mind of Christ—the mental attitude that He gives us to deny all ungodliness and selfishness within us. That mind is mighty through God to bring into captivity every evil lust, every evil thought that rises within us.

Soon, that old enemy of sin within us will be bound in death, never again to annoy us (1 Corinthians 15:54–56). Until then, let us arm ourselves with the mind that was in Christ and daily win the small battles with honor!

“For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet **the inward man is renewed day by day**” (2 Corinthians 4:16).

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 8, p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 324.

<sup>3</sup> *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 451.



# Perfect

The first of two articles

## I. Be perfect

What is Jesus' well-known statement about perfection? "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48).

"The **conditions of eternal life**, under grace, are just what they were in Eden—**perfect righteousness, harmony with God**, perfect conformity to the principles of His law. The standard of character presented in the Old Testament is the same that is presented in the New Testament. This standard is not one to which we cannot attain. In every command or injunction that God gives there is a promise, the most positive, underlying the command. **God has made provision that we may become like unto Him**, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace."<sup>1</sup>

I have always heard this verse in connection with the concepts of sanctification and character perfection without much reference to the context. You may have heard it as well; it is an important reference on this subject.

However, as I have been reviewing the Sermon on the Mount, I have realized something about this passage. There is a point that I have been mostly missing. Now I want to give you the rest of the story.

## II. Not good enough

What was the prevailing religious condition in Jesus' day? "But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in" (Matthew 23:13).

How did they shut the kingdom? "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers" (Matthew 23:1–4).

"The **Jews held that God loved those who served Him**—according

to their view, those who fulfilled the requirements of the rabbis—and that **all the rest of the world lay under His frown and curse**. Not so, said Jesus; the whole world, the evil and the good, lies in the sunshine of His love. This truth you should have learned from nature itself; for God 'maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust' (Matthew 5:45)."<sup>2</sup>

"Such was the **spirit of the law** which the **rabbis** had **misinterpreted as a cold and rigid code of exactions**. They **regarded themselves as better than other men**, and as **entitled to the special favor** of God by virtue of their birth as Israelites; but **Jesus pointed to the spirit of forgiving love** as that which would give **evidence** that they were **actuated** by any **higher motives** than even the **publicans** and **sinner**s, whom they despised."<sup>3</sup>

Why had they judged everyone else so harshly? "The **Jews** had been **wearily toiling to reach perfection by their own efforts**, and they **had failed**. Christ had

**already told them that their righteousness could never enter the kingdom of heaven.** Now He points out to them the character of the righteousness that all who enter heaven will possess.”<sup>4</sup>

“The Saviour’s lesson, ‘Resist not him that is evil,’ was a hard saying for the revengeful Jews, and they murmured against it among themselves. But Jesus now made a still stronger declaration:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 5:43–45).”<sup>5</sup>

### III. The Father’s example

What did “therefore” in Matthew 5:48 point back to? **“That ye may be the children of your Father** which is in heaven: for He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust” (Matthew 5:45).

“The word ‘therefore’ implies a **conclusion**, an **inference** from what has gone before. Jesus has been describing to His hearers the unfailing mercy and love of God, and He bids them **therefore** to be **perfect**.

Because your heavenly Father ‘is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil’ (Luke 6:35), **because He has stooped to lift you up**, therefore, said Jesus, **you may become like Him** in character, and stand without fault in the presence of men and angels.”<sup>6</sup>

In describing God as “Father,” what was Jesus saying? “He pointed His hearers to the Ruler of the universe, under the new name, ‘Our Father.’ He would have them understand how tenderly the heart of God yearned over them. He teaches that **God cares for every lost soul**; that ‘like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear Him’ (Psalm 103:13). **Such a conception of God was never given to the world by any religion but that of the Bible.** **Heathenism** teaches men to look upon the Supreme Being as an object of **fear** rather than of **love**—a **malign deity** to be **appeased by sacrifices**, rather than a Father pouring upon His children the gift of His love. **Even** the people of Israel had become so blinded to the precious teaching of the prophets concerning God that this revelation of His paternal love was as an original subject, a new gift to the world.”<sup>7</sup>

What did a loving God do for lost humanity? “For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet

peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were **yet sinners**, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were **enemies**, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being **reconciled**, we shall be saved by his life” (Romans 5:6–10).

“And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled” (Colossians 1:21).

Toward whom did He show love? “For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost” (Titus 3:3–5).

“While we were yet unloving and unlovely in character, ‘hateful, and hating one another,’ our heavenly Father had mercy on us. [Titus 3:3–5 quoted]. **His love received, will make us, in like manner, kind and tender**, not merely toward those who please us, but **to the most**



“ Love is the agent which [God] uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith.”

**faulty and erring and sinful.”<sup>8</sup>**

How is love constantly demonstrated? “That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for **he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust**” (Matthew 5:45).

“It is not because of inherent power that year by year the earth produces her bounties and continues her motion round the sun. The hand of God guides the planets and keeps them in position in their orderly march through the heavens. It is through His power that summer and winter, seedtime and harvest, day and night follow each other in their regular succession. It is by His word that vegetation flourishes, that the leaves appear and the flowers bloom. **Every good thing we have**, each ray of sunshine and shower of rain, every morsel of food, every moment of life, **is a gift of love.**”<sup>9</sup>

**“God is love. Like rays of light from the sun, love and light and joy flow out from Him to all His creatures. It is His nature to give. His very life is the outflow of unselfish love. ‘His glory is His children’s good; His joy, His tender Fatherhood.’ ”<sup>10</sup>**

How does the heart respond when we see how He has loved us? “We love him, because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19).

“With untold love our **God has loved us**, and **our love awakens toward Him** as we comprehend something of the length and breadth and depth and height of this love that passeth knowledge. By the **revelation** of the attractive **loveliness of Christ**, by the **knowledge of His love** expressed to us while we were yet sinners, the **stubborn heart is melted and subdued**, and the **sinner is transformed** and becomes a child of heaven. God does not employ compulsory measures; love is the agent which He uses to expel sin from the heart. By it He changes pride into humility, and enmity and unbelief into love and faith.”<sup>11</sup>

#### IV. Love that works

Can we have God’s type of love without some kind of action?

“What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man **say he hath faith, and have not works?** can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and one of you say unto them, **Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled;** notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works” (James 2:14–18).

Faith must have a companion ingredient: Not saying, but doing.

“Divine truth exerts little influence upon the world, when it should exert much influence through our practice. **The mere profession of religion abounds**, but it **has little weight**. We may **claim to be followers of Christ**, we may **claim to believe every truth** in the word of God; but **this will do our neighbor no good** unless our belief is carried into our daily life. **Our profession may be as high as heaven**, but it **will save neither ourselves nor our fellow men unless we are Christians**. A **right example will do more** to benefit the world **than all our profession**.

“By **no selfish practices** can the cause of Christ be served. His cause is the cause of the oppressed and the poor. In the hearts of His professed followers there is need of the tender sympathy of Christ—a deeper love for those whom He has so valued as to give His own life for their salvation. These souls are precious, infinitely more precious than any other offering we can bring to God. To bend every energy toward some apparently great work, while we neglect the needy or turn the stranger from his right, is not a service that will meet His approval. . . .

“The sanctification of the soul by the working of the Holy Spirit is

the implanting of Christ’s nature in humanity. Gospel religion is Christ in the life—a living, active principle. It is the grace of Christ revealed in character and wrought out in good works. **The principles of the gospel cannot be disconnected from any department of practical life**. Every line of Christian experience and labor is to be a representation of the life of Christ.”<sup>12</sup>

How can we fulfill God’s law? “Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for **he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law**” (Romans 13:8).

“If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for **he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?**” (1 John 4:20).

“But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7).

“(For **not the hearers** of the law are just before God, but the **doers** of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another)” (Romans 2:13–15).

“Our standing before God depends, not upon the amount of light we have received, but upon the use we make of what we have. Thus even the heathen who choose the right as far as they can distinguish it are in a more favorable condition than are those who have had great light, and profess to serve God, but who disregard the light, and by their daily life contradict their profession.”<sup>13</sup>

“Jesus said, Be perfect as *your Father* is perfect. If you are the **children of God** you are **partakers of His nature**, and you cannot but **be like Him**. Every child lives by the life of his father. If you are God’s



children, begotten by His Spirit, you **live by the life of God**. In Christ dwells ‘all the fullness of the Godhead bodily’ (Colossians 2:9); and the **life of Jesus** is made **manifest** ‘in our mortal flesh’ (2 Corinthians 4:11). That life in you will **produce the same character and manifest the same works** as it did in Him. Thus you will be **in harmony with every precept of His law**; for ‘the law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul’ (Psalm 19:7, margin). Through love ‘the righteousness of the law’ will be ‘fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit’ (Romans 8:4).<sup>14</sup>

What is the essence of true religion? “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

“Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, **To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world**” (James 1:27).

What is a true fast in the eyes of God? “Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go

free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh?” (Isaiah 58:6, 7).

“It is not possible for the heart in which Christ abides to be destitute of love. If we love God because He first loved us, we shall love all for whom Christ died. **We cannot come in touch with divinity without coming in touch with humanity**; for in Him who sits upon the throne of the universe, divinity and humanity are combined. **Connected with Christ**, we are **connected with our fellow men** by the golden links of the chain of love. Then the **pity and compassion of Christ** will be **manifest in our life**. We shall **not wait to have the needy and unfortunate brought to us**. We shall not need to be entreated to feel for the woes of others. **It will be as natural for us to minister to the needy and suffering as it was for Christ to go about doing good**.

“Wherever there is an impulse of love and sympathy, **wherever the heart reaches out to bless and uplift others, there is revealed**

**the working of God's Holy Spirit**. In the depths of heathenism, men who have had **no knowledge of the written law of God**, who have **never even heard the name of Christ**, have been kind to His servants, protecting them at the risk of their own lives. **Their acts show the working of a divine power**. The Holy Spirit has implanted the grace of Christ in the heart of the savage, quickening his sympathies contrary to his nature, contrary to his education. The ‘Light which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (John 1:9), is shining in his soul; and this light, if heeded, will guide his feet to the kingdom of God.”<sup>15</sup>

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 76.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 76.
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 74, 75.
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 77.
- <sup>12</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 383, 384.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 239.
- <sup>14</sup> *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 77, 78.
- <sup>15</sup> *Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 384, 385.

# What Does It Mean “To Be in Your Likeness”?

By Dorothy Ilic

What does it mean to be in Your likeness?  
In heaven You were perfect,  
No scars marked Your brow,  
No tears of pain and grief fell down Your cheeks,  
Your hands had no nails driven in them,  
Your side was not run through.

In heaven You were perfect,  
Your visage unscathed,  
Yet You chose the path to pain,  
And death put You in the grave.

You did this because You didn't want me to lose  
Your likeness,  
My sins—my life—were what had almost obliterated  
The likeness of You in me;  
The hope of glory.  
And You couldn't bear to see me standing alone  
in my misery,  
And so You came.

To walk how I walked,  
So that I may walk as You walked,  
To feel what I feel  
So that I may feel what You feel for humanity;  
To see what I see,  
So that I may see others as You see them,  
To love me unconditionally,  
So that I, too, may love.

You came to cry aloud, to feel the pain,  
The burden of sin, the sting of death.

What does it mean to be in Your likeness?  
When one day I will reach out and touch Your hands

And ask You,  
“What are these wounds in Your hands?”  
How will I ever be able to look into Your eyes  
When You reply,  
“I was wounded in the house of My friends”  
Knowing that I was one of those friends?

What does it mean to be in Your likeness?  
When Your likeness will forever be marked  
and scarred,  
So that my likeness will never again be marked  
and scarred?

For me You were scarred,  
Your beauty was marred,  
Yet those very scars  
Are what make You  
More than beautiful.

I can never transform myself into Your likeness.  
Only You can do that for me.  
From glory to glory.

Oh Lord, teach me, show me,  
What it means to be in Your likeness.

May I one day rejoice as the psalmist did,  
And exclaim,  
“As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness:  
I shall be satisfied,  
When I awake, with thy likeness” (Psalm 17:15).

*A compilation from the Bible and the Spirit of Prophecy, with comments  
by Vernon Rankine*



# *Light* in a Dark Place

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

“Faithful men, who were obedient to the promptings of God’s Spirit and the teachings of His word, were to proclaim this warning [of Revelation 14:6, 7] to the world. They were those who had taken heed to the ‘sure word of prophecy,’ the ‘light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise’ (2 Peter 1:19). They had been seeking the knowledge of God more than all hid treasures, counting it ‘better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold’ (Proverbs 3:14). And the Lord revealed to them the great things of the kingdom. ‘The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him; and he will show them his covenant’ (Psalm 25:14).”<sup>1</sup>

The big question is: Why are God’s people in darkness? From the very outset of the gospel we have been privileged to have Jesus Christ, the Light of the world, in our midst! For a long time, the Lord has given us the invitation through the prophecy of Isaiah 2:5, “O house of Jacob, come ye, and let us walk in the light of the Lord.” What or who is the light? I do hope we have accepted that this light

consists of the messages that God has chosen to speak to us through the prophets, including the Lord’s messenger for the last days, Ellen G. White. And of course, we should also let Jesus Himself give us the answer, “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world” (John 9:5). Jesus even went to the extent to declare to us, “I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life” (John 8:12).

The servant of the Lord laid matters out very precisely, and this counsel was given, “It was not the scholarly theologians who had an understanding of this truth, and engaged in its proclamation. Had these faithful watchmen, diligently and prayerfully searching the Scriptures, they would have known the time of night; the prophecies would have opened to them the events about to take place. **But they did not occupy this position, and the message was given by humbler men.** Said Jesus: ‘Walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you’ (John 12:35). Those who turn away from the light which God has given, or who neglect to seek it when it is within their reach, are left in darkness. But the Saviour declares: ‘He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life’ (John 8:12). Whoever is with singleness of purpose seeking to do God’s will, earnestly heeding

the light already given, will receive greater light; to that soul some star of heavenly radiance will be sent to guide him into all truth.”<sup>2</sup>

### Does God force us to believe the truth? Or does He guide us to the light?

“God does not compel men to give up their unbelief. Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which they will accept. The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture. Had the Jews laid by their prejudice and compared written prophecy with the facts characterizing the life of Jesus, they would have perceived a beautiful harmony between the prophecies and their fulfillment in the life and ministry of the lowly Galilean.”<sup>3</sup>

The servant of the Lord explains: “Obedience to God brings the soul into agreement with the highest laws in the universe. It imparts dignity and true greatness to the humblest occupation where Christ can preside. It crowns the lowliest position in life with the highest honors, bringing men into alliance with God and binding up His interests with plans and purposes that have existence in the infinite mind from eternity.

“Those followers of Christ who accept the light that God sends them must obey the voice of God speaking to them when there are many other voices crying out against it.”

“The Lord Jesus Christ has paid the price for you, not to secure a mere assent to the truth, but for heart service. He desires the homage of your soul. You cannot cease to believe that you ought to do the will of God. You can no more release yourself from the claims of duty than you can flee from the presence of God. It is only in obedience to God that you will realize true happiness.”<sup>4</sup>

### Why are God’s people in this spiritual condition?

**“I have been shown that the greatest reason why the people of God are now found in this state of spiritual blindness is that they will not receive correction.**

Many have despised the reproofs and warnings given them. The True Witness condemns the lukewarm condition of the people of God, which gives Satan great power over them in this waiting, watching time. The selfish, the proud, and the lovers of sin are ever assailed with doubts. Satan has ability to suggest doubts and to devise objections to the pointed testimony that God sends, and many think it a virtue, a mark of intelligence in them, to be unbelieving and to question and quibble.

Those who desire to doubt will have plenty of room. God does not propose to remove all occasion for unbelief. He gives evidence, which must be carefully investigated with a humble mind and a teachable spirit, and all should decide from the weight of evidence.”<sup>5</sup>

“The word of the Lord, spoken through His servants, is received by many with questionings and fears. And many will defer their obedience to the warning and reproofs given, waiting till every shadow of uncertainty is removed from their

minds. The unbelief that demands perfect knowledge will never yield to the evidence that God is pleased to give. He requires of His people faith that rests upon the weight of evidence, not upon perfect knowledge. Those followers of Christ who accept the light that God sends them must obey the voice of God speaking to them when there are many other voices crying out against it. It requires

voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me. And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate” (Isaiah 6:8–11).

“The heavenly visitant bade the waiting messenger: ‘Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed’ (Isaiah 6:9, 10).

“The prophet’s duty was plain; he was to lift his voice in protest against the prevailing evils. But he dreaded to undertake the work without some assurance of hope. . . .

“His burden of soul in behalf of erring Judah was

not to be borne in vain. His mission was not to be wholly fruitless. Yet the evils that had been multiplying for many generations could not be removed in his day. Throughout his lifetime he must be a patient, courageous teacher—a prophet of hope as well as of doom. The divine purpose finally accomplished, the full fruitage of his efforts, and of the labors of all God’s faithful messengers, would appear. **A remnant should be saved. That this might be brought about, the messages of warning and entreaty were to**



discernment to distinguish the voice of God.”<sup>6</sup>

### The fulfilling of prophecies with a direct bearing upon us

The lesson that God has been giving to His people is ever the same, yet how difficult it is for us to comprehend the plain teaching! Allow me to journey back to the time of prophet Isaiah. Here we can see how personal, how intimate God wanted to get with us—especially when a serious warning comes into question. “Also I heard the

**be delivered to the rebellious,** the Lord declared, "until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land" (verses 11, 12).<sup>7</sup>

Is there a direct lesson for us today? The servant of the Lord makes it clear for us:

"The heavy judgments that were to befall the impenitent—war, exile, oppression, the loss of power and prestige among the nations—**all these were to come in order that those who would recognize in them the hand of an offended God, might be led to repent.** The ten tribes of the northern kingdom were soon to be scattered among the nations, and their cities left desolate; the destroying armies of hostile nations were to sweep over their land again and again; even Jerusalem was finally to fall, and Judah was to be carried away captive; yet the Promised Land was not to remain wholly forsaken forever. The assurance of the heavenly visitant to Isaiah was: 'In it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof' (verse 13)."<sup>8</sup>

How much clearer do we expect the Lord to be in showing us the things that He is about to bring upon the earth? It was by the rejection of heaven-sent light and unbelief and apostasy that caused the vision of God's ancient people to be so blurred that they were unable to see the clear warnings. The servant of the Lord explains, "It is not the plan of God to compel men to yield their wicked unbelief. **Before them are light and darkness, truth and error. It is for them to decide which to accept.** The human mind is endowed with power to discriminate between right and wrong. God designs that men shall not decide from impulse, **but from weight of evidence, carefully comparing scripture with scripture.**"<sup>9</sup>

## In conclusion

"We need a divine Teacher. In order that the world might not remain in darkness, in eternal spiritual night, God met us in Jesus Christ. Christ is 'the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world' (John 1:9). The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is revealed 'in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Corinthians 4:6). The light of Christ, illuminating our understanding, and shining upon the face of nature, enables us still to read the lesson of God's love in His created works."<sup>10</sup>

God would not have His people to remain in spiritual darkness. He has given us the three angels' messages—yet these messages have become muffled in our hands. How? The servant of the Lord admonishes us, "There must be no toning down of the truth, no muffling of the message for this time. The third angel's message must be strengthened and confirmed. The eighteenth chapter of Revelation reveals the importance of presenting the truth in no measured terms but with boldness and power. . . . There has been too much beating about the bush in the proclamation of the third angel's message. The message has not been given as clearly and distinctly as it should have been."<sup>11</sup> So, fellow readers, this is why the "Light" that should be shining has almost become indistinguishable!

"The third angel's message is to be given with power. The power of the proclamation of the first and second messages is to be intensified in the third. In the Revelation John says of the heavenly messenger who unites with the third angel: **'I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.** And he cried mightily with a strong voice' (Revelation 18:1, 2). **We are in danger of giving the third angel's message in so indefinite a manner that it does not impress the people.** So many other interests are brought in that the very message which should be proclaimed with power becomes tame and voiceless. . . . While the churches profess to

believe in Christ, they are violating the law which Christ Himself proclaimed from Sinai. The Lord bids us: 'Show My people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins' (Isaiah 58:1). The trumpet is to give a certain sound."<sup>12</sup>

Fellow believers, we need to be the company the prophet Isaiah describes in chapter 60:1–5. This light that God has given through inspiration is the very fundamental power that will bring us to the shore of eternity. Our confidence is to grow stronger in these sure words of prophecy, lest we fall back and sink as low as in the days before the reformation. God raised up the Reformers to arouse the inhabitants of earth from their deathlike slumber, and many turned away from their vanities and superstitions, from priests and penances, to serve the living God, to search in His holy word for truth as for hidden treasure. They began diligently to work the mine of truth, to clear away the rubbish of human opinion that had buried the precious jewels of light. But as soon as the work of reformation began, Satan with determined purpose sought the more zealously to bind the minds of people in superstition, errors, and traditions. Let us never forget that the neglected light is what identifies and guides us as the remnant church found in Revelation 19:10, "for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy"—and we are to live that prophecy.

May the Lord help us to continue lifting the light entrusted to us higher and higher to bring the people to the true Light of the world. Amen.

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Maranatha*, p. 17.
- <sup>2</sup> *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>3</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 458.
- <sup>4</sup> *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 14, pp. 11, 12.
- <sup>5</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 255.
- <sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 258.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Review and Herald*, March 11, 1915. [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- <sup>9</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 1, p. 1120.
- <sup>10</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 256.
- <sup>11</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 230.
- <sup>12</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 60. [Emphasis added.]



By T. Stockler

# Are You a Church Member?

Part 1 of 2

In the beginning of human history, God made almost everything good. It is that almost that we are going to talk about today. Six times God tells us in Genesis chapter one that each part of His creation is good. He declares everything good except the sky. Then He calls the whole of creation good. But Jesus Himself tells us that in the beauty and glory of Eden there was one thing that was not good. “It is not good that the man should be alone” (Genesis 2:18). Those are God’s words in a perfect world. And thousands of years of human experience has proven the accuracy and credibility of Jesus ever since. To this day, it is not good for a man or a woman to be alone.

Our desire for companionship is a basic human need, along with hunger and thirst and a need for safety. We probably spend more time and money on our social needs than we ever do for food and drink combined. We will travel anywhere on earth it

takes to spend time with family or close friends. Most of us never even considered going out of the state we live in for food or drink. Do you plan to travel to British Columbia just to get fresh blueberries, or Wisconsin for fresh apples, or Brazil for fresh açai and papaya?

The same is true of your house. Half the money that most of us put into our house has nothing to do with keeping us warm, dry, or safe. That money is to make guests comfortable or to impress them. Hermits do not need big or expensive housing.

We not only want others, we need them. We need others for three reasons:

**1. We need others because we are helpless. We can’t do everything ourselves. We cannot accomplish everything alone.**

**2. We need others because we were created to share. Each of us is like a fountain that is going to explode if we can’t share.**

**3. We also need others because we have a deep need to belong.**

The wise man told us, “Two are better than one. . . . For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up” (Ecclesiastes 4:9, 10).

We spend all day, every day, thinking about family and friends. That is what keeps social media like Facebook going. Part of our fascination with the Internet is to educate or entertain ourselves. The rest is to enhance our social activities. Everyone reading this demonstrates all day long, every day, the truth of Jesus’ words that it is not good for even perfect and holy people to be alone—much less sinners.

Not only our actions but also our words demonstrate the truth of those words. We could talk for days about each of the relationships God gives us. What do we do about our family, our community, our ethnicity, and our friendships? What are the social

laws of the universe? How do we obey or violate them? What makes relationships good and what ruins them? Our world is filled with these subjects. From songs to books to TV shows to gossip, there is no end to the discussion of relationships.

Angels don't talk about relationships nonstop. They don't need to. Angels are friends. They know how to communicate, how express their own needs and interests, how to appreciate the needs and views of others, and how to negotiate the best solution for everyone affected by the choice. Country music, with its songs of pain and frustration, has no market in heaven. Self-help relationship books don't much matter in a perfect world. It's here, in the middle of a sinful social world where we hurt and betray each other enough to make relationships an interesting topic.

We have just observed that as long as humans have existed they have been social creatures that seek out social relationships. It is part of who we are. Or is it? Some of you are starting to question me already. Many of you agree with me, but not all of you. You know someone that claims to be happier living on the moon in isolation than in your community. You know someone that loves to be alone. I have known those people also. There are people who do not need other humans very much. Their social appetite is small. They never have to go on a social diet. Their lives are simpler. But even the most introverted people want a friend sometimes. I have to laugh when they tell me how much they want to live alone. For in telling me, they prove that they want to talk about being alone. They want to talk to someone else about being alone. And you cannot talk to anyone when you live alone. Even hermits want a friend sometimes.

But there are probably moments when everyone wants to be alone. We need solitude. All those beautiful pictures of nature sell, because we want to feel a little alone sometimes.

Loneliness is necessary. We need it to hear our own selves. My father

used to say that it was necessary to be alone, so that you could hear yourself think. Growing up, as many of us have, without much time alone, we don't even know ourselves. We don't know the voice of our own thoughts. We know what our friends think or like better than we know ourselves. Just stop and ask yourself what you would do. For example, take your three closest family members and friends and ask yourself what they would say if they met the President of the United States. What would they say if it snowed on the beaches of Los Angeles in July. What would the look on their face be? You probably can tell me the words and the exact expressions your friends are likely to use. Now tell me what would you do in the same circumstances? Most of us do not know ourselves as well as we do our friends. We need to be alone, just to meet and get to know ourselves.

In all our busyness, we lose knowing ourselves. We also lose knowing God. We lose out on the best friendship in the world. For each of us can know God personally. But knowing Him requires loneliness.

"Everyone needs to have a personal experience in obtaining a knowledge of the will of God. We must individually hear Him speaking to the heart. When every other voice is hushed, and in quietness we wait before Him, the silence of the soul makes more distinct the voice of God. He bids us, 'Be still, and know that I am God' (Psalm 46:10). Here alone can true rest be found. And this is the effectual preparation for all who labor for God. Amid the hurrying throng, and the strain of life's intense activities, the soul that is thus refreshed will be surrounded with an atmosphere of light and peace. The life will breathe out fragrance, and will reveal a divine power that will reach men's hearts."<sup>1</sup>

The Bible doesn't talk much about sinners being alone. It only mentions occasionally the loneliness of our forefathers. But it tells us that Jesus was alone. Several times it says that the Holy One was alone. No one else in the Bible is repeatedly said to be

alone. Our Example knew how to be lonely enough to hear His Father and ours. Will we follow His example? You will each one be lost in this world and lost for eternity if you do not learn how to be lonely enough to hear God.

But solitude is not enough. Some solitude opens the soul to God and heals our battered and bruised souls. Too much solitude is a form of selfishness. It is an escape from a life of service. It is a way to reject the work God gives us for the pleasure we desire.

I remember the glory of the Norway pine forests of northern Minnesota. Watching the birds land on any one of the state's thousand lakes is a thrill. Seeing loons and moose and porcupines restores the soul. Listening to the snipe endlessly laugh at us all is heartening. Looking at the pink lady slipper is fantastic. Having a bear so close I could almost touch him is heart thrilling. Watching a golden eagle fly down the road just feet away from me, with his wings almost touching the tree branches on either side of the road is majestic and captivating. But I chose to leave that for something else. Service to others is better than all the solitude in the world.

And so we turn ourselves to those around us. God designed several solutions to our loneliness. Marriage is the dearest and most satisfying. We each want that and we want more. We look for extended families, communities, the church, and the nation as well.

We should talk about God's advice for each of these relationships. We should talk of how to have happy marriages. For our church needs as much happiness as it has marriages. Discouraging remarriage is a doctrine designed to lock people in a living hell if we do not know how to have happy marriages. Happy parent-child relationships and happy sibling relationships and happy friendships matter as much as marriages. The reason most of us do not act like we want to go to heaven is that we do not enjoy our relationships here on

earth. An eternity of living the way most of our marriages, families, and friendships exist would never be heaven! It's already purgatory at least, and we only have to survive a few decades together. If most of us had to live together for centuries, hell would be a pretty word for the chaos and agony.

One valuable social relationship that the Bible presents to us is church involvement. One of the places that the Bible discusses this social connection is the New Testament book of Philippians. In order to grasp its message about the church, we are going to drink in the entire book of Philippians. Paul first went to Philippi because God told him to go in a dream. After he arrived in the town, Paul started meeting with anyone interested in listening and telling them of the Messiah. This made the Jews so angry they stirred up the whole town and got Paul and his friend Silas thrown into prison. Not a very kind way to treat a Roman citizen who meant them no harm at all.

But each of those two apostles were more of a man than almost anyone today. Beaten and bruised, insulted and injured, Paul and Silas began singing from the maximum security ward. No curses or whining from their lips. These real men praised God when everything went wrong. I have no doubt that many of us would sing in prison also. Our tune would be the blues. We would complain all night of the injustice that took our freedom away. But Paul and Silas weren't singing blues. They were singing praises.

Now God seems to like what we don't. He also seems to hate what we like. We like complaining. Millions of Israelites on their way home from Egypt proved that for the rest of human history. God hates it. We don't like being grateful in the middle of terrible moments. But God likes it when we are adults. Paul and Silas praised the God of heaven and He heard them.

The earth itself shook. God timed the earthquake to the rhythm of

the apostles' song. If you want the problems of your life to shake until they are solved, praise the Lord. If you want out of the prison that other people's injustice builds around you, tell God how grateful you are out loud.

The earthquake shook more than the ground. It shook the jailer. Fearing that all the prisoners were free, and he would be killed for failing at his job, he started to commit suicide. And Paul, the prisoner, stopped him. In the rubble of that prison, God saved the jailer from committing suicide and turned him into one of the founding members of the Philippian church. Next time you think God can't reach the people around us, remember God founded the Philippian church with the jailer and his family.

Now, each Sabbath, the Philippian jailer and Lydia the seller of purple and their families spent the time together. So when we read the statements of Paul to Philippi, we are eavesdropping in on what he told that jailer, that seller of purple, and their families, and friends.

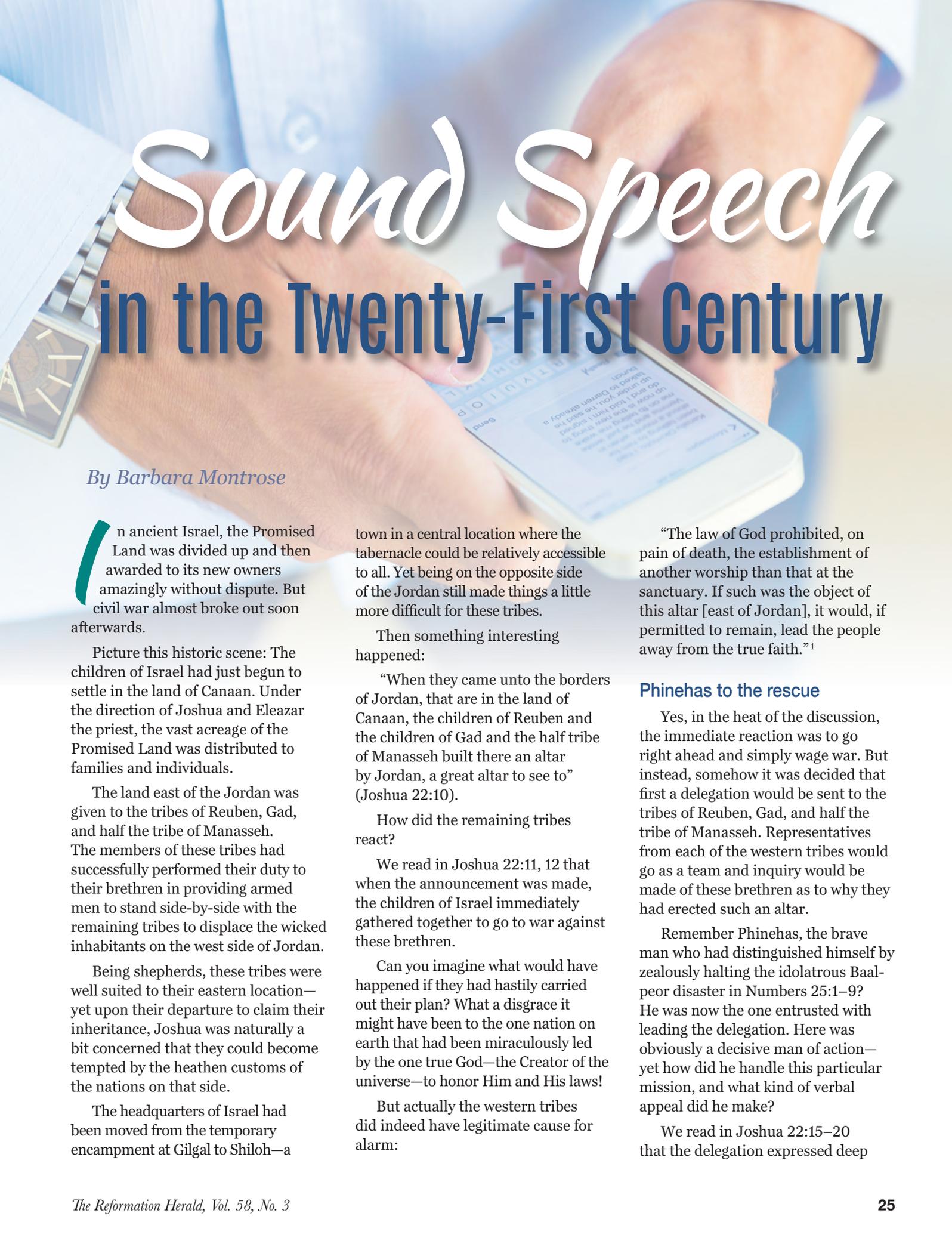
In the book of Philippians, Paul is writing to them from his confinement in Rome. Maybe being in prison again reminds him of Macedonia. He is writing to his friends. Let us digest together his message to them and to us. Paul is writing to talk about what is on his mind. He speaks intimately and lets the Philippians in on his own retirement planning. He exposes his own decision-making process to them and talks of life-and-death decisions that many of us never imagine we could make. He talks freely of how seriously he, Paul, takes the work of the gospel ministry, how deeply he cared for converts and how he suffers for their good (1:7-14). He admits comfortably to the humility he has regarding his own salvation, even though he is one of those that is almost ready to walk into heaven and for sure will be saved. "Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but . . . I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (3:12, 14). Paul admits that he trusts God to be in charge of and direct all

Christian growth and experience. "He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6). He talks of his own flexibility. "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (4:12). He tells of his own source of strength for the demands of his work. "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." And he speaks of his trust in God to take care of the physical needs of every human. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (verses 13, 19). "Our conversation [or citizenship, Young's Literal Translation] is in heaven" (3:20). "Let your moderation be known unto all men" (verse 5). Don't worry about anything. "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (verses 6, 7). Be careful what mental food you give yourselves. "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things" (verse 8). And finally, always be cheerful and content. "Rejoice in the Lord alway" (verse 4). Some of Paul's most intimate and most inspiring statements come from the book of Philippians.

Out of the various church centers Paul founded, the Philippian is one of the stronger ones. Paul is not concerned about the church, for it is free from the great problems of his time. But he is concerned that the church at Philippi be the best church possible. His topic in the epistle is all about how to be the best church member one can ever be.

## Reference

<sup>1</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 363.



# Sound Speech in the Twenty-First Century

By Barbara Montrose

In ancient Israel, the Promised Land was divided up and then awarded to its new owners amazingly without dispute. But civil war almost broke out soon afterwards.

Picture this historic scene: The children of Israel had just begun to settle in the land of Canaan. Under the direction of Joshua and Eleazar the priest, the vast acreage of the Promised Land was distributed to families and individuals.

The land east of the Jordan was given to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. The members of these tribes had successfully performed their duty to their brethren in providing armed men to stand side-by-side with the remaining tribes to displace the wicked inhabitants on the west side of Jordan.

Being shepherds, these tribes were well suited to their eastern location—yet upon their departure to claim their inheritance, Joshua was naturally a bit concerned that they could become tempted by the heathen customs of the nations on that side.

The headquarters of Israel had been moved from the temporary encampment at Gilgal to Shiloh—a

town in a central location where the tabernacle could be relatively accessible to all. Yet being on the opposite side of the Jordan still made things a little more difficult for these tribes.

Then something interesting happened:

“When they came unto the borders of Jordan, that are in the land of Canaan, the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh built there an altar by Jordan, a great altar to see to” (Joshua 22:10).

How did the remaining tribes react?

We read in Joshua 22:11, 12 that when the announcement was made, the children of Israel immediately gathered together to go to war against these brethren.

Can you imagine what would have happened if they had hastily carried out their plan? What a disgrace it might have been to the one nation on earth that had been miraculously led by the one true God—the Creator of the universe—to honor Him and His laws!

But actually the western tribes did indeed have legitimate cause for alarm:

“The law of God prohibited, on pain of death, the establishment of another worship than that at the sanctuary. If such was the object of this altar [east of Jordan], it would, if permitted to remain, lead the people away from the true faith.”<sup>1</sup>

## Phinehas to the rescue

Yes, in the heat of the discussion, the immediate reaction was to go right ahead and simply wage war. But instead, somehow it was decided that first a delegation would be sent to the tribes of Reuben, Gad, and half the tribe of Manasseh. Representatives from each of the western tribes would go as a team and inquiry would be made of these brethren as to why they had erected such an altar.

Remember Phinehas, the brave man who had distinguished himself by zealously halting the idolatrous Baal-peor disaster in Numbers 25:1–9? He was now the one entrusted with leading the delegation. Here was obviously a decisive man of action—yet how did he handle this particular mission, and what kind of verbal appeal did he make?

We read in Joshua 22:15–20 that the delegation expressed deep

concern that the building of the altar constituted a trespass against the Lord to rebel against Him. They reminded the brethren about the plague that had come upon Israel because of the iniquity of Peor and the iniquitous robbery of Achan that had brought the wrath of God upon all Israel, rendering him and his family worthy of death by stoning. Solemn, sobering comparisons!

The invitation was made to come and worship at the Lord's designated tabernacle in Shiloh and a final appeal urged them to no longer rebel against the Lord and His people by having their own altar.

Strong words indeed! Yet, thankfully, Phinehas and the delegation exercised the patience to take the time to wait for their brethren to respond.

### The reasonable explanation

"Then the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the half tribe of Manasseh answered, and said unto the heads of the thousands of Israel, the Lord God of gods, the Lord God of gods, he knoweth, and Israel he shall know; if it be in rebellion, or if in transgression against the Lord, (save us not this day,) that we have built us an altar to turn from following the Lord, or if to offer thereon burnt-offering or meat-offering, or if to offer peace-offerings thereon, let the Lord himself require it; And if we have not rather done it for fear of this thing, saying, In time to come your children might speak unto our children, saying, What have ye to do with the Lord God of Israel? For the Lord hath made Jordan a border between us and you, ye children of Reuben and children of Gad; ye have no part in the Lord: so shall your children make our children cease from fearing the Lord. Therefore we said, Let us now prepare to build us an altar, not for burnt-offering, nor for sacrifice: but that it may be a witness between us, and you, and our generations after us, that we might do the service of the Lord before him with our burnt-offerings, and with our sacrifices, and with our peace-offerings; that your children

may not say to our children in time to come, Ye have no part in the Lord. Therefore said we, that it shall be, when they should so say to us or to our generations in time to come, that we may say again, Behold the pattern of the altar of the Lord, which our fathers made, not for burnt-offerings, nor for sacrifices; but it is a witness between us and you. God forbid that we should rebel against the Lord, and turn this day from following the Lord, to build an altar for burnt-offerings, for meat-offerings, or for sacrifices, beside the altar of the Lord our God that is before his tabernacle" (Joshua 22:21–29).

### The beauty of reasoning together

What was the result of the explanation given by the eastern tribes?

"And when Phinehas the priest, and the princes of the congregation and heads of the thousands of Israel which were with him, heard the words that the children of Reuben and the children of Gad and the children of Manasseh spake, it pleased them. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest said unto the children of Reuben, and to the children of Gad, and to the children of Manasseh, This day we perceive that the Lord is among us, because ye have not committed this trespass against the Lord: now ye have delivered the children of Israel out of the hand of the Lord. And Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, and the princes, returned from the children of Reuben, and from the children of Gad, out of the land of Gilead, unto the land of Canaan, to the children of Israel, and brought them word again. And the thing pleased the children of Israel; and the children of Israel blessed God, and did not intend to go up against them in battle, to destroy the land wherein the children of Reuben and Gad dwelt. And the children of Reuben and the children of Gad called the altar Ed: for it shall be a witness between us that the Lord is God" (verses 30–34).

A happy ending! Wouldn't it be wonderful if all disputes among

brethren and sisters would end so successfully? How easy it is to jump to conclusions about others and misinterpret their motives!

The Lord's messenger warned in her day: "Envy, jealousy, suspicion, fault-finding, and false witnessing have existed. There are unconsecrated hearts among you, who turn everything said or done, even under the special direction of God, in a wrong way. The power of Satan's temptations is strong upon these, and they view things in a perverted light. They please the enemy by their criticisms, and by making a man an offender for a word. In many of these cases that are criticized there is no actual sin; the suspicion is the result of the condition of the mind that entertains it. If one crosses their path, they have no unity or fellowship with him. They feel disgusted with all he may say or do. Those who have confidence in them share their feelings and sentiments. A spirit of retaliation is secretly at work; yet those who are thus creating disaffection and disunion, and planting the seeds of jealousy, all the while claim to be firm believers in the truth. Such do not practice the spirit of the truth. The leaven of their evil surmisings permeates the company where it exists, and God is dishonored, the principles of truth are degraded, and the Christian experience is marred and dwarfed.

"Now, is it not high time to change this order of things, and seek true repentance. This unsanctified element has weakened the church, and given a large place to the devil. Is not this something to repent of, something to bring us to the foot of the cross in deepest humiliation, until Jesus shall be found of us, and be chosen as our guide, our counselor, our Alpha and Omega? He is the Rock that is higher than we. . . . There is hope for the erring; it is not too late for wrongs to be righted."<sup>2</sup>

How?

"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord" (Isaiah 1:18).

### How are we to approach difficult and delicate subjects?

There are times in life when someone has hurt us—maybe

unknowingly and without any evil intentions whatsoever. But he or she has hurt us nonetheless and we feel impressed that somehow we really need to address the issue. After all, Matthew 18:15 tells us that we can go ahead and do this: “If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

But how?

“Give ear, O ye heavens, and I will speak; and hear, O earth, the words of my mouth. My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass: Because I will publish the name of the Lord: ascribe ye greatness unto our God” (Deuteronomy 32:1–3).

The Lord here declares that even doctrinal subjects need to be given gently, with words distilled as the dew upon the tender herb. What happens if you bombard delicate plants with torrential rain? They can become totally uprooted and wash away. The same thing is true with new souls—and even with established friends.

### High-tech, but out of touch?

Let’s face reality. Today we live in a fast-paced world. We think we just don’t have time to spend in a lot of extraneous conversation (or so we assume). We think we are being super-efficient by texting or emailing when, in some cases, it really would be more appropriate to speak face-to-face. After all, we manage to convince ourselves, surely we are just saving precious time.

In reality, however, might it actually end up that we don’t have time to spend in repairing the tremendous damage that can result by hasty, thoughtless communication? This is something we need to consider. . . .

Dr. Mike Bechtle recently wrote a book entitled, *You Can’t Text a Tough Conversation*. The title speaks for itself. But in the book the author explains that the deeper meaning of communication is largely lost in today’s society. Sometimes it is only an illusion that we are in touch with one another—because unfortunately,

body language, facial expression, and tone of voice are absent when we text or tweet. We cannot see how the other person is responding to what we are saying, and we can easily miscommunicate and offend people as a result. Emoticons or emojis help, of course, but often they are not enough to make up for the loss. Let’s recall the example of Jesus:

“Even the crowd that so often thronged His steps was not to Christ an indiscriminate mass of human beings. He spoke directly to every mind and appealed to every heart. He watched the faces of His hearers, marked the lighting up of the countenance, the quick, responsive glance, which told that truth had reached the soul.”<sup>3</sup>

### The other person’s perspective

Another factor that comes into play is that today we live in a more global environment. The world is smaller than ever, and we frequently find ourselves in contact with people from different geographical areas.

The result has of course been enriching to all of us. Yet there are some communication tips we should realize. Back in 1959, anthropologist Edward Hall identified some distinctions between the way members of various cultures deliver messages. For example:

The self-disclosure and direct, straight-talk appreciated by some will likely come across as aggressive and insensitive in others where subtlety and indirectness are valued instead.

Some tend to convey information in explicit verbal messages. Self-expression, persuasiveness, clear, eloquent speech, and verbal fluency are considered assets. But others rely on time, place, relationship, and situation to convey their message and may refrain even from saying “no” directly. Listeners fill in the blanks around the point and read between the lines of what is being said. This approach is designed to avoid upsetting people and works fine wherever it is understood—but less so where it is not.

The result of these different styles of communication is, of course, a

greater risk of miscommunication—and the enemy of souls monopolizes on this to cause confusion. He paints a twisted picture from what was actually intended, taking fiendish glee in causing discord and strife among those who genuinely intend to be in harmony.

This is just the tip of the iceberg in the vast realm of communication—but it gives a taste of the challenge we face when we seek to love one another in a multi-cultural society.

The key, of course, is Jesus Christ—looking to Him and following in His footsteps. He is willing to help us, but we need to realize our limitations and repent when we realize we have miscommunicated with someone and possibly hurt him or her in the process.

“Few are willing to follow the Saviour’s example of meekness and humility. Many ask the Lord to humble them, but are unwilling to submit to the needful discipline. When the test comes, when trials or even annoyances occur, the heart rebels, and the tongue utters words that are like poisoned arrows or blasting hail.”<sup>4</sup>

### How can we learn to communicate better?

This is not simply something that can be pasted on the outside; it needs to radiate from within. The best communication is generated from the converted heart.

“Incorrect speech, wrong habits, must be overcome. God would have every man correct in speech, correct in habits, possessing knowledge that will give him a standing place among men. . . . Let us determine to put ourselves to the task of learning in the school of Christ.”<sup>5</sup>

“The religion of Jesus never degrades the receiver, nor makes him coarse and rough; nor does it make him unkind in thought and feeling toward those for whom Christ died. . . .

“Some are in danger of making the externals all-important, of overestimating the value of mere conventionalities. The results will not warrant the expenditure of time and thought given to these matters. Some who are trained to give much

attention to these things will manifest little true respect or sympathy for anything, however excellent, that in any way fails to meet their standard of conventionality. Anything that would encourage ungenerous criticism, a disposition to notice and expose every defect or error, is wrong. It fosters distrust and suspicion, which are contrary to the character of Christ, and detrimental to the mind thus exercised. Those who are engaged in this work gradually depart from the true spirit of Christianity. While the gospel constantly sanctifies and ennobles the receiver, it will never lead us to cherish selfish and exalted ideas of our own ability or merit in contrast with that of others. It never nurtures pride and self-esteem. Every soul who sees Christ as He is, will abase self. He will exalt the Saviour as the ‘chiefest among ten thousand,’ the One ‘altogether lovely’ (The Song of Solomon 5:10, 16).

“The most essential, enduring education is that which will develop the nobler qualities, which will encourage a spirit of universal kindness.”<sup>6</sup>

### Ancient insights for today

“How forcible are right words!

but what doth your arguing reprove? Do ye imagine to reprove words, and the speeches of one that is desperate, which are as wind? Yea, ye overwhelm the fatherless, and ye dig a pit for your friend” (Job 6:25–27).

“With the ancient is wisdom; and in length of days understanding. With him is wisdom and strength, he hath counsel and understanding. . . . He removeth away the speech of the trusty, and taketh away the understanding of the aged” (Job 12:12, 13, 20).

### What about if someone does not communicate nicely to me?

“Give love to them that need it most. The most unfortunate, those who have the most disagreeable temperaments, need our love, our tenderness, our compassion. Those who try our patience need most love. We pass through the world only once; any good thing we can do, we should do most earnestly, untiringly, with the same spirit as is stated of Christ in His work. He will not fail nor be discouraged. The rough, stubborn, sullen dispositions are the ones who need help the most. How can they be helped? Only by that love practiced

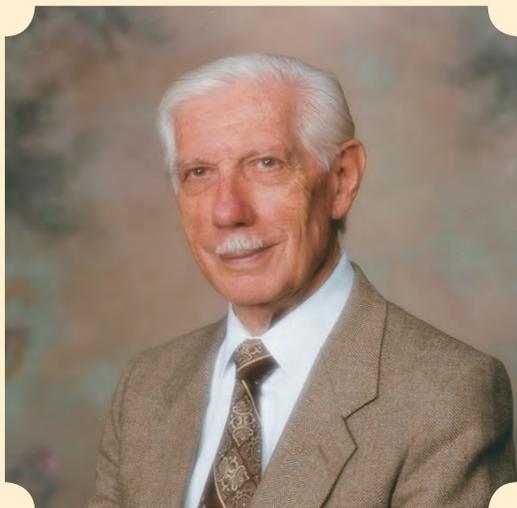
in dealing with them which Christ revealed to fallen men. Treat them, you say, as they deserve? What if Christ had treated us thus? He, the undeserving, was treated as we deserve. Still we are treated by Christ with grace and love as we did not deserve, but as He deserved. Treat some characters as you think they richly deserve, and you will cut off from them the last thread of hope, spoil your influence, and ruin the soul. Will it pay? No, I say no, a hundred times no. Bind these souls who need all the help it is possible for you to give them close to a loving, sympathizing, pitying heart, overflowing with Christlike love, and you will save a soul from death and hide a multitude of sins. Had we not better try the love process?”<sup>7</sup>

“Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man” (Colossians 4:6).

### References

- <sup>1</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 518.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Review and Herald*, December 18, 1888.
- <sup>3</sup> *Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 73.
- <sup>4</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 176.
- <sup>5</sup> *Medical Ministry*, p. 200.
- <sup>6</sup> *Christian Education*, pp. 201, 202.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Spalding and Magan Collection*, pp. 144, 145.

## An Editor Has Gone to His Rest



1924–2017

*Brother Alfons (Alfred) Balbach served as the main editor of this magazine from the early 1970's through 1994. He continued as a contributing editor until only recently. It seems only fitting that we acknowledge Brother Alfons Balbach's long-term service specifically to this publication with the following obituary:*

**A**lfred Balbach was born January 8, 1924, in Virbalis, Lithuania, to a German family involved in international trade between Germany and Russia. The family moved to Brazil when he was six years old. He attended a German school in Brazil and through diligence and hard work became a salesman and eventually a translating secretary for a German oil company later purchased by Mobil Oil.

During this time, he lived away from his parents much of the time but would come home to see them every weekend. Twice

## Sierra Leone

A group of believers,  
March 2017.

## Philippines

National youth convention  
in New Washington, Aklan,  
April 26–May 7, 2017.



on the way home, Alfred almost stepped on a poisonous snake. God's protection at those times convinced him that God was real and cared about him. One of Alfred's former colleagues from the oil company introduced him to a young working Brazilian woman, Maria Antunes. After a year of courtship and another year of engagement, the two were married (a union that would bring 63 years of happiness to them both).

Alfred then switched to working for Ford Motor Company in Brazil as a translator. He also began to seriously investigate the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, a church he discovered while walking to his friend's house. This new church put the young German to work translating, even though they were skeptical that he would ever join. After discovering Bible passages that confirmed for Alfred the message of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement, he became a member of that church.

The church soon hired Alfred as a writer and eventually he was ordained as a minister and became an administrator. He served at most levels of church administration for the next 64 years, with book circulations of some of his more than 20 books reaching over a million copies. Perhaps one of his most noted accomplishments would be the extensively researched and well-appreciated treatise, *The History of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement*, published in 1999.

Many times, Alfred would credit God directly for guiding him in moments when he personally had no idea where to turn next. This faithful servant of God went to his rest on February 27, 2017, yet his writings follow him. He is survived by his sons, Alfred and Charles, with their wives and children as well as daughter-in-law, Lily, with her children. May the Lord raise up more who cherish the present truth and are gifted with the pen to continue carrying the torch! Amen.



## Seychelles

A group of believers, April 2017.

## Tanzania

Brethren, sisters, and friends, March 2017.

## Brazil

Music summer school in Itú, São Paulo, January 9–15, 2017.



## Australia

Western Australia Field  
youth camp at Wave Rock,  
April 14–17, 2017.

## Suriname

Brethren and sisters in  
front of the new church  
building, April 2017.

## Bolivia

Colporteur seminar in  
Cochabamba, January  
15–22, 2017.



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MOVING? Please let us know.

# Fun in Being a Friend

“I wish we had something fun to do,” sighed eleven-year-old Ricky, with his freckled nose pressed firmly to the window pane.

“Did you finish your homework yet?” Mother asked, looking up from her sewing.

“Sure did. Now I’m ready for something different.”

“Since you’ve already finished your chores for the day, why don’t you pray that God will show you how to best use your free time?” Mother suggested.

“Okay,” said Ricky.

A few minutes later, the shrill little voice of nine-year-old Judy rang through the living room. “Mom, Dad, look down the street!” she cried.

“What is it, honey?” Mother asked.

Darting back toward the front window, Ricky announced, “A moving van! Hey . . . not a bad looking vehicle!”

“But look at the ugly old car the people drove up in. Don’t they have anything better than that?” said Judy.

“Interesting,” Dad mused as he approached the window. “It looks like they’re actually moving into the old Peterson house. That place has been abandoned for months. Great—now maybe they can spruce it up a bit and some of those dried-up weeds will finally be mowed.”

“Mom, look! They have a little girl. But what about those strange old clothes she’s wearing? . . . Hmm . . . I don’t know if I’m really going to like her!” Judy said.

“Uh-oh,” gasped Ricky. “The boy is in a . . . wheelchair! These kids are not going to be much fun to play with. . . .”

“Now, children,” Father said. “Think for a minute. Is this the way Jesus would welcome new neighbors to His block?”

The children pondered for a moment.

“Well, not exactly,” admitted Judy.

“But Dad,” said Ricky, “What can we do to make the new neighbors feel welcome?”

“Well, after a long trip, maybe they’re tired, hungry, and thirsty,” mentioned Mother.

“Let’s take them some fruit juice and peanut butter and jelly sandwiches!” Judy exclaimed, joyfully.

“That’s a nice start,” Mother smiled.

“Dad,” Ricky noticed, “I don’t see a father in the car. It’s just a young-looking lady with the boy and girl, and a really old grandpa-type-of-fellow was driving the rental van for them. Maybe . . . well, maybe we should give them a hand to unload.”

“I think that’s an excellent idea, son,” agreed Dad. “And after all their things are unpacked, we can plan on helping them with some of those old weeds.”

“Mom, the Lord is good. Maybe the pretty pink dress that Aunt Sue gave me would fit that little girl exactly,” Judy said. “And you know what else?”

“What, honey?”

“Ricky’s prayer for something fun to do was answered!”

“For sure,” said Ricky. “And now that you mention it, our Bible memory verse for this week was: ‘He that despiseth his neighbour sinneth: but he that hath mercy on the poor, happy is he’ (Proverbs 14:21). Now that is really interesting—we’re getting a chance to see our verse come to life! I like it when that happens!”

—BHM.

