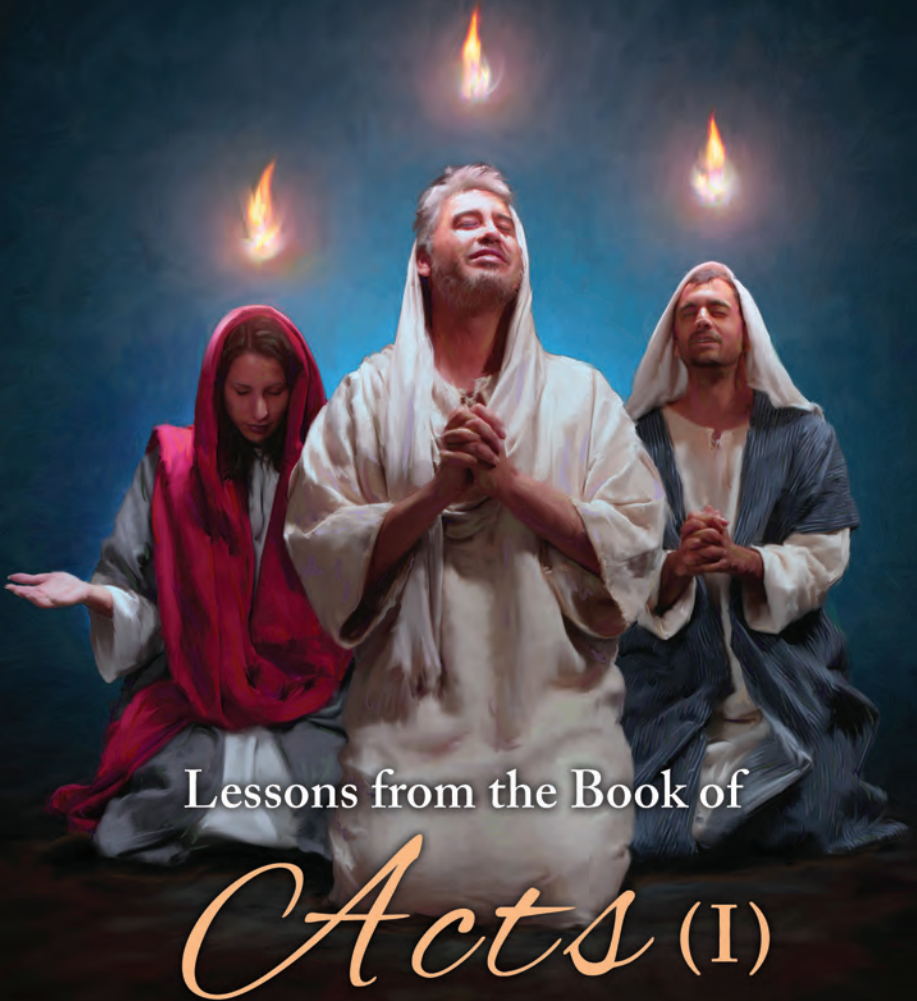


SABBATH BIBLE LESSONS
Senior Division



Lessons from the Book of

Acts (I)

Vol. 97, No. 2

April–June, 2021

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

Illustrations: Sermon View on the front cover; 123RF on pp. 4, 25, 72; Map Resources on pp. 51, 72.

Sabbath Bible Lessons (USPS 005-118), Vol. 97, No. 2, April–June, 2021. Published quarterly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, Sabbath School Department. Copyright © 2021, printed, and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association, 5240 Hollins Road, Roanoke, Virginia 24019–5048, U.S.A. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022–9993.

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Foreword

For the next six months, Sabbath school students around the world will be uplifted and energized to action by God's word in studying *Lessons from the Book of Acts*.

What had started out as a tremendous disappointment for the Christian believers following the crucifixion of their Lord, changed drastically. "After the death of their Lord [the disciples of Christ] were a helpless, disappointed, discouraged company—as sheep without a shepherd; but now they go forth as witnesses for the truth, with no weapons but the word and Spirit of God, to triumph over all opposition."—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 66, 67.

"We need a deeper piety and the sincere meekness of the Great Teacher. I am instructed . . . that the whole book of Acts is our lesson book. All of us need to humble our own individual hearts, and be converted daily."—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1055.

"Zeal for God moved the disciples to bear witness to the truth with mighty power. Should not this zeal fire our hearts with a determination to tell the story of redeeming love, of Christ and Him crucified?"—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 22.

"Moral darkness, like a funeral pall, covers the earth. All manner of false doctrines, heresies, and satanic deceptions are misleading the minds of men. Without the Spirit and power of God it will be in vain that we labor to present the truth.

"It is by contemplating Christ, by exercising faith in Him, by experiencing for ourselves His saving grace, that we are qualified to present Him to the world. If we have learned of Him, Jesus will be our theme; His love, burning upon the altar of our hearts, will reach the hearts of the people. The truth will be presented, not as a cold, lifeless theory, but in the demonstration of the Spirit."—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 158.

"The lapse of time has wrought no change in Christ's parting promise to send the Holy Spirit as His representative. It is not because of any restriction on the part of God that the riches of His grace do not flow earthward to men. If the fulfillment of the promise is not seen as it might be, it is because the promise is not appreciated as it should be."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 50.

"The measure of the Holy Spirit we receive, will be proportioned to the measure of our desire and the faith exercised for it, and the use we shall make of the light and knowledge that shall be given to us. We shall be entrusted with the Holy Spirit according to our capacity to receive and our ability to impart it to others."—*The Review and Herald*, May 5, 1896.

"A world, perishing in sin, is to be enlightened. The lost pearl is to be found. The lost sheep is to be brought back in safety to the fold. Who will join in the search? Who will bear the light to those who are wandering in the darkness of error?"—*Ibid.*, July 23, 1895.

The General Conference Sabbath School Department

First Sabbath Offering for the Spanish Hymnal

Dear brothers, sisters, and friends
around the world:

Music was born in the heart of God to be a meeting place between the Creator and the creature—a moment of communion, in which created beings could express their adoration and worship for the great Creator. The psalmist declares: “Sing unto the Lord, bless his name; shew forth his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people. . . . Give unto the Lord, O ye kindreds of the people, give unto the Lord glory and strength. Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name: bring an offering, and come into his courts. O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness: fear before him, all the earth” (Psalm 96:2, 3, 7–9).

“Music forms a part of God’s worship in the courts above, and we should endeavor, in our songs of praise, to approach as nearly as possible to the harmony of the heavenly choirs. . . . Singing, as a part of religious service, is as much an act of worship as is prayer.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 594.

Music can facilitate learning and “it is one of the most effective means of impressing the heart with spiritual truth.”—*The Faith I Live By*, p. 273.

Bearing in mind the importance of good music in the context of worship, education and evangelization, we present to the Reform family our urgent need to have the first official hymnal in the Spanish language. There are 21 countries having Spanish as their main language and estimates range that somewhere between 527–580 million people speak Spanish worldwide, with the vast majority of these being native speakers.

The process of preparing this hymnbook in Spanish includes exhaustive translation work, legal copyright issues, the technical work of reharmonizing the hymns, transcribing them into new keys, inserting the notation in the respective scores and editing them in the software.

As it is a high-cost enterprise, we call on all Sabbath school students kindly to help us with this project, so that soon we can have our official hymnal appropriate for worship services to our God.

We pray that the Lord will richly reward you for giving freely to this cause, and we thank you in advance for your support and generous contribution.

Your brethren and sisters from the South American Region



A Message for the Multitudes

MEMORY TEXT: “And the remnant of Jacob shall be in the midst of many people as a dew from the Lord, as the showers upon the grass, that tarrieth not for man, nor waiteth for the sons of men” (Micah 5:7).

“The heart that is in harmony with God is a partaker of the peace of heaven and will diffuse its blessed influence on all around. The spirit of peace will rest like dew upon hearts weary and troubled with worldly strife.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, p. 28.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 9–22.

Sunday

March 28

1. CALLED TO BE A BLESSING

- a. What has always been God’s plan for the few who accept Him? Micah 5:7.

“God had chosen Israel. He had called them to preserve among men the knowledge of His law, and of the symbols and prophecies that pointed to the Saviour. He desired them to be as wells of salvation to the world. What Abraham was in the land of his sojourn, what Joseph was in Egypt, and Daniel in the courts of Babylon, the Hebrew people were to be among the nations. They were to reveal God to men.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 27.

- b. How did Christ depict the way the Hebrew nation failed in His plan—and what warning should we take from it? Luke 20:9–18.

“We need to beware lest we suffer the same fate as did ancient Israel. The history of their disobedience and downfall has been recorded for our instruction, that we may avoid doing as they did.”—*The Review and Herald*, July 10, 1900.

2. QUALITIES OF THOSE CHOSEN

- a. **What should we learn concerning specific snares that had especially entrapped ancient Israel? Proverbs 11:2; 29:23.**
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“As idolaters were roused to crush out the truth, the Lord brought His servants face to face with kings and rulers, that they and their people might receive the light. Time after time the greatest monarchs were led to proclaim the supremacy of the God whom their Hebrew captives worshiped.

“By the Babylonish captivity the Israelites were effectually cured of the worship of graven images. During the centuries that followed, they suffered from the oppression of heathen foes, until the conviction became fixed that their prosperity depended upon their obedience to the law of God. But with too many of the people obedience was not prompted by love. The motive was selfish. They rendered outward service to God as the means of attaining to national greatness. They did not become the light of the world, but shut themselves away from the world in order to escape temptation to idolatry. In the instruction given through Moses, God had placed restrictions upon their association with idolaters; but this teaching had been misinterpreted. It was intended to prevent them from conforming to the practices of the heathen. But it was used to build up a wall of separation between Israel and all other nations. The Jews looked upon Jerusalem as their heaven, and they were actually jealous lest the Lord should show mercy to the Gentiles.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 28, 29.

- b. **Describe the humility and solemnity of spirit needed in accepting God’s call. Matthew 11:28–30.**
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“The Jewish leaders thought themselves too wise to need instruction, too righteous to need salvation, too highly honored to need the honor that comes from Christ. The Saviour turned from them to entrust to others the privileges they had abused and the work they had slighted. God’s glory must be revealed, His word established. Christ’s kingdom must be set up in the world. The salvation of God must be made known in the cities of the wilderness; and the disciples were called to do the work that the Jewish leaders had failed to do.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 16.

3. A DISTINCT ASSIGNMENT

- a. **What is the purpose of God’s children on this earth—and where do we begin to accomplish it? Matthew 5:14–16.**
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“Every one of Christ’s workers is to begin where he is. In our own families may be souls hungry for sympathy, starving for the bread of life. There may be children to be trained for Christ. There are heathen at our very doors. Let us do faithfully the work that is nearest. Then let our efforts be extended as far as God’s hand may lead the way. The work of many may appear to be restricted by circumstances; but, wherever it is, if performed with faith and diligence it will be felt to the uttermost parts of the earth.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 822.

- b. **What should startle us to re-examine our motives and priorities in life? 1 Corinthians 9:16; 2 Corinthians 10:16–18.**
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“The command, ‘Go ye into all the world,’ is not to be lost sight of. We are called upon to lift our eyes to the ‘regions beyond.’ Christ tears away the wall of partition, the dividing prejudice of nationality, and teaches a love for all the human family. He lifts men from the narrow circle which their selfishness prescribes; He abolishes all territorial lines and artificial distinctions of society. He makes no difference between neighbors and strangers, friends and enemies. He teaches us to look upon every needy soul as our brother, and the world as our field.”—*Ibid.*, p. 823.

“Instead of our enlarging and erecting additional buildings . . . where our institutions are already established, there should be a limiting of the wants. Let the means and the workers be scattered to represent the truth and give the warning message in ‘regions beyond.’ ”—*Testimonies for the church*, vol. 8, p. 50.

“While you have been gratifying your inclination in the appropriation of money—God’s money—for which you must give an account, missionary work has been hindered and bound about for want of means and workers to plant the banner of truth in places where the people have never heard the message of warning.”—*Ibid.*, p. 51.

“Who will leave pleasant homes and dear ties of relationship, and carry the precious light of truth to far-off lands?”—*Ibid.*, p. 54.

4. THE SECRET OF POWER

- a. Explain the significance of the vision given to the prophet Zechariah illustrating the work of God on this earth. Zechariah 4:1–3.
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“A great work is to be accomplished in setting before men the saving truths of the gospel. This is the means ordained by God to stem the tide of moral corruption. This is His means of restoring His moral image in man. It is His remedy for universal disorganization. . . .

“All the light of the past, all the light which shines in the present and reaches forth into the future, as revealed in the word of God, is for every soul who will receive it. The glory of this light, which is the very glory of the character of Christ, is to be manifested in the individual Christian, in the family, in the church, in the ministry of the word, and in every institution established by God’s people. All these the Lord designs shall be symbols of what can be done for the world. They are to be types of the saving power of the truths of the gospel. They are agencies in the fulfillment of God’s great purpose for the human race.

“God’s people are to be channels for the outworking of the highest influence in the universe. In Zechariah’s vision the two olive trees which stand before God are represented as emptying the golden oil out of themselves through golden tubes into the bowl of the sanctuary. From this the lamps of the sanctuary are fed, that they may give a continuous bright and shining light. So from the anointed ones that stand in God’s presence the fullness of divine light and love and power is imparted to His people, that they may impart to others light and joy and refreshing. They are to become channels through which divine instrumentalities communicate to the world the tide of God’s love.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 11, 12.

- b. What is the energizing “battery” for the task of enlightening the world? Zechariah 4:6.
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“There is far more being done by the heavenly universe than we realize in preparing the way that souls may be converted. We are to work in harmony with the messengers of heaven. We want more of God; we are not to feel that our talking and sermonizing can do the work. Unless the people are reached through God, they will never be reached.”—*Ibid.*, p. 50.

5. HEARTS AGLOW

- a. Explain our greatest need at this time. John 1:12, 13; 3:5–8; 4:14.
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“Fellow laborers, we must have Jesus, the precious Jesus, abiding in our own hearts much more fully if we are to meet with success in presenting Him to the people. We are in great need of the heavenly influence, God’s Holy Spirit, to give power and efficiency to our work. We need to open the heart to Christ. We need much firmer faith and more fervent devotion. We need to die to self, and in mind and heart to cherish an adoring love for our Saviour. When we will seek the Lord with all the heart we shall find Him, and our hearts will be all aglow with His love. Self will sink into insignificance, and Jesus will be all and in all to the soul.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 51.

“The truly converted soul is illuminated from on high, and Christ is in that soul ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life.’ His words, his motives, his actions, may be misinterpreted and falsified; but he does not mind it because he has greater interests at stake. He does not consider present convenience; he is not ambitious for display; he does not crave the praise of men. His hope is in heaven, and he keeps straight on, with his eye fixed on Jesus. He does right because it is right, and because only those who do right will have an entrance into the kingdom of God. He is kind and humble, and thoughtful of others’ happiness. He never says, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ but he loves his neighbor as himself. His manner is not harsh and dictatorial, like that of the godless; but he reflects light from heaven upon men. He is a true, bold soldier of the cross of Christ, holding forth the word of life.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 569.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. When tempted to think I have no influence on others, what must I realize?
2. What key characteristic can make my witness for Christ more effective?
3. In the sight of God, what should be the greatest priority for His people?
4. How is Zechariah’s vision of the flowing oil to affect me?
5. Describe the truly converted Christian.

Vessels for the Master's Use

MEMORY TEXT: “If ye love me, keep my commandments. And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever” (John 14:15, 16).

“The Comforter is given that He may take of the things of Christ and show them unto us, that He may present in their rich assurance the words that fell from His lips, and convey them with living power to the soul who is obedient, who is emptied of self.”—*The Signs of the Times*, July 15, 1908.

Suggested Reading: *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 109–111.

Sunday

April 4

1. THE WONDERFUL PROMISE

- a. Describe the precious promise Jesus gave the night before His crucifixion—and how only we can receive and be blessed by it. John 14:15–17, 23.

“Prayer can never take the place of duty. ‘If ye love Me,’ Christ says, ‘Keep My commandments.’ . . . Those who bring their petitions to God, claiming His promise while they do not comply with the conditions, insult Jehovah.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 143.

“We are to represent Christ in every phase of character.

“What is the Bible test of character? [John 14:23 quoted.]”—*Medical Ministry*, p. 46.

“[John 14:23 quoted.] The spell of a stronger, a perfect mind will be over us; for we have a living connection with the source of all-enduring strength. In our divine life we shall be brought into captivity to Jesus Christ. We shall no longer live the common life of selfishness, but Christ will live in us. His character will be reproduced in our nature. Thus shall we bring forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit.”—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 61.

2. A BOOK OF ACTION

- a. How does Luke, the beloved physician, begin the book of Acts as a continuation from the book in the Bible bearing his name? Luke 24:50–53; Acts 1:1–3.
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- b. In their final questions for Jesus, with what were the disciples most concerned—and what similar concerns are common to us? Acts 1:6. Explain what we are to learn from His response. Acts 1:7; John 9:4.
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“God has not revealed to us the time when this [third angel’s] message will close, or when probation will have an end. Those things that are revealed we shall accept for ourselves and for our children; but let us not seek to know that which has been kept secret in the councils of the Almighty. It is our duty to watch and work and wait, to labor every moment for the souls of men that are ready to perish. We are to keep walking continually in the footsteps of Jesus, working in His lines, dispensing His gifts as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Satan will be ready to give to any one who is not learning every day of Jesus, a special message of his own creating, in order to make of no effect the wonderful truth for this time.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 9, 1894.

“Again and again I have been warned in regard to time setting. There will never again be a message for the people of God that will be based on time. We are not to know the definite time either for the outpouring of the Holy Spirit or for the coming of Christ.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 188.

“We are living in the closing scenes of this earth’s history. Prophecy is fast fulfilling. The hours of probation are fast passing. We have no time—not a moment—to lose. Let us not be found sleeping on guard. Let no one say in his heart or by his works: ‘My Lord delayeth His coming.’ Let the message of Christ’s soon return sound forth in earnest words of warning. Let us persuade men and women everywhere to repent and flee from the wrath to come. Let us arouse them to immediate preparation, for we little know what is before us. Let ministers and lay members go forth into the ripening fields to tell the unconcerned and indifferent to seek the Lord while He may be found.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 252, 253.

3. THE ASCENSION AND ASSURANCE

- a. In His final remarks just before His ascension, what did Jesus emphasize—and what does this mean for us? Acts 1:4, 5, 8, 9.
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“The Spirit was to be given as a regenerating agent, and without this the sacrifice of Christ would have been of no avail. The power of evil had been strengthening for centuries, and the submission of men to this satanic captivity was amazing. Sin could be resisted and overcome only through the mighty agency of the Third Person of the Godhead, who would come with no modified energy, but in the fullness of divine power. It is the Spirit that makes effectual what has been wrought out by the world’s Redeemer. It is by the Spirit that the heart is made pure. Through the Spirit the believer becomes a partaker of the divine nature. Christ has given His Spirit as a divine power to overcome all hereditary and cultivated tendencies to evil, and to impress His own character upon His church.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

- b. With what blessed assurance can faithful believers in all generations rest in hope? Acts 1:10, 11; Titus 2:11–13.
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“The disciples no longer had any distrust of the future. They knew that Jesus was in heaven, and that His sympathies were with them still. They knew that they had a friend at the throne of God, and they were eager to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus.”—*Ibid.*, p. 833.

“With joy unutterable, rulers and principalities and powers acknowledge the supremacy of the Prince of life. The angel host prostrate themselves before Him, while the glad shout fills all the courts of heaven, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honor, and glory, and blessing.’ Revelation 5:12. . . .

“From that scene of heavenly joy, there comes back to us on earth the echo of Christ’s own wonderful words, ‘I ascend unto My Father, and your Father; and to My God, and your God.’ John 20:17. The family of heaven and the family of earth are one. For us our Lord ascended, and for us He lives. ‘Wherefore He is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.’ Hebrews 7:25.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 834, 835.

4. MEETING WITH AN AIM

- a. **Where did the disciples gather, who were those present, and what did they do? Acts 1:12–14. What can we learn from this step?**

“As the disciples waited for the fulfillment of the promise, they humbled their hearts in true repentance and confessed their unbelief. As they called to remembrance the words that Christ had spoken to them before His death they understood more fully their meaning. Truths which had passed from their memory were again brought to their minds, and these they repeated to one another. . . .

“These days of preparation were days of deep heart searching. The disciples felt their spiritual need and cried to the Lord for the holy unction that was to fit them for the work of soul saving. They did not ask for a blessing for themselves merely. They were weighted with the burden of the salvation of souls. They realized that the gospel was to be carried to the world, and they claimed the power that Christ had promised.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 36, 37.

- b. **Name one decision made by the early church, composed of 120 believers. Acts 1:15–26. Why should the way the choice was made in the very young church not necessarily be viewed as the usual method? Acts 6:3.**

“Every member of the church has a voice in choosing officers of the church.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 236.

“Let none be led from the sound, sensible principles that God has laid down for the guidance of His people, to depend for direction on any such device as the tossing up of a coin. Such a course is well pleasing to the enemy of souls; for he works to control the coin, and through its agency works out his plans. Let none be so easily deceived as to place confidence in any such tests. Let none belittle their experience by resorting to cheap devices for direction in important matters connected with the work of God.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 326.

“‘Read your Bibles with much prayer. Do not try to humble others, but humble yourselves before God, and deal gently with one another. To cast lots for the officers of the church is not in God’s order. Let men of responsibility be called upon to select the officers of the church.’ ”—*Ibid.*, p. 328.

5. OUR NEED TODAY

- a. What is the greatest need of all of us right now? Isaiah 26:4, 8, 9.
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“When you give up your own will, your own wisdom, and learn of Christ, you will find admittance into the kingdom of God. He requires entire, unreserved surrender. Give up your life for Him to order, mold, and fashion. Take upon your neck His yoke. Submit to be led and taught by Him. Learn that unless you become as a little child, you can never enter the kingdom of heaven.

“Abiding in Christ is choosing only the disposition of Christ, so that His interests are identified with yours. Abide in Him, to be and to do only what He wills. These are the conditions of discipleship, and unless they are complied with, you can never find rest. . . .

“You must have an inward, higher experience. You must obtain a growth in grace by abiding in Christ. When you are converted, you will not be a hindrance, but will strengthen your brethren.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, pp. 110, 111.

“We must be much in prayer if we would make progress in the divine life. When the message of truth was first proclaimed, how much we prayed. How often was the voice of intercession heard in the chamber, in the barn, in the orchard, or the grove. Frequently we spent hours in earnest prayer, two or three together claiming the promise; often the sound of weeping was heard and then the voice of thanksgiving and the song of praise. Now the day of God is nearer than when we first believed, and we should be more earnest, more zealous, and fervent than in those early days. Our perils are greater now than then. Souls are more hardened. We need now to be imbued with the spirit of Christ, and we should not rest until we receive it.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 161, 162.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Name the conditions for receiving the Holy Spirit, as shown in John 14.
2. Why are we told not to try to base our faith on the setting of time?
3. Why is the Holy Spirit essential to the Christian life?
4. What was the main focus of prayer in the first church gathering?
5. How can we be inspired by the focus of the early Advent believers?

Power at Pentecost

MEMORY TEXT: “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (Luke 11:13).

“We should pray as earnestly for the descent of the Holy Spirit as the disciples prayed on the day of Pentecost. If they needed it at that time, we need it more today.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 158.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 35–42;
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 8, pp. 19–23.

Sunday

April 11

1. PREPARING FOR THE OUTPOURING

- a. In answer to prayer, what happened when the disciples were of one accord in one place—and what can we learn from this? Luke 11:13; Acts 2:1, 2.

“Notice that it was after the disciples had come into perfect unity, when they were no longer striving for the highest place, that the Spirit was poured out. They were of one accord. All differences had been put away. . . .

“The disciples did not ask for a blessing for themselves. They were weighted with the burden of souls. . . .

“Let Christians put away all dissension and give themselves to God for the saving of the lost. Let them ask in faith for the promised blessing and it will come.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 20, 21.

“We may safely seek to be of one accord in doctrine and spirit, and if this were done, we would be in harmony with God’s will. If selfishness and pride and vanity and evil surmising were put away, we would become strong in God, and the door of our heart would be open for the entrance of Christ; the baptism of the Holy Ghost would fall upon us, and we should be filled with all the fullness of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, April 22, 1890.

2. BEFORE A MULTI-NATIONAL AUDIENCE

- a. What miracle did the disciples soon experience—and why was it needed? Acts 2:3–11. How had this event been prophesied? Mark 16:17.
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“The Holy Spirit, assuming the form of tongues of fire, rested upon those assembled. This was an emblem of the gift then bestowed on the disciples, which enabled them to speak with fluency languages with which they had heretofore been unacquainted. The appearance of fire signified the fervent zeal with which the apostles would labor and the power that would attend their work.

“ ‘There were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven.’ During the dispersion the Jews had been scattered to almost every part of the inhabited world, and in their exile they had learned to speak various languages. Many of these Jews were on this occasion in Jerusalem, attending the religious festivals then in progress. Every known tongue was represented by those assembled. This diversity of languages would have been a great hindrance to the proclamation of the gospel; God therefore in a miraculous manner supplied the deficiency of the apostles. The Holy Spirit did for them that which they could not have accomplished for themselves in a lifetime. They could now proclaim the truths of the gospel abroad, speaking with accuracy the languages of those for whom they were laboring. This miraculous gift was a strong evidence to the world that their commission bore the signet of Heaven. From this time forth the language of the disciples was pure, simple, and accurate, whether they spoke in their native tongue or in a foreign language.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 39, 40.

- b. How was an Old Testament prophet shown a dangerous counterfeit of this gift? Isaiah 8:19, 20.
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“Some of these persons [ruled by a spirit of fanaticism] have exercises which they call gifts and say that the Lord has placed them in the church. They have an unmeaning gibberish which they call the unknown tongue, which is unknown not only by man but by the Lord and all heaven. Such gifts are manufactured by men and women, aided by the great deceiver.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 412.

3. PURSUING THE GENUINE

- a. Explain the difference between cheap, shallow quasi-religious excitement vs. genuine Holy Spirit-led revivals. Matthew 7:15–20; Psalm 77:6.
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“Fanaticism, false excitement, false talking in tongues, and noisy exercises have been considered gifts which God has placed in the church. Some have been deceived here. The fruits of all this have not been good. ‘Ye shall know them by their fruits.’ Fanaticism and noise have been considered special evidences of faith. Some are not satisfied with a meeting unless they have a powerful and happy time. They work for this and get up an excitement of feeling. But the influence of such meetings is not beneficial. When the happy flight of feeling is gone, they sink lower than before the meeting because their happiness did not come from the right source. The most profitable meetings for spiritual advancement are those which are characterized with solemnity and deep searching of heart; each seeking to know himself, and earnestly, and in deep humility, seeking to learn of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 412.

- b. What distinctly identifies Christ’s true followers in this world? James 2:18; Galatians 5:6.
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“We should show our faith by our works. A greater anxiety should be manifested to have a large measure of the spirit of Christ; for in this will be the strength of the church. It is Satan who is striving to have God’s children draw apart. Love, oh, how little love we have—love for God and for one another! The word and spirit of truth, dwelling in our hearts, will separate us from the world. The immutable principles of truth and love will bind heart to heart, and the strength of the union will be according to the measure of grace and truth enjoyed. Well would it be for us each to hold up the mirror, God’s royal law, and see in it the reflection of His own character. Let us be careful not to neglect the danger signals and the warnings given in His word. Unless heed is given to these warnings, and defects of character are overcome, these defects will overcome those who possess them, and they will fall into error, apostasy, and open sin. The mind that is not elevated to the highest standard will in time lose its power to retain that which it had once gained.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 537.

4. OPPORTUNITIES AWAIT US

- a. **As the disciples spoke clearly through the Spirit, what two responses were heard—one revealing interest and the other incited by Satan’s typical tactic of ridicule? Acts 2:12, 13.**

“When the Lord is about to do a work, Satan moves upon someone to object.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 535.

“The Lord was at work in His own way; but had there been such a manifestation among us, upon whom the ends of the world are come, would not some have mocked, as on that occasion? Those who did not come under the influence of the Holy Spirit knew it not. To this class the disciples seemed like drunken men.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 66.

- b. **What can we learn from the way Peter promptly clarified what was happening? Acts 2:14–21.**

- c. **How was the fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy that the apostle cited also to be repeated in our day? Joel 2:28, 29.**

“It is with an earnest longing that I look forward to the time when the events of the day of Pentecost shall be repeated with even greater power than on that occasion. John says, ‘I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory.’ Then, as at the Pentecostal season, the people will hear the truth spoken to them, every man in his own tongue.

“God can breathe new life into every soul that sincerely desires to serve Him, and can touch the lips with a live coal from off the altar, and cause them to become eloquent with His praise. Thousands of voices will be imbued with the power to speak forth the wonderful truths of God’s Word. The stammering tongue will be unloosed, and the timid will be made strong to bear courageous testimony to the truth.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1055.

5. LEADING MINDS TO CHRIST

- a. How did Peter introduce the multitude to Christ? Acts 2:22–24.
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“The scene is one full of interest. Behold the people coming from all directions to hear the disciples witness to the truth as it is in Jesus. They press in, crowding the temple. Priests and rulers are there, the dark scowl of malignity still on their faces, their hearts still filled with abiding hatred against Christ, their hands uncleansed from the blood shed when they crucified the world’s Redeemer. They had thought to find the apostles cowed with fear under the strong hand of oppression and murder, but they find them lifted above all fear and filled with the Spirit, proclaiming with power the divinity of Jesus of Nazareth. They hear them declaring with boldness that the One so recently humiliated, derided, smitten by cruel hands, and crucified, is the Prince of life, now exalted to the right hand of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 42.

- b. How did Peter again bring prophecy into his discourse? Acts 2:25–36.
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- c. Describe the amazing operation of the Holy Spirit at that instant. Acts 2:37; John 16:7, 8.
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“It is the office of the Holy Spirit to reveal to the mind the character of the consecration that God will accept. Through the agency of the Holy Spirit, the soul is enlightened, and the character is renewed, sanctified, and uplifted.”—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 134.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What may be blocking me personally from fully receiving the Holy Spirit?
2. For what practical purpose did the apostles need the gift of tongues?
3. How is emotionalism a snare to having a real experience with Christ?
4. What should I recall whenever God works differently than I expect?
5. Describe the two types of people who were listening to Peter’s sermon.

Joy from Repentance

MEMORY TEXT: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:38).

“If the joy of angels is to see sinners repent, will it not be the joy of sinners, saved by the blood of Christ, to see others repent and turn to Christ through their instrumentality? In working in harmony with Christ and the holy angels we shall experience a joy that cannot be realized aside from this work.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 381, 382.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 43–59.

Sunday

April 18

1. COURAGEOUS CARE

- a. When the conscience of the multitude was awakened as to who Christ actually was, what strong appeal did Peter immediately make—and how can it give us courage? Acts 2:38–40.

“We are not to cringe and beg pardon of the world for telling them the truth: we should scorn concealment. Unfurl your colors to meet the cause of men and angels. Let it be understood that Seventh-day Adventists can make no compromise. In your opinions and faith there must not be the least appearance of waverings: the world has a right to know what to expect of us. . . .

“The Lord desires His servants today to preach the old gospel doctrine, sorrow for sin, repentance, and confession. We want old-fashioned sermons, old-fashioned customs, old-fashioned fathers and mothers in Israel. The sinner must be labored for, perseveringly, earnestly, wisely, until he shall see that he is a transgressor of God’s law, and shall exercise repentance toward God and faith toward the Lord Jesus Christ.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 179, 180.

2. MIRACULOUS RESULTS

- a. What amazing work was wrought through the Holy Spirit? Acts 2:41.
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“Peter stood up among them and spoke with mighty power. Among those who listened to him were devout Jews, who were sincere in their belief. But the power that accompanied the words of the speaker convinced them that Christ was indeed the Messiah. What a mighty work was accomplished! Three thousand were converted in one day.

“The seed had been sown by the greatest Teacher the world had ever known. For three and a half years the Son of God had sojourned in the land of Judea, proclaiming the message of the gospel of truth and working with mighty signs and wonders. The seed had been sown, and after His ascension the great ingathering took place. More were converted by one sermon on the day of Pentecost than were converted during all the years of Christ’s ministry. So mightily will God work when men give themselves to the control of the Spirit.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1055.

- b. Describe the attitude of the early church—and what we all need to learn from it. Acts 2:42–47.
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“After the descent of the Holy Spirit the disciples went forth to proclaim a risen Saviour, their one desire the salvation of souls. They rejoiced in the sweetness of the communion with saints. They were tender, thoughtful, self-denying, willing to make any sacrifice for the truth’s sake. In their daily association with one another they revealed the love that Christ had commanded them to reveal. By unselfish words and deeds they strove to kindle this love in other hearts.

“The believers were ever to cherish the love that filled the hearts of the apostles after the descent of the Holy Spirit. They were to go forward in willing obedience to the new commandment: ‘As I have loved you, that ye also love one another.’ John 13:34. So closely were they to be united to Christ that they would be enabled to fulfill His requirements. The power of a Saviour who could justify them by His righteousness was to be magnified.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 241.

3. THE MIRACLE AT THE TEMPLE

- a. How did the Lord use Peter and John to perform a wonderful miracle at the Beautiful gate of the temple? Acts 3:1–10.
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“With mighty power the disciples preached a crucified and risen Saviour. Signs and wonders were wrought by them in the name of Jesus; the sick were healed; and a man who had been lame from his birth was restored to perfect soundness and entered with Peter and John into the temple, walking and leaping and praising God in the sight of all the people.”—*Early Writings*, p. 192.

- b. How did the people react to the miracle, and what did Peter declare to emphasize the actual source of it? Acts 3:11–16.
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“Many ran together, greatly astonished at the cure that had been wrought.

“When Jesus died, the priests thought that no more miracles would be performed among them, that the excitement would die out and the people would again turn to the traditions of men. But lo! right among them the disciples were working miracles, and the people were filled with amazement. Jesus had been crucified, and they wondered where His followers had obtained this power. When He was alive, they thought that He imparted power to them; but when He died, they expected the miracles to cease.”—*Ibid.*

- c. How did Peter kindly give his listeners the benefit of the doubt? Acts 3:17.
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“ ‘I wot that through ignorance ye did it,’ said Peter; but this ignorance did not excuse the action; for they had had great light granted unto them. The statement is made that had they known that He was the Prince of life, they would not have crucified Him. But why did they not know?—because they chose not to know. They had no interest to search and study, and their ignorance proved their eternal ruin. They had had the strongest evidence on which to base their faith, and they were under obligation to God to accept the evidence He had given them. Their unbelief made them guilty of the blood of the only begotten Son of the infinite God.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1056.

4. TIME TO FALL ON THE ROCK

- a. **Having presented the truth about Christ, what appeal did Peter therefore make to his hearers at the temple? Acts 3:18, 19. How does this same appeal echo down to us today with even greater urgency?**
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“The words should come to us now with impelling earnestness: [Acts 3:19 quoted.] There are many among us who are deficient in spirituality and who, unless they are wholly converted, will certainly be lost. Can you afford to run the risk? . . .

“If we would escape having a sickly experience, we must begin in earnest without delay to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. There are many who give no decided evidence that they are true to their baptismal vows. Their zeal is chilled by formality, worldly ambition, pride, and love of self. Occasionally their feelings are stirred, but they do not fall on the Rock, Christ Jesus. They do not come to God with hearts that are broken in repentance and confession. Those who experience the work of true conversion in their hearts will reveal the fruits of the Spirit in their lives. Oh, that those who have so little spiritual life would realize that eternal life can be granted only to those who become partakers of the divine nature and escape the corruption that is in the world through lust!”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 154, 155.

- b. **How only can we experience the “refreshing” referred to in Acts 3:19? Isaiah 43:25; 44:3, 22; 57:15; 60:1, 2.**
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“As the ‘former rain’ was given, in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the opening of the gospel, to cause the upspringing of the precious seed, so the ‘latter rain’ will be given at its close for the ripening of the harvest. . . .

“The great work of the gospel is not to close with less manifestation of the power of God than marked its opening. The prophecies which were fulfilled in the outpouring of the former rain at the opening of the gospel, are again to be fulfilled in the latter rain at its close. Here are ‘the times of refreshing’ to which the apostle Peter looked forward when he said, ‘Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out [in the investigative Judgment], when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.’ ”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 611. [1888 edition.]

5. PREPARING FOR THE GLORIOUS EVENT

- a. Who only will receive the “refreshing,” and what is the glorious result of it? Acts 3:19, 20; 2 Corinthians 7:10.
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“These words should come to us today with impelling force. [2 Corinthians 7:10, 11 quoted.] This is genuine repentance. It will lead to a transformation in the life. It is the absence of this true sorrow for sin that makes many conversions superficial. Reformations are not made in the life. But when sin is viewed in the light of the law of God, and its true character is realized, it will be put away from the heart and life.

“True sorrow for sin brings the penitent soul near to the side of Jesus. There he may effectually plead for pardon, and obtain grace to conquer. There his darkened understanding may be enlightened, and the stony heart transformed into a heart of flesh. There the rebellious sinner is subdued, and his will is brought into conformity to the will of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 8, 1911.

“I saw that many were neglecting the preparation so needful and were looking to the time of ‘refreshing’ and the ‘latter rain’ to fit them to stand in the day of the Lord and to live in His sight. Oh, how many I saw in the time of trouble without a shelter! They had neglected the needful preparation; therefore they could not receive the refreshing that all must have to fit them to live in the sight of a holy God. . . . I saw that none could share the ‘refreshing’ unless they obtain the victory over every besetment, over pride, selfishness, love of the world, and over every wrong word and action. We should, therefore, be drawing nearer and nearer to the Lord and be earnestly seeking that preparation necessary to enable us to stand in the battle in the day of the Lord. Let all remember that God is holy and that none but holy beings can ever dwell in His presence.”—*Early Writings*, p. 71.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can I develop more courage to speak up for Christ as He does for me?
2. Why were the disciples so successful right there where they began working?
3. How does giving people the benefit of the doubt promote mutual respect?
4. Why does God bid us repent before entrusting us with latter rain power?
5. What are some besetting sins I need to overcome to receive the refreshing?

First Sabbath Offering for World Missions

The words of Christ are familiar to His followers: “Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

What is so striking about this powerful command? The everlasting gospel is go to ALL the world—“unto them that dwell on the earth, and to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people” (Revelation 14:6).



The number of Christians (of all denominations) worldwide is around 2.4 billion people—among a world population of nearly 7.8 billion. Within these vast numbers, many have been exposed to the present truth, but the majority have not.

“How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (Romans 10:14). So many precious souls are in deep darkness and utter confusion! Yet “God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments these faithful ones must be called out, that they partake not of her sins, and ‘receive not of her plagues.’ . . .

“But not one is made to suffer the wrath of God until the truth has been brought home to his mind and conscience, and has been rejected. There are many who have never had an opportunity to hear the special truths for this time. The obligation of the fourth commandment has never been set before them in its true light. He who reads every heart and tries every motive will leave none who desire a knowledge of the truth, to be deceived as to the issues of the controversy. The decree is not to be urged upon the people blindly. Every one is to have sufficient light to make his decision intelligently.”—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 604, 605.

How will they hear? All of us can reach out to friends, relatives, neighbors, acquaintances, and strangers for free. But there’s still much more to do in places beyond our reach: Our monetary gifts can be used to establish missionary activities in new areas. So, when the First Sabbath Offering is gathered for World Missions, please remember this need and give generously—and may your faith be bountifully rewarded!

The General Conference Missionary Department

Fearing Only God

MEMORY TEXT: “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard” (Acts 4:19, 20).

“After the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, the disciples, clothed with the divine panoply, went forth as witnesses, to tell the wonderful story of the manger and the cross. They were humble men, but they went forth with the truth.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 66.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 60–69;
Testimonies for the Church, vol. 6, pp. 394–401.

Sunday

April 25

1. LIVING UP TO ALL THE LIGHT

- a. What is our calling in the times of restitution today—to occur prior to Christ’s return? Acts 3:20–25. Explain our duty with regard to the light entrusted to each of us individually. Verse 26.

“Our responsibility is greater than was that of our ancestors. We are accountable for the light which they received, and which was handed down as an inheritance for us, and we are accountable also for the additional light which is now shining upon us from the word of God.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 164.

“If we turn from the testimony of God’s word, and accept false doctrines because our fathers taught them, we fall under the condemnation pronounced upon Babylon; we are drinking of the wine of her abominations.”—*Ibid.*, p. 537. [1888 edition.]

“You are accountable only for the manner in which you, independent of all others, use the light that shines upon your pathway. The lack of consecration in others will be no excuse for you. The fact that they pervert the truth by their wrong course of action, because they are unsanctified by it, will not render you less responsible.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 490.

2. WOUNDED PRIDE

- a. How did the leaders at the temple react to the powerful message that Peter had presented? Acts 4:1–4.
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“After Christ rose from the dead, the priests spread far and near the lying report that His body had been stolen by the disciples while the Roman guard slept. . . . The captain of the temple and some of the other officials were Sadducees. These were greatly roused by the preaching of the disciples. They felt that their favorite doctrine was in danger, and their reputation was at stake. . . .

“The opponents of the disciples could not but believe that Christ had risen from the dead. The evidence was too convincing to be doubted. Nevertheless, many hardened their hearts, refusing to repent of the horrible deed they had committed in putting Jesus to death. When power from heaven came upon the apostles in so remarkable a manner, fear kept the Jewish leaders from violence, but their bitterness and malice were unchanged.

“Five thousand individuals had already accepted the truth proclaimed by the disciples, and both Pharisees and Sadducees agreed that if these teachers were suffered to go unchecked, their own influence would be in greater danger than when Jesus was upon the earth.”—*The Review and Herald*, June 8, 1911.

- b. How can pride and rebellion lead to spiritual blindness? 2 Kings 17:13, 14.
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“The Holy Spirit is often rejected because it comes in unexpected ways. Abundant evidence that the apostles were speaking and acting under divine inspiration had been given to the Jewish rulers, but they firmly resisted the message of truth. Christ had not come in the way they expected, and though at times they were convinced that He was the Son of God, yet they stifled conviction, and crucified Him. In mercy God gave them still further evidence, and another opportunity to turn to Him. He sent the disciples to tell them what they had done, and in the terrible charge that they had killed the Prince of Life, He gave them another call to repentance. But feeling secure in their own righteousness, the Jewish teachers were not prepared to admit that the men charging them with crucifying Christ were speaking by the direction of the Holy Spirit.”—*Ibid.*

3. THE TRUTH UNVEILED

- a. **The next day, what did the Jewish rulers demand—and how can we be truly inspired by Peter’s valiant, comprehensive words? Acts 4:5–11.**
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“In that very room and before some of those very men, Peter had shamefully denied his Lord. This came distinctly to his mind as he appeared for his own trial. He now had an opportunity of redeeming his cowardice.

“Those present who remembered the part that Peter had acted at the trial of his Master, flattered themselves that he could now be intimidated by the threat of imprisonment and death. But the Peter who denied Christ in the hour of His greatest need was impulsive and self-confident, differing widely from the Peter who was brought before the Sanhedrin for examination. Since his fall he had been converted. He was no longer proud and boastful, but modest and self-distrustful. He was filled with the Holy Spirit, and by the help of this power he was resolved to remove the stain of his apostasy by honoring the name he had once disowned.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 62, 63.

- b. **What was the memorable climax of Peter’s response—and how does it endure in the face of dangerous popular theories today? Acts 4:12.**
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“There is but one power that can break the hold of evil from the hearts of men, and that is the power of God in Jesus Christ. Only through the blood of the Crucified One is there cleansing from sin. His grace alone can enable us to resist and subdue the tendencies of our fallen nature. This power the spiritualistic theories concerning God make of no effect. If God is an essence pervading all nature, then He dwells in all men; and in order to attain holiness, man has only to develop the power that is within him. . . .

“These theories regarding God make His word of no effect, and those who accept them are in great danger of being led finally to look upon the whole Bible as a fiction. . . . The unaided human will has no real power to resist and overcome evil. The defenses of the soul are broken down. Man has no barrier against sin. When once the restraints of God’s word and His Spirit are rejected, we know not to what depths one may sink.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 291, 292.

4. A POWER IN THE LAND

- a. Why were the Jewish leaders amazed by Peter and John, and what should this cause all of us—both ministers and laypersons alike—to ponder prayerfully? Acts 4:13, 14; 1 Corinthians 1:27.
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“After the ascension of Jesus, doctors, lawyers, priests, rulers, scribes, and theologians listened with astonishment to words of wisdom and power from unlearned and humble men. These wise men marveled at the success of the lowly disciples, and finally accounted for it to their own satisfaction from the fact that they had been with Jesus and learned of Him. Their character and the simplicity of their teachings were similar to the character and teachings of Christ. . . .

“Vanity and pride fill the hearts of men. God’s grace alone can work a reformation.

“It is your work, my brother, to humble yourself and not wait for God to humble you. God’s hand at times bears heavily upon men to humble them and bring them into a proper position before Him; but how much better it is to keep the heart daily humbled before God. We can abase ourselves, or we can build ourselves up in pride and wait till God abases us. Ministers of the gospel suffer little for the truth’s sake today. If they were persecuted, as were the apostles of Christ, and as were holy men of God in later times, there would be a pressing closer to the side of Christ, and this closer connection with the Saviour would make their words a power in the land.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 378, 379.

- b. In their perplexity, what did the priests feel compelled to do? Acts 4:15–18.
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- c. What was the courageous response of the disciples—and the only option left for the priests? Acts 4:19–22.
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“Gladly would the priests have punished these men for their unswerving fidelity to their sacred calling, but they feared the people; ‘for all men glorified God for that which was done.’ So, with repeated threats and injunctions, the apostles were set at liberty.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 67.

5. BRAVE TO STAND FOR CHRIST

- a. Where did the disciples go after their release—and how can we be inspired by their prayer? Acts 4:23–30. What happened as a result? Acts 4:31.
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- b. As with reformers in ages past, what should be the type of prayer of those entrusted with solemn present truth? Psalm 60:3–5.
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“When in 1529 the German princes assembled at the Diet of Spire, there was presented the emperor’s decree restricting religious liberty, and prohibiting all further dissemination of the reformed doctrines. It seemed that the hope of the world was about to be crushed out. . . . Should the light of the gospel be shut out from the multitudes still in darkness? Mighty issues for the world were at stake. Those who had accepted the reformed faith met together, and their unanimous decision was, ‘Let us reject this decree. In matters of conscience the majority has no power.’

“This principle we in our day are firmly to maintain. The banner of truth and religious liberty held aloft by the founders of the gospel church and by God’s witnesses during the centuries that have passed since then, has, in this last conflict, been committed to our hands. The responsibility for this great gift rests with those whom God has blessed with a knowledge of His word. We are to receive this word as supreme authority. We are to recognize human government as an ordinance of divine appointment, and teach obedience to it as a sacred duty, within its legitimate sphere. But when its claims conflict with the claims of God, we must obey God rather than men. God’s word must be recognized as above all human legislation. A ‘Thus saith the Lord’ is not to be set aside for a ‘Thus saith the church’ or a ‘Thus saith the state.’ The crown of Christ is to be lifted above the diadems of earthly potentates.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 68, 69.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Even when other believers fail in their Christian duty, what is mine?
2. What type of temptation may put me in peril of rejecting the Holy Spirit?
3. How might I get a chance to turn defeat into victory as Peter did?
4. How can I gain courage from the apostles’ witness in the face of threats?
5. Why is learning of the Protestant Reformation a source of strength?

Real Unselfishness

MEMORY TEXT: “Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others” (Philippians 2:4).

“When those who profess the name of Christ shall practice the principles of the golden rule, the same power will attend the gospel as in apostolic times.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 137.

Suggested Readings: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 148–157; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 70–76.

Sunday

May 2

1. DIVINELY-INSPIRED CHARITY

- a. Describe the sincere charity of the early Christian church. Acts 4:32–35.

“As the disciples proclaimed the truths of the gospel in Jerusalem, God bore witness to their word, and a multitude believed. Many of these early believers were immediately cut off from family and friends by the zealous bigotry of the Jews, and it was necessary to provide them with food and shelter.

“The record declares, ‘Neither was there any among them that lacked,’ and it tells how the need was filled. Those among the believers who had money and possessions cheerfully sacrificed them to meet the emergency. . . .

“This liberality on the part of the believers was the result of the outpouring of the Spirit. The converts to the gospel were ‘of one heart and of one soul.’ One common interest controlled them—the success of the mission entrusted to them; and covetousness had no place in their lives. Their love for their brethren and the cause they had espoused, was greater than their love of money and possessions. Their works testified that they accounted the souls of men of higher value than earthly wealth. Thus it will ever be when the Spirit of God takes possession of the life.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 70, 71.

2. PARTING WITH MATERIAL GOODS

- a. Why can we be inspired by the cheerful willingness of the early disciples to share with their fellow believers? 1 John 3:11, 16; Philippians 2:3, 4.
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“Those whose hearts are filled with the love of Christ, will follow the example of Him who for our sake became poor, that through His poverty we might be made rich. Money, time, influence—all the gifts they have received from God’s hand, they will value only as a means of advancing the work of the gospel. Thus it was in the early church; and when in the church of today it is seen that by the power of the Spirit the members have taken their affections from the things of the world, and that they are willing to make sacrifices in order that their fellow men may hear the gospel, the truths proclaimed will have a powerful influence upon the hearers.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 71.

“Search heaven and earth, and there is no truth revealed more powerful than that which is made manifest in works of mercy to those who need our sympathy and aid. This is the truth as it is in Jesus.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 137.

- b. Name one genuine example of this type of charity in action—in contrast to another example that at first, only God knew was ultimately to be false. Acts 4:36, 37; 5:1.
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“In sharp contrast to the example of benevolence shown by the believers, was the conduct of Ananias and Sapphira, whose experience, traced by the pen of Inspiration, has left a dark stain upon the history of the early church. With others, these professed disciples had shared the privilege of hearing the gospel preached by the apostles. They had been present with other believers when, after the apostles had prayed, ‘the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost’ (Acts 4:31). Deep conviction had rested upon all present, and under the direct influence of the Spirit of God, Ananias and Sapphira had made a pledge to give to the Lord the proceeds from the sale of certain property.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 71, 72.

3. FROM THE HEART OR NOT?

- a. **What did Ananias and Sapphira do with the proceeds of the property they had pledged to donate to the church—and why? Acts 5:2.**
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“Ananias and Sapphira grieved the Holy Spirit by yielding to feelings of covetousness. They began to regret their promise and soon lost the sweet influence of the blessing that had warmed their hearts with a desire to do large things in behalf of the cause of Christ. They thought they had been too hasty, that they ought to reconsider their decision. They talked the matter over, and decided not to fulfill their pledge. They saw, however, that those who parted with their possessions to supply the needs of their poorer brethren, were held in high esteem among the believers; and ashamed to have their brethren know that their selfish souls grudged that which they had solemnly dedicated to God, they deliberately decided to sell their property and pretend to give all the proceeds into the general fund, but really to keep a large share for themselves. Thus they would secure their living from the common store and at the same time gain the high esteem of their brethren.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 72.

- b. **Of what shallow motivation must we all beware? John 12:43.**
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“God does not intend that your light shall so shine that your good words or works shall bring the praise of men to yourself; but that the Author of all good shall be glorified and exalted. Jesus, in His life, gave to men a model of character. How little power did the world have over Him to mold Him according to its standard! All its influence was thrown off. He declared, ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work!’ If we had this devotion to the work of God, doing it with an eye single to His glory, we should be able to say with Christ, ‘I seek not mine own glory.’ His life was full of good works, and it is our duty to live as our great Example lived. Our life must be hid with Christ in God, and then the light will be reflected from Jesus to us, and we shall reflect it upon those around us, not in mere talk and profession, but in good works, and by manifesting the character of Christ.”—*Reflecting Christ*, p. 41.

4. DRASTIC MEASURES

- a. **What do we need to realize and understand about the problem of Ananias and Sapphira? 2 Corinthians 9:7; Acts 5:3, 4.**
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“No undue influence had been brought to bear upon Ananias to compel him to sacrifice his possessions to the general good. He had acted from choice. But in attempting to deceive the disciples, he had lied to the Almighty.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 73.

“Satan led Ananias and Sapphira to lie to the Holy Ghost. Those who are not wholly consecrated to God may be led to do the work of Satan, while yet they flatter themselves that they are in the service of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 103.

“The hearts of men become hardened through selfishness, and, like Ananias and Sapphira, they are tempted to withhold part of the price, while pretending to fulfill God’s requirements. Many spend money lavishly in self-gratification. Men and women consult their pleasure and gratify their taste, while they bring to God, almost unwillingly, a stinted offering. They forget that God will one day demand a strict account of how His goods have been used, and that He will no more accept the pittance they hand into the treasury than He accepted the offering of Ananias and Sapphira.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 75.

- b. **Explain the drastic way the Lord had to protect His early church from the ways of this hypocritical pair—and why. Acts 5:5–10; Matthew 6:24.**
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“Infinite Wisdom saw that this signal manifestation of the wrath of God was necessary to guard the young church from becoming demoralized. Their numbers were rapidly increasing. The church would have been endangered if, in the rapid increase of converts, men and women had been added who, while professing to serve God, were worshiping mammon. This judgment testified that men cannot deceive God, that He detects the hidden sin of the heart, and that He will not be mocked. It was designed as a warning to the church, to lead them to avoid pretense and hypocrisy, and to beware of robbing God.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 73, 74.

5. A WARNING FOR US TODAY

- a. What minimum does God require of us today concerning our finances and pledges? Ecclesiastes 5:4–6; Malachi 3:8–12.
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“The people need to be impressed with the sacredness of their vows and pledges to the cause of God. Such pledges are not generally held to be as obligatory as a promissory note from man to man. But is a promise less sacred and binding because it is made to God? Because it lacks some technical terms, and cannot be enforced by law, will the Christian disregard the obligation to which he has given His word? No legal note or bond is more obligatory than a pledge made to the cause of God.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1056.

“The New Testament does not reenact the law of the tithe, as it does not that of the Sabbath; for the validity of both is assumed, and their deep spiritual import explained.”—*Counsels on Stewardship*, p. 66.

“The hearts of men become hardened through selfishness, and, like Ananias and Sapphira, they are tempted to withhold part of the price while pretending to come up to the rules of tithing.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 150.

“In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, the sin of fraud against God was speedily punished. The same sin was often repeated in the after history of the church and is committed by many in our time. But though it may not be attended by the visible manifestation of God’s displeasure, it is no less heinous in His sight now than in the apostles’ time. The warning has been given; God has clearly manifested His abhorrence of this sin; and all who give themselves up to hypocrisy and covetousness may be sure that they are destroying their own souls.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 76.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can I develop and cultivate the attitude manifested in Acts 4:32–35?
2. Explain the difference between the gift of Joses Barnabas and of Ananias.
3. What motives caused Ananias and his wife to lie to the Holy Spirit?
4. Why did the Lifegiver slay the guilty pair—and why does He not today?
5. What do I need to realize about my vows/pledges, tithes, and offerings?

Boldness Bestowed

MEMORY TEXT: “And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ” (Acts 5:42).

“Let the people understand that you have a message that means life, eternal life to them if they accept it. If any subject should enthuse the soul it is the proclamation of the last message of mercy to a perishing world.”—*Evangelism*, p. 297.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 77–86.

Sunday

May 9

1. ALL ON THE ALTAR

- a. How did the judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira affect the believers? Acts 5:11. What should each of us consider regarding property today?

“Houses and lands will be of no use to the saints in the time of trouble, for they will then have to flee before infuriated mobs, and at that time their possessions cannot be disposed of to advance the cause of present truth. I was shown that it is the will of God that the saints should cut loose from every encumbrance before the time of trouble comes, and make a covenant with God through sacrifice. If they have their property on the altar and earnestly inquire of God for duty, He will teach them when to dispose of these things. Then they will be free in the time of trouble and have no clogs to weigh them down.

“I saw that if any held on to their property and did not inquire of the Lord as to their duty, He would not make duty known, and they would be permitted to keep their property, and in the time of trouble it would come up before them like a mountain to crush them, and they would try to dispose of it, but would not be able. I heard some mourn like this: ‘The cause was languishing, God’s people were starving for the truth, and we made no effort to supply the lack; now our property is useless. Oh, that we had let it go, and laid up treasure in heaven!’ ”—*Early Writings*, pp. 56, 57.

2. PURSUING THE SPIRITUAL BATTLE

- a. **Why can we be inspired by seeing how the Holy Spirit worked in Jerusalem in the days of the early church? Acts 5:12–16.**
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“There is need of coming close to the people by personal effort. If less time were given to sermonizing, and more time were spent in personal ministry, greater results would be seen. The poor are to be relieved, the sick cared for, the sorrowing and the bereaved comforted, the ignorant instructed, the inexperienced counseled. We are to weep with those that weep, and rejoice with those that rejoice. Accompanied by the power of persuasion, the power of prayer, the power of the love of God, this work will not, cannot, be without fruit.

“We should ever remember that the object of the medical missionary work is to point sin-sick men and women to the Man of Calvary, who taketh away the sin of the world. By beholding Him, they will be changed into His likeness. We are to encourage the sick and suffering to look to Jesus and live.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 143, 144.

- b. **Whom did the enemy of souls stir to fear and jealousy for personal interests to stop the work—and how does this occur today? Acts 5:17, 18.**
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“Multitudes of all classes come out to listen to the preaching of the apostles, and are healed of their diseases through the name of Jesus, that name so hated among the Jews. The priests and rulers are frantic in their opposition as they see that the sick are healed and Jesus is exalted as the Prince of life. They fear that soon the whole world will believe on Him, and then accuse them of murdering the Mighty Healer.”—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 62.

“The enemy of all righteousness has been and still is working by every device he can invent to hinder the work that ought to be done in enlightening and educating the people; his forces are increasing. Delays have been giving Satan advantage of the situation, and these delays have caused the loss of many souls. The Lord is not pleased with the retarding of the work.”—*Evangelism*, p. 227.

3. DIVINE INTERVENTION AND ACTION

- a. **When the apostles were imprisoned for doing God's work, how did the Lord intervene—and what can we learn from this? Acts 5:19, 20.**
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“The God of heaven, the mighty Ruler of the universe, took this matter into His own hands; for men were warring against His work. He showed them plainly that there is a ruler above man, whose authority must be respected. The Lord sent His angel by night to open the prison doors, and he brought forth these men whom God had commissioned to do His work. The rulers said, Speak not ‘at all nor teach in the name of Jesus;’ but the heavenly messenger sent by God said, ‘Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life’ (Acts 4:18; 5:20).

“Those who seek to compel men to observe an institution of the papacy, and trample upon God's authority, are doing a work similar to that of the Jewish leaders in the days of the apostles. When the laws of earthly rulers are brought into opposition to the laws of the Supreme Ruler of the universe, then those who are God's loyal subjects will be true to Him.

“We as a people have not accomplished the work which God has committed to us. We are not ready for the issue to which the enforcement of the Sunday law will bring us. It is our duty, as we see the signs of approaching peril, to arouse to action. Let none sit in calm expectation of the evil, comforting themselves with the belief that this work must go on because prophecy has foretold it, and that the Lord will shelter His people. We are not doing the will of God if we sit in quietude, doing nothing to preserve liberty of conscience. Fervent, effectual prayer should be ascending to heaven that this calamity may be deferred until we can accomplish the work which has been so long neglected. Let there be most earnest prayer, and then let us work in harmony with our prayers.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 713, 714.

- b. **How did the apostles respond to God's commission? Acts 5:21 (first part). What was the result? Verses 21–26.**
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“If the priests and rulers had dared act out their own feelings toward the apostles, there would have been a different record; for the angel of God was a watcher on that occasion, to magnify His name if any violence had been offered to His servants.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 71, 72.

4. RENDERING SUPREME OBEDIENCE

- a. What are we to learn from Peter in the face of opposition? Acts 5:27–29.
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“As [Peter and John] stood for the second time before the men who seemed bent on their destruction, no fear or hesitation could be discerned in their words or attitude.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 81.

“It is our duty in every case to obey the laws of our land, unless they conflict with the higher law which God spoke with an audible voice from Sinai, and afterward engraved on stone with His own finger. ‘I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people’ [Hebrews 8:10]. He who has God’s law written in the heart will obey God rather than men, and will sooner disobey all men than deviate in the least from the commandment of God.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 361.

“The ten precepts of Jehovah are the foundation of all righteous and good laws. Those who love God’s commandments will conform to every good law of the land. But if the requirements of the rulers are such as conflict with the laws of God, the only question to be settled is: Shall we obey God, or man?”—*Ibid.*, pp. 361, 362.

- b. What did the apostle further explain about the gospel—and reveal a vital secret of how to receive the Holy Spirit? Acts 5:30–32.
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“Those who consecrate soul, body, and spirit to God, purifying their thoughts by obedience to the law of God, will continually receive a new endowment of physical and mental power. There will be heart yearnings after God, and earnest prayer for clear perception to discern the office and work of the Holy Spirit. It is not for us to use it, but for the Holy Spirit to use us, molding, fashioning every power.”—*Counsels on Sabbath School Work*, p. 40.

“There is a great work before us to be carried on in every church. Believers are to be thoroughly consecrated to God, rendering obedience to every jot and tittle of His holy law. Thus they will become laborers together with Him, filled with all the fulness of God. The self-important, selfish spirit, which leads men to strive for the mastery, is to be cast out of the soul. All unholy ambition is to be put aside.”—*Manuscript 162*, 1905.

5. DIVINE LEADING

- a. How did the Lord use the wisdom of a mature Pharisee to reason with the council in their fury against the Christians? Acts 5:33–39. Why can we be truly inspired by the result? Verses 40–42.
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“The disciples were but humble men, without wealth, and with no weapon but the word of God; yet in Christ’s strength they went forth to tell the wonderful story of the manger and the cross, and to triumph over all opposition. Without earthly honor or recognition, they were heroes of faith. From their lips came words of divine eloquence that shook the world.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 77.

“What was the strength of those who in the past have suffered persecutions for Christ’s sake? It was union with God, union with the Holy Spirit, union with Christ. Reproach and persecution have separated many from earthly friends, but never from the love of Christ. Never is the tempest-trying soul more dearly loved by His Saviour than when he is suffering reproach for the truth’s sake. ‘I will love him,’ Christ said, ‘and will manifest Myself to him’ (John 14:21). When for the truth’s sake the believer stands at the bar of earthly tribunals, Christ stands by his side. When he is confined within prison walls, Christ manifests Himself to him and cheers his heart with His love. When he suffers death for Christ’s sake, the Saviour says to him, They may kill the body, but they cannot hurt the soul. ‘Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world’ [John 6:33].”—*Ibid.*, pp. 85, 86.

“We can receive of heaven’s light only as we are willing to be emptied of self. We can discern the character of God, and accept Christ by faith, only as we consent to the bringing into captivity of every thought to the obedience of Christ. To all who do this, the Holy Spirit is given without measure.”—*Maranatha*, p. 117.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What do we all need to realize about our earthly possessions?
2. Aside from preaching, describe our work as Christian missionaries.
3. Why did the Lord deliver the apostles out of the prison?
4. Explain our duty to earthly authorities—and to our Creator.
5. In the face of growing persecution, what must we always keep in mind?

Achieving Greater Efficiency

MEMORY TEXT: “And the word of God increased; and the number of the disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly; and a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith” (Acts 6:7).

“[Acts 6:7 quoted.] This ingathering of souls was due both to the greater freedom secured by the apostles and to the zeal and power shown by the seven deacons.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 90.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87–101.

Sunday

May 16

1. SUSPICION STIRRED UP

- a. As the Lord had made the church to grow, how did Satan stealthily sneak in fallen human nature to trigger discord and crisis? Acts 6:1.

“The hearts of those who had been converted under the labors of the apostles, were softened and united by Christian love. Despite former prejudices, all were in harmony with one another. Satan knew that so long as this union continued to exist, he would be powerless to check the progress of gospel truth; and he sought to take advantage of former habits of thought, in the hope that thereby he might be able to introduce into the church elements of disunion.

“Thus it came to pass that as disciples were multiplied, the enemy succeeded in arousing the suspicions of some who had formerly been in the habit of looking with jealousy on their brethren in the faith and of finding fault with their spiritual leaders, and so ‘there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews.’ The cause of complaint was an alleged neglect of the Greek widows in the daily distribution of assistance. Any inequality would have been contrary to the spirit of the gospel, yet Satan had succeeded in arousing suspicion.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 87, 88.

2. A SOLUTION FOUND

- a. **What should we learn from the step proposed to prevent the apostles from being deterred away from their task of carrying the gospel message to the world? Acts 6:2–4.**
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“A minister cannot keep in the best spiritual frame of mind while he is called upon to settle little difficulties in the various churches. This is not his appointed work. God desires to use every faculty of His chosen messengers. Their mind should not be wearied by long committee meetings at night, for God wants all their brain power to be used in proclaiming the gospel clearly and forcibly as it is in Christ Jesus. . . .

“It is a great mistake to keep a minister who is gifted with power to preach the gospel, constantly at work in business matters. He who holds forth the Word of life is not to allow too many burdens to be placed upon him. . . .

“The finances of the cause are to be properly managed by businessmen of ability; but preachers and evangelists are set apart for another line of work. Let the management of financial matters rest on others than those set apart for the work of preaching the gospel.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 91, 92.

- b. **How did the church respond to the idea—and what benefit do we see as the result? Acts 6:5–7.**
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“The appointment of the seven to take the oversight of special lines of work, proved a great blessing to the church. These officers gave careful consideration to individual needs as well as to the general financial interests of the church. . . .

“That this step was in the order of God, is revealed in the immediate results for good that were seen. [Acts 6:7 quoted.]”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 89.

“For years the Lord has been instructing us to choose wise men—men who are devoted to God—men who know what the principles of heaven are—men who have learned what it means to walk with God—and to place upon them the responsibility of looking after the business affairs connected with our work. This is in accordance with the Bible plan as outlined in the sixth chapter of Acts. We need to study this plan; for it is approved of God.”—*The Review and Herald*, October 5, 1905.

3. LIVING UP TO THE CALL

- a. Explain the distinct qualifications of a deacon (a specific office requiring ordination, although sometimes this title is wrongly misapplied when referring to any usher or church property caretaker). 1 Timothy 3:8–13.
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“The fact that these brethren [the seven deacons] had been ordained for the special work of looking after the needs of the poor, did not exclude them from teaching the faith. On the contrary, they were fully qualified to instruct others in the truth, and they engaged in the work with great earnestness and success.

“To the early church had been entrusted a constantly enlarging work—that of establishing centers of light and blessing wherever there were honest souls willing to give themselves to the service of Christ.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 90.

- b. What can we all learn from the qualities that made Stephen especially effective in his calling as a deacon? Acts 6:8; 2 Timothy 2:15.
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“Stephen, the foremost of the seven deacons, was a man of deep piety and broad faith. Though a Jew by birth, he spoke the Greek language and was familiar with the customs and manners of the Greeks. He therefore found opportunity to preach the gospel in the synagogues of the Greek Jews. He was very active in the cause of Christ and boldly proclaimed his faith. Learned rabbis and doctors of the law engaged in public discussion with him, confidently expecting an easy victory. But ‘they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spake’ [Acts 6:10].”—*Ibid.*, p. 97.

“In order to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the truth, laborers must have a varied experience. This will be best acquired in extended labor in new fields, in different localities, where they will come in contact with all classes of people and all varieties of minds, and where various kinds of labor will be required to meet the wants of many and varied minds. This drives the true laborer to God and the Bible for light, strength, and knowledge, that he may be fully qualified to meet the wants of the people.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 642.

“The Spirit of God is working upon the minds and hearts of men, and we are to work in harmony with it.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 55.

4. PERSECUTION IS NO SURPRISE

- a. **Seething with the bitter gall of envy, how did the enemy of souls stir up deceitful opposition against Stephen? Acts 6:8–14.**

“Stephen, full of faith, was doing great wonders and miracles among the people. The Jewish leaders were stirred to great anger as they saw priests turning from their traditions, and from the sacrifices and offerings, and accepting Jesus as the great sacrifice. With power from on high, Stephen reproved the unbelieving priests and elders, and exalted Jesus before them. They could not withstand the wisdom and power with which he spoke, and as they found that they could prevail nothing against him, they hired men to swear falsely that they had heard him speak blasphemous words against Moses and against God.”—*Early Writings*, p. 197.

- b. **How has our Master warned of such things—and what words of the psalmist can bring us hope? Matthew 10:16, 17; Psalm 31:18–20.**

“Men’s hearts are no softer today than when Christ was upon the earth. They will do all in their power to aid the great adversary in making it as hard as possible for the servants of Christ, just as the people did with Christ when He was upon the earth. They will scourge with the tongue of slander and falsehood. They will criticize, and turn against the servant of God the very efforts he is leading them to make. They will, with their evil surmisings, see fraud and dishonesty where all is right and where perfect integrity exists. They lay selfish motives to the charge of God’s servants, when He Himself is leading them, and when they would give even their lives if God required, if by so doing they could advance His cause.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 234.

- c. **What was remarkable about Stephen when accused? Acts 6:15.**

“The glorious light of Christ’s countenance shone upon Stephen with such brightness that even his enemies saw his face shine like the face of an angel.”—*Messages to Young People*, p. 113.

5. WITNESSING THROUGH MARTYRDOM

- a. Describe the council's reaction after Stephen candidly concluded an extensive summary of the rebellious history of the Hebrew nation. Acts 7:51–57. How far did their fury lead them? Verses 58, 59.
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- b. Why can our hearts be warmed by the end of that story? Acts 7:60.
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“In every age God’s chosen messengers have been reviled and persecuted, yet through their affliction the knowledge of God has been spread abroad. Every disciple of Christ is to step into the ranks and carry forward the same work, knowing that its foes can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth. God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God’s means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber.

“How often this result has been seen in the history of God’s messengers! When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 33, 34.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How does the enemy try to intrude his ugly head even into acts of charity?
2. Why is the ordination of deacons so helpful to local churches?
3. Even if not called to be a deacon, what can I learn from Stephen?
4. In view of this lesson, why must I be very careful if talking about someone?
5. Although Stephen’s work was cut short, why was it still of great value?

Onward to Samaria

MEMORY TEXT: “And Philip ran thither to him, and heard him read the prophet Esaias, and said, Understandest thou what thou readeſt?” (Acts 8:30).

“In the experience of Philip and the Ethiopian is presented the work to which the Lord calls His people. The Ethiopian represents a large class who need missionaries like Philip, missionaries who will hear the voice of God and go where He sends them. There are those in the world who are reading the Scriptures, but who cannot understand their import. The men and women who have a knowledge of God are needed to explain the word to these souls.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 58.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 101–111.

Sunday

May 23

1. MISGUIDED FURY

- a. What predicament did the church face after the stoning of Stephen—and who was the main cause of it? Acts 8:1–3; 26:9–11.

“At the scene of Stephen’s trial and death, Saul had seemed to be imbued with a frenzied zeal. Afterward he was angered by his own secret conviction that Stephen had been honored by God at the very time when he was dishonored by men. Saul continued to persecute the church of God, hunting them down, seizing them in their houses, and delivering them up to the priests and rulers for imprisonment and death. His zeal in carrying forward this persecution brought terror to the Christians at Jerusalem. The Roman authorities made no special effort to stay the cruel work and secretly aided the Jews in order to conciliate them and to secure their favor.

“After the death of Stephen, Saul was elected a member of the Sanhedrin council in consideration of the part he had acted on that occasion. For a time he was a mighty instrument in the hands of Satan to carry out his rebellion against the Son of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 101, 102.

2. WHEN FACED WITH PERSECUTION

- a. **In response to the fierce persecution, what did the church do—and what should we learn from this today? Acts 8:4; Matthew 10:21–23.**
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“The Lord has said: ‘Verily My Sabbaths ye shall keep: for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations’ (Exodus 31:13). None should disobey His command in order to escape persecution. But let all consider the words of Christ: ‘When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another’ (Matthew 10:23). If it can be avoided, do not put yourselves into the power of men who are worked by the spirit of antichrist. Everything that we can do should be done that those who are willing to suffer for the truth’s sake may be saved from oppression and cruelty.

“Christ is our example. The determination of antichrist to carry out the rebellion he began in heaven will continue to work in the children of disobedience. Their envy and hatred against those who obey the fourth commandment will wax more and more bitter. But the people of God are not to hide their banner. They are not to ignore the commandments of God and, in order to have an easy time, go with the multitude to do evil. . . .

“Those who forsake God in order to save their lives will be forsaken by Him. In seeking to save their lives by yielding the truth, they will lose eternal life.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 230.

- b. **What timeless principle will endure to the end? Ecclesiastes 11:1, 2.**
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“As long as probation continues, there will be opportunity for the canvasser to work. When the religious denominations unite with the papacy to oppress God’s people, places where there is religious freedom will be opened by evangelistic canvassing. If in one place the persecution becomes severe, let the workers do as Christ has directed. ‘When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.’ If persecution comes there, go to still another place. God will lead His people, making them a blessing in many places. Were it not for persecution they would not be so widely scattered abroad to proclaim the truth. . . . Until in heaven is spoken the word, ‘It is finished,’ there will always be places for labor, and hearts to receive the message.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 478.

3. A NEW SAFE HAVEN

- a. Where did Philip go as a missionary—and with what results? Acts 8:5–8. What does this reveal about souls in seemingly hopeless places?
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“The Saviour’s own visit to Samaria, and later, the commendation of the good Samaritan, and the grateful joy of that leper, a Samaritan, who alone of the ten returned to give thanks to Christ, were full of significance to the disciples. The lesson sank deep into their hearts. In His commission to them, just before His ascension, Jesus mentioned Samaria with Jerusalem and Judea as the places where they were first to preach the gospel. This commission His teaching had prepared them to fulfill. When in their Master’s name they went to Samaria, they found the people ready to receive them. The Samaritans had heard of Christ’s words of commendation and His works of mercy for men of their nation. They saw that, notwithstanding their rude treatment of Him, He had only thoughts of love toward them, and their hearts were won. After His ascension they welcomed the Saviour’s messengers, and the disciples gathered a precious harvest from among those who had once been their bitterest enemies.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 488.

“When [Jesus’] disciples were driven from Jerusalem, some found in Samaria a safe asylum.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 106, 107.

- b. Relate the history of one unusual baptism there. Acts 8:9–13.
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“Those possessed with devils are usually represented as being in a condition of great suffering; yet there were exceptions to this rule. For the sake of obtaining supernatural power, some welcomed the satanic influence. These of course had no conflict with the demons. Of this class were those who possessed the spirit of divination—Simon Magus, Elymas the sorcerer, and the damsel who followed Paul and Silas at Philippi.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 516.

- c. Why was the assistance of Peter and John so vital now? Acts 8:14–17.
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“[Acts 8:14 quoted.] The Spirit of God was waiting to enlighten souls and convert them to the truth.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 57.

4. MANIPULATIVE DELUSIONS

- a. **How was the underlying spirit of Simon Magus, by then a baptized church member, unveiled—and how are we warned of this type of occult spiritism that misuses the name of Christ? Acts 8:18–24; Revelation 16:13, 14.**

“[Revelation 16:13, 14 quoted.] Except those who are kept by the power of God, through faith in His word, the whole world will be swept into the ranks of this delusion. The people are fast being lulled to a fatal security to be awakened only by the outpouring of the wrath of God.”—*The Great Controversy* p. 562.

“Fearful sights of a supernatural character will soon be revealed in the heavens, in token of the power of miracle-working demons. The spirits of devils will go forth to the kings of the earth and to the whole world, to fasten them in deception, and urge them on to unite with Satan in his last struggle against the government of heaven. By these agencies, rulers and subjects will be alike deceived. Persons will arise pretending to be Christ Himself, and claiming the title and worship which belong to the world’s Redeemer. They will perform wonderful miracles of healing and will profess to have revelations from heaven contradicting the testimony of the Scriptures.

“As the crowning act in the great drama of deception, Satan himself will personate Christ. The church has long professed to look to the Saviour’s advent as the consummation of her hopes. Now the great deceiver will make it appear that Christ has come. In different parts of the earth, Satan will manifest himself among men as a majestic being of dazzling brightness, resembling the description of the Son of God given by John in the Revelation. Revelation 1:13–15. The glory that surrounds him is unsurpassed by anything that mortal eyes have yet beheld. . . . In gentle, compassionate tones he presents some of the same gracious, heavenly truths which the Saviour uttered; he heals the diseases of the people, and then, in his assumed character of Christ, he claims to have changed the Sabbath to Sunday, and commands all to hallow the day which he has blessed. He declares that those who persist in keeping holy the seventh day are blaspheming his name by refusing to listen to his angels sent to them with light and truth. This is the strong, almost overmastering delusion. Like the Samaritans who were deceived by Simon Magus, the multitudes, from the least to the greatest, give heed to these sorceries, saying: This is ‘the great power of God’ (Acts 8:10).”—*Ibid.*, pp. 624, 625.

5. AN EXAMPLE FOR US

- a. Why can we be motivated from how the Holy Spirit guided Philip to a sincere soul needing answers he could provide? Acts 8:26–31, 35.

“When God pointed out to Philip his work, the disciple did not say, ‘The Lord does not mean that.’ No; ‘he arose and went.’ He had learned the lesson of conformity to God’s will. He realized that every soul is precious in the sight of God, and that angels are sent to bring those who are seeking for light into touch with those who can help them. . . .

“The Holy Spirit will guide and direct those who stand ready to go where God calls, and to speak the words He gives them. . . .

“Though you may be weak, erring, sinful, the Lord holds out to you the offer of partnership with Himself. He invites you to come under divine instruction. Uniting with Christ, you may work the works of God. ‘Without me,’ Christ said, ‘ye can do nothing.’ Through the prophet Isaiah is given the promise, ‘Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy rearward.’

“Ye churches of the living God, study this promise, and consider how your lack of faith, of spirituality, of divine power, is hindering the coming of the kingdom of God. If you would go forth to do Christ’s work, angels of God would open the way before you, preparing hearts to receive the gospel. Were every one of you a living missionary, the message for this time would speedily be proclaimed in all countries, to every people, nation, and tongue. This is the work that must be done before Christ shall come in power and great glory. I call upon the church to pray earnestly, that you may understand your responsibilities. Are you individually laborers together with God? If not, why not? When do you mean to do your Heaven-appointed work?”—*The Review and Herald*, March 2, 1911.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What sometimes occurs when a person is resisting Heaven-sent light?
2. If faced with difficulties in a certain place, what may God be telling me?
3. Where is there a “Samaria” near me that might be open to truth?
4. In what ways will the enemy of souls use spiritism to ensnare people?
5. How shall I seek out opportunities such as God gave to Philip?

First Sabbath Offering for a headquarters in DR Congo

The Democratic Republic of Congo (formerly called Zaire) is a vast country in the middle of Africa, with an area of 2,345,410 square kilometers (905,568 square miles), making it the largest country in sub-Saharan Africa, the second largest in Africa, and the 11th largest in the world. A biodiverse land with around 80 million hectares of arable soil and over 1,100 listed minerals and precious metals, it shares borders with nine countries: to the north by the republic of Central Africa and Sudan; to the east by Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda, to the west by the Republic of Congo and to the South by Angola and Zambia.



The Congolese population is estimated to be close to 90,000,000, of which, according to *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, around three-quarters profess Christianity—33% are Roman Catholic believers, 20% Protestants, 22% Awakening Church/Christian Revival, 2% Salutiste, 2% Muslims, 10% are of other religions, and 11% make no profession of faith.

The message of the Reform Movement started here in 1972 in the Katananga province, and developed significantly in 1990 and further in 2000, when the General Conference organized it as a Mission. Later, in 2012 it became a Union of missions, and the work is going forward swiftly.

The DR Congo Union is in need of a headquarters building; the organization is currently renting a house. In view of this real necessity, we pray that the Lord may touch your heart to consider our situation. Please share generously of your means this Sabbath through your offerings and donations to enable us to secure appropriate land in the capital city of Kinshasa and build a beautiful monument for the headquarters office and church that will be representative of the Reformation, to the glory of our God.

Reminding you of the words of our Lord Jesus, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35), we are calling on our brothers and sisters around the world to help in this project. We pray that God will reward, in advance, your generosity towards the missionary work in the DRC.

May the God of compassion and mercy bless you all.

The brethren and sisters of the DR Congo Union

The Surrender of Saul

MEMORY TEXT: “And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do” (Acts 9:6).

“Our own future well-being and also the salvation of other souls depend upon the course which we now pursue. We need to be guided by the Spirit of truth. Every follower of Christ should earnestly inquire: ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 601.

Suggested Reading: *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 428–434.

Sunday

May 30

1. A TRANSFORMING LIGHT

- a. Explain the agony of Saul and how Christ arrested his spiritual blindness of kicking against the pricks of conscience. Jeremiah 17:5; Acts 9:1–5.

“The mind that resists the truth will see everything in a perverted light. It will be fastened in the sure toils of the enemy, and view things in the light of the enemy.

“Saul of Tarsus was an example of this. He had no moral right to be an unbeliever. But he had chosen to accept the opinions of men rather than the counsel of God. He had the prophecies pointing to the Messiah, but the sayings of the rabbis, the words of men, were preferred.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1057.

“[Saul] had witnessed Stephen’s forbearance toward his enemies and his forgiveness of them. He had also witnessed the fortitude and cheerful resignation of many whom he had caused to be tormented and afflicted. He had seen some yield up even their lives with rejoicing for the sake of their faith.

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

2. A CALL REPEATED TODAY

- a. **What should we all learn from how the Lord can abruptly turn the course of life events to save a sincere soul? Jeremiah 10:23, 24.**
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“[Saul] had conscientiously done many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. In his zeal he was a persevering, earnest persecutor of the church of Christ.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 429.

“The servants of Christ should not allow themselves to be hindered by those who would make the gospel only a matter of contention and ridicule.

“But the Saviour never passed by one soul, however sunken in sin, who was willing to receive the precious truths of heaven. To publicans and harlots His words were the beginning of a new life. Mary Magdalene, out of whom He cast seven devils, was the last at the Saviour’s tomb and the first whom He greeted in the morning of His resurrection. It was Saul of Tarsus, one of the most determined enemies of the gospel, who became Paul the devoted minister of Christ. Beneath an appearance of hatred and contempt, even beneath crime and degradation, may be hidden a soul that the grace of Christ will rescue to shine as a jewel in the Redeemer’s crown.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 129, 130.

- b. **With what vital question do we all need to bow before our Master, in deep humility and full surrender at every stage in our life? Acts 9:6.**
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“God calls after you again. He seeks to reach you, girded about with selfishness as you are, and covered with the cares of this life. He invites you to withdraw your affections from the world and place them upon heavenly things. In order to know the will of God, you must study it, rather than follow your inclinations and the natural bent of your own mind. ‘What wilt Thou have me to do?’ should be the earnest, anxious inquiry of your heart.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 53, 54.

“Ask of Him who suffered reproach, insult, and mockery for your sakes: ‘Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?’ None are too highly educated to become humble disciples of Christ. Those who feel it a privilege to give the best of their life and learning to Him from whom they received them, will shun no labor, no sacrifice, to render back to God in highest service His entrusted talents.”—*Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 584.

3. SENT TO GOD'S CHURCH

- a. What should we all learn from the way Saul, a proud religious man, was deeply humbled before both God and man? Acts 9:7, 8.
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“Paul verily believed that faith in Jesus made of none effect the law of God, the religious service of sacrificial offerings, and the rite of circumcision, which had in all past ages received the full sanction of God. But the miraculous revelation of Christ brings light into the darkened chambers of his mind. The Jesus of Nazareth whom he is arrayed against is indeed the Redeemer of the world. . . .

“Christ sends him to the very disciples whom he had been so bitterly persecuting, to learn of them. The light of heavenly illumination had taken away Paul’s eyesight; but Jesus, the Great Healer of the blind, does not restore it.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 429, 430.

“What a humiliation it was to Paul to know that all the time he was using his powers against the truth, thinking he was doing God’s service, he was persecuting Christ. . . . His conscience, aroused, now worked with self-accusing energy. The zeal of his work, his earnest resistance of the light shining upon him through God’s messengers, now brought condemnation upon his soul, and he was filled with bitter remorse. He no longer saw himself as righteous, but condemned by the law in thought, in spirit, and in deeds. He saw himself a sinner, utterly lost, without the Saviour he had been persecuting.”—*The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1058.

- b. Describe Saul’s experience in his blindness. Acts 9:9.
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“These days of close self-examination and of heart humiliation were spent in lonely seclusion. . . .

“As Saul yielded himself fully to the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, he saw the mistakes of his life and recognized the far-reaching claims of the law of God. He who had been a proud Pharisee, confident that he was justified by his good works, now bowed before God with the humility and simplicity of a little child, confessing his own unworthiness and pleading the merits of a crucified and risen Saviour.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 118, 119.

4. READY FOR ACTION

- a. **Observe the clear communion between Christ and Ananias—and explain why every single believer can be encouraged by it. Acts 9:10–16.**

“Each is to have an individual experience in being taught by the Great Teacher, and individual communion with God.”—*Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 486.

- b. **Describe the tender, God-fearing way Ananias and the Damascus church ministered to Saul (now called Paul) as a new believer. Acts 9:17–19.**

“Jesus gave sanction to the authority of His organized church and placed Saul in connection with His appointed agencies on earth.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

- c. **Name Paul’s steps after baptism—and the trials he faced. Acts 9:20–25.**

“Paul was baptized by Ananias in the river of Damascus. He was then strengthened by food, and immediately began to preach Jesus to the believers in the city, the very ones whom he had set out from Jerusalem with the purpose of destroying. He also taught in the synagogues that Jesus who had been put to death was indeed the Son of God. His arguments from prophecy were so conclusive, and his efforts were so attended by the power of God, that the opposing Jews were confounded and unable to answer him.”—*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, p. 32.

“Paul declared that his change of faith had not been prompted by impulse or fanaticism, but had been brought about by overwhelming evidence. . . .

“Many hardened their hearts, refusing to respond to his message, and soon their astonishment at his conversion was changed into intense hatred like that which they had shown toward Jesus.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 125.

“[The chief priests and rulers] agreed that the only safe course was to put Paul to death. But God knew of their intention, and angels were commissioned to guard him, that he might live to fulfill his mission.”—*Early Writings*, p. 202.

- d. **Why did Paul go to the desert? Galatians 1:17; Psalm 119:10 (first part).**

5. TRIALS AND PROVIDENCE

- a. After three years in Arabia alone in prayer, what unexpected hurt did Paul face—and whom did God use to help? Acts 9:26, 27.

“[Barnabas] fully believed and received Paul, took him by the hand and led him into the presence of the apostles. He related his experience which he had just heard. . . .

“The apostles no longer hesitated; they could not withstand God. Peter and James, who at that time were the only apostles in Jerusalem, gave the right hand of fellowship to the once fierce persecutor of their faith; and he was now as much beloved and respected as he had formerly been feared and avoided.”—*The Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 3, p. 321.

- b. With Paul’s compelling, unanswerable appeals, what was soon necessary—yet how do we see God’s loving hand in it? Acts 9:28–31; 22:17–21.

“[Paul] saw that he must separate from his brethren, and sorrow filled his heart. He would willingly have yielded up his life, if by that means they might have been brought to a knowledge of the truth. The Jews began to lay plans to take his life, and the disciples urged him to leave Jerusalem; but he lingered, unwilling to leave the place, and anxious to labor a little longer for his Jewish brethren. . . .

“When the brethren learned of the vision of Paul, and the care which God had over him, their anxiety on his behalf was increased; for they realized that he was indeed a chosen vessel of the Lord, to bear the truth to the Gentiles. They hastened his secret escape from Jerusalem, for fear of his assassination.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 321–323.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. In what areas of life might I be kicking against pricks of conscience?
2. Who in my sphere of contacts might I be in danger of underestimating?
3. How may God be seeking to humble me to become a more effective vessel?
4. What does the relationship of Saul with Ananias teach us about the church?
5. Might I, like Paul, be tarrying somewhere when God wants me elsewhere?

Hope for “Worldlings” Outside

MEMORY TEXT: “Forasmuch then as God gave them the like gift as he did unto us, who believed on the Lord Jesus Christ; what was I, that I could withstand God?” (Acts 11:17).

“It ought to be a great encouragement to us in our work to think of the compassion and tender love of God for those who are seeking and praying for light.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 79.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 131–142, 155–159; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 76–84.

Sunday

June 6

1. IN LYDDA AND JOPPA

a. Relate the experience of Peter’s visit to Lydda. Acts 9:32–35.

b. Why can we all be encouraged by the miracle in Joppa—and why are church members like Dorcas such an asset to the body? Acts 9:36–43.

“In Joppa there was a Dorcas, whose skillful fingers were more active than her tongue. She knew who needed comfortable clothing and who needed sympathy, and she freely ministered to the wants of both classes. And when Dorcas died, the church in Joppa realized their loss. It is no wonder that they mourned and lamented, nor that warm tears fell upon the inanimate clay. She was of so great value that by the power of God she was brought back from the land of the enemy, that her skill and energy might still be a blessing to others.

“Such patient, prayerful, and persevering fidelity as was possessed by these saints of God is rare; yet the church cannot prosper without it. . . . There is always a call for steadfast, God-fearing workers, who will not faint in the day of adversity.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 304.

2. A SINCERE SEEKER

- a. **Who was Cornelius—and why did God speak to him? Acts 10:1–8.**
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“Cornelius was a Roman centurion. He was a man of wealth and noble birth, and his position was one of trust and honor. A heathen by birth, training, and education, through contact with the Jews he had gained a knowledge of God, and he worshiped Him with a true heart, showing the sincerity of his faith by compassion to the poor. He was known far and near for his beneficence, and his righteous life made him of good repute among both Jews and Gentiles. His influence was a blessing to all with whom he came in contact. . . .

“Believing in God as the Creator of heaven and earth, Cornelius revered Him, acknowledged His authority, and sought His counsel in all the affairs of life. He was faithful to Jehovah in his home life and in his official duties.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 132, 133.

- b. **Meanwhile, over in Joppa, using food as a symbol (but not actually referring to food), what vital lesson did God give Peter—to be upheld by Christians to the close of time? Acts 10:9–16, 28, 34, 35.**
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“Our neighbor does not mean merely one of the church or faith to which we belong. It has no reference to race, color, or class distinction. Our neighbor is every person who needs our help. Our neighbor is every soul who is wounded and bruised by the adversary. Our neighbor is every one who is the property of God.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 376.

- c. **How did the Lord send Peter to give Cornelius and his group a home Bible study in Caesarea? Acts 10:19–22, 27.**
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- d. **What did Peter teach? Acts 10:36–43.**
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“From the promise given to Adam, down through the patriarchal line and the legal economy, heaven’s glorious light made plain the footsteps of the Redeemer.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 211.

3. RECOGNIZING THE CALL OF GOD

- a. How did Cornelius and his group bear fruit, revealing evidence that they had indeed fully embraced the present truth for that time—hence qualifying them for baptism? Acts 10:44–48.
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- b. After his missionary work with Cornelius, what complaint did Peter have to face from his brethren in Judea? Acts 11:1–3.
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“When the brethren in Judea heard that Peter had gone to the house of a Gentile and preached to those assembled, they were surprised and offended. They feared that such a course, which looked to them presumptuous, would have the effect of counteracting his own teaching. When they next saw Peter they met him with severe censure, saying, ‘Thou wentest in to men uncircumcised, and did eat with them.’”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 141.

- c. After relating his experience starting with the vision from God, what did Peter emphasize—and how did his brethren receive this logic? Acts 11:15–18. What does this say to us today?
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“It ought to be a great encouragement to us in our work to think of the compassion and tender love of God for those who are seeking and praying for light.

“There are many who are represented to me as being like Cornelius, men whom God desires to connect with His church. Their sympathies are with the Lord’s commandment-keeping people. But the threads that bind them to the world hold them firmly. They have not the moral courage to take their position with the lowly ones. We are to make special efforts for these souls, who are in need of special labor because of their responsibilities and temptations.

“From the light given me I know that a plain ‘Thus saith the Lord’ should now be spoken to men who have influence and authority in the world. They are stewards to whom God has committed important trusts. If they will accept His call, God will use them in His cause.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 79, 80.

4. NURTURING AN OPPORTUNITY

- a. As a result of the scattering from the persecution, how did the church expand to Mediterranean islands and north of Judea? Acts 11:19–21.
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- b. Which city was an especially fertile field for the gospel, what plan was made to develop it more fully—and why? Acts 11:22–26 (first part).
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“Barnabas . . . was sent to Antioch, the metropolis of Syria, to help the church there. He labored there with great success. As the work increased, he solicited and obtained the help of Paul; and the two disciples labored together in that city for a year, teaching the people and adding to the numbers of the church of Christ.

“Antioch had both a large Jewish and Gentile population; it was a great resort for lovers of ease and pleasure, because of the healthfulness of its situation, its beautiful scenery, and the wealth, culture, and refinement that centered there. Its extensive commerce made it a place of great importance, where people of all nationalities were found. It was therefore a city of luxury and vice.”—*The Story of Redemption*, p. 301.

- c. What distinguished the church at Antioch? Acts 11:26 (last part).
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“It was here that the disciples were first called Christians. Their name was given them because Christ was the main theme of their preaching, teaching, and conversation. They were continually recounting the incidents of His life during the time in which His disciples were blessed with His personal company. They dwelt untiringly upon His teachings, His miracles of healing the sick, casting out devils, and raising the dead to life. With quivering lips and tearful eyes they spoke of His agony in the garden, His betrayal, trial, and execution, the forbearance and humility with which He endured the contumely and torture imposed upon Him by His enemies, and the Godlike pity with which He prayed for those who persecuted Him. His resurrection and ascension and His work in heaven as a Mediator for fallen man were joyful topics with them. The heathen might well call them Christians.”—*Ibid.*, p. 302.

5. COMPASSION FOR THE NEEDY

- a. What benevolent action did the brethren of Antioch take when they heard the prophecy that famine would be coming around the world? Acts 11:27–30. How is this an example for Christians in all ages? Acts 20:35.
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“Through circumstances some who love and obey God become poor. Some are not careful; they do not know how to manage. Others are poor through sickness and misfortune. Whatever the cause, they are in need, and to help them is an important line of missionary work.

“All our churches should have a care for their own poor. Our love for God is to be expressed in doing good to the needy and suffering of the household of faith whose necessities come to our knowledge and require our care. Every soul is under special obligation to God to notice His worthy poor with particular compassion. Under no consideration are these to be passed by. . . .

“There had been a famine at Jerusalem, and Paul knew that many of the Christians had been scattered abroad and that those who remained would be likely to be deprived of human sympathy and exposed to religious enmity. Therefore he exhorted the churches to send pecuniary assistance to their brethren in Jerusalem. The amount raised by the churches exceeded the expectation of the apostles. Constrained by the love of Christ, the believers gave liberally, and they were filled with joy because they should thus express their gratitude to the Redeemer and their love for the brethren. This is the true basis of charity according to God’s word.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 271, 272.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How can I exert an influence in my church that would be like Tabitha’s?
2. What is outstanding about Cornelius?
3. What prominent person do I know who may actually be open to truth?
4. There may be a city like Antioch near me that needs truth. Where is it?
5. Why should I always consider the importance of Christian charity?

God's Truth Vindicated

MEMORY TEXT: "The word of God grew and multiplied" (Acts 12:24).

"Truth is inspired and guarded by God; and it will triumph over all opposition."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 12.

Suggested Readings: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 143–154, 166–169; *Early Writings*, pp. 97–104.

Sunday

June 13

1. A MANIPULATED GOVERNMENT

- a. Instigated by evil-minded men, what political actions did the king over Judea, Herod Agrippa I (nephew and brother-in-law of the Herod in Christ's day), carry out against God's work—and why? Acts 12:1–4.

"While the Jews were celebrating their deliverance from Egypt and pretending great zeal for the law of God, they were at the same time transgressing every principle of that law by persecuting and murdering the believers in Christ. . . .

"Herod's act in putting James to death was applauded by the Jews, though some complained of the private manner in which it was accomplished, maintaining that a public execution would have more thoroughly intimidated the believers and those sympathizing with them. Herod therefore held Peter in custody, meaning still further to gratify the Jews by the public spectacle of his death. But it was suggested that it would not be safe to bring the veteran apostle out for execution before all the people then assembled in Jerusalem. It was feared that the sight of him being led out to die might excite the pity of the multitude.

"The priests and elders also feared lest Peter might make one of those powerful appeals which had frequently aroused the people to study the life and character of Jesus—appeals which they, with all their arguments, had been unable to controvert."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 144.

2. CRISIS IN THE EARLY CHURCH

- a. **Why need we not be surprised at the persecution faced by the early church? 1 Peter 4:12, 13.**
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“Our great Exemplar, who was in the brightness of His Father’s glory, was despised and rejected of men. Reproach and falsehood followed Him. His chosen disciples were living examples of the life and spirit of their Master. They were honored with stripes and imprisonment; and it was finally their portion to seal their ministry with their blood.”—*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 345.

- b. **How did the church respond to Peter’s imprisonment? Acts 12:5.**
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“The death of James caused great grief and consternation among the believers. When Peter also was imprisoned, the entire church engaged in fasting and prayer. . . .

“While, upon various pretexts, the execution of Peter was being delayed until after the Passover, the members of the church had time for deep searching of heart and earnest prayer. They prayed without ceasing for Peter, for they felt that he could not be spared from the cause. They realized that they had reached a place where, without the special help from God, the church of Christ would be destroyed. . . .

“The day of Peter’s execution was at last appointed, but still the prayers of the believers ascended to heaven; and while all their energies and sympathies were called out in fervent appeals for help, angels of God were watching over the imprisoned apostle.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 144, 145.

- c. **How tight was the security of Peter’s bondage? Acts 12:6.**
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“Remembering the former escape of the apostles from prison, Herod on this occasion had taken double precautions. To prevent all possibility of release, Peter had been put under the charge of sixteen soldiers, who in different watches, guarded him day and night. . . . With the prison doors securely fastened, and a strong guard before them, all chance of rescue or escape through human means was cut off.”—*Ibid.*, pp. 145, 146.

3. GOD IS IN CONTROL

- a. Describe the miracle performed for Peter in prison. Acts 12:7–11.
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“The bolts and bars and the Roman guard, which effectually cut off all possibility of human aid, were but to make more complete the triumph of God in the deliverance of Peter. . . .

“[The angel] moves toward the door, followed by the usually talkative Peter, now dumb from amazement. They step over the guard and reach the heavily bolted door, which of its own accord swings open and closes again immediately, while the guards within and without are motionless at their post.

“The second door, also guarded within and without, is reached. It opens as did the first, with no creaking of hinges or rattling of iron bolts. They pass through, and it closes again as noiselessly. In the same way they pass through the third gateway and find themselves in the open street. No word is spoken; there is no sound of footsteps. The angel glides on in front, encircled by a light of dazzling brightness, and Peter, bewildered, and still believing himself to be in a dream, follows his deliverer. Thus they pass on through one street, and then, the mission of the angel being accomplished, he suddenly disappears. . . .

“[Peter’s] wrists, swollen from wearing the cruel irons, were free from the manacles. He realized that his freedom was no delusion, no dream or vision, but a blessed reality.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 146–148.

- b. Finding himself in a familiar place, what did Peter do? Acts 12:12–17. And what happened to the guilty king? Verses 21–23.
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“Herod knew that he deserved none of the praise and homage offered him, yet he accepted the idolatry of the people as his due. . . .

“But suddenly a terrible change came over him. His face became pallid as death and distorted with agony. Great drops of sweat started from his pores. He stood for a moment as if transfixed with pain and terror; then turning his blanched and livid face to his horror-stricken friends, he cried in hollow, despairing tones, He whom you have exalted as a god is stricken with death. . . . He felt that God was now dealing with him, the relentless persecutor.”—*Ibid.*, p. 151.

4. GOSPEL ORDER

- a. As the gospel message expands to new places, what is necessary—and why? Acts 12:24, 25; 13:1–3.
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“The church should feel their responsibility and should look carefully and attentively at the lives, qualifications, and general course of those who profess to be teachers. If unmistakable evidence is not given that God has called them, and that the ‘woe’ is upon them if they heed not this call, it is the duty of the church to act and let it be known that these persons are not acknowledged as teachers by the church. This is the only course the church can take in order to be clear in this matter, for the burden lies upon them. . . .

“[Gospel order] is indispensably necessary in order to bring the church into the unity of the faith. I saw that in the apostles’ day the church was in danger of being deceived and imposed upon by false teachers. Therefore the brethren chose men who had given good evidence that they were capable of ruling well their own house and preserving order in their own families, and who could enlighten those who were in darkness. Inquiry was made of God concerning these, and then, according to the mind of the church and the Holy Ghost, they were set apart by the laying on of hands. Having received their commission from God and having the approbation of the church, they went forth baptizing in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, and administering the ordinances of the Lord’s house, often waiting upon the saints by presenting them the emblems of the broken body and spilt blood of the crucified Saviour, to keep fresh in the memory of God’s beloved children His sufferings and death.

“I saw that we are no more secure from false teachers now than they were in the apostles’ days; and, if we do no more, we should take as special measures as they did to secure the peace, harmony, and union of the flock. We have their example, and should follow it. Brethren of experience and of sound minds should assemble, and following the Word of God and the sanction of the Holy Spirit, should, with fervent prayer, lay hands upon those who have given full proof that they have received their commission of God, and set them apart to devote themselves entirely to His work. This act would show the sanction of the church to their going forth as messengers to carry the most solemn message ever given to men.”—*Early Writings*, pp. 100, 101.

5. A SOUL AT STAKE

- a. **Where did Barnabas and Saul go next in their missionary labors—and what obstacle did they face? Acts 13:4–8.**
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“Not without a struggle does Satan allow the kingdom of God to be built up in the earth. The forces of evil are engaged in unceasing warfare against the agencies appointed for the spread of the gospel, and these powers of darkness are especially active when the truth is proclaimed before men of repute and sterling integrity. Thus it was when Sergius Paulus, the deputy of Cyprus, was listening to the gospel message. The deputy had sent for the apostles, that he might be instructed in the message they had come to bear, and now the forces of evil, working through the sorcerer Elymas, sought with their baleful suggestions to turn him from the faith and so thwart the purpose of God.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 167.

- b. **How did Paul boldly rebuke the one through whom the enemy was working—and thus gain a victory for the gospel? Acts 13:9–12.**
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“The sorcerer had closed his eyes to the evidences of gospel truth, and the Lord, in righteous anger, caused his natural eyes to be closed, shutting out from him the light of day. This blindness was not permanent, but only for a season, that he might be warned to repent and seek pardon of the God whom he had so grievously offended. The confusion into which he was thus brought made of no effect his subtle arts against the doctrine of Christ. The fact that he was obliged to grope about in blindness proved to all that the miracles which the apostles had performed . . . were wrought by the power of God.”—*Ibid.*, p. 168.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How are plots like the one between the Jews and Herod repeated today?
2. Facing impossible obstacles like Peter’s imprisonment, what can we do?
3. Why can the details of Peter’s deliverance bring me hope?
4. What is the key qualification necessary for teachers of the gospel?
5. Why should I not be discouraged when laboring for new souls?

Reaching Beyond our Comfort Zone

MEMORY TEXT: “And the next sabbath day came almost the whole city together to hear the word of God” (Acts 13:44).

“No one will be able to say when the movings of God’s Spirit will be realized or what direction or through whom it will manifest itself. . . . There will be thousands converted to the truth in a day, who at the eleventh hour see and acknowledge the truth and movements of the Spirit of God.”—*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, pp. 754, 755.

Suggested Reading: *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 169–179.

Sunday

June 20

1. LIGHT TO THOSE IN DARKNESS

- a. From Paphos on the island of Cyprus—to way beyond Perga (on the southern Mediterranean coast of today’s Turkey)—where did Paul and his company go as missionaries on the Sabbath? Acts 13:13, 14 (far away from the Syrian city bearing the same name in Acts 11).

“Paul and his company continued their journey, going to Perga, in Pamphylia. Their way was toilsome; they encountered hardships and privations, and were beset with dangers on every side. In the towns and cities through which they passed, and along the lonely highways, they were surrounded by dangers seen and unseen. But Paul and Barnabas had learned to trust God’s power to deliver. Their hearts were filled with fervent love for perishing souls. As faithful shepherds in search of the lost sheep, they gave no thought to their own ease and convenience. Forgetful of self, they faltered not when weary, hungry, and cold. They had in view but one object—the salvation of those who had wandered far from the fold.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 169.

- b. What happened to John Mark at this time? Acts 12:25; 13:5, 13.
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2. JEWS AND GENTILES ON THE SABBATH

- a. What opportunity was offered to Paul in the synagogue at Antioch—and what can we learn from how this applies today? Acts 13:15.
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“You may have opportunity to speak in other churches. In improving these opportunities, remember the words of the Saviour, ‘Be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.’ Do not arouse the malignity of the enemy by making denunciatory speeches. Thus you will close doors against the entrance of truth. Clear-cut messages are to be borne. But guard against arousing antagonism. There are many souls to be saved. Restrain all harsh expression. In word and deed be wise unto salvation, representing Christ to all with whom you come in contact. Let all see that your feet are shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace and good will to men. Wonderful are the results we shall see if we enter into the work imbued with the Spirit of Christ. Help will come in our necessity if we carry the work forward in righteousness, mercy, and love. Truth will triumph, and bear away the victory.”—*Evangelism*, pp. 563, 564.

“Let faithful, God-fearing, earnest workers, their life hid with Christ in God, pray and work for honest ministers who have been educated to misinterpret the Word of Life.”—*Ibid.*, p. 562.

“Ministers and the world’s wise men are to be tested by the light of present truth. The third angel’s message is to be set before them judiciously, in its true dignity.”—*Ibid.*, p. 563.

- b. As Paul related the history of the Hebrew nation and graciously led into the message of Christ—all based on Scripture fulfilled—what was his concluding appeal? Acts 13:38–41.
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- c. How were various hearts touched on that fruitful Sabbath? Acts 13:42, 43.
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“[Acts 13:38, 39 quoted.] The Spirit of God accompanied the words that were spoken, and hearts were touched.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 172.

3. A SPIRITUAL BATTLE

- a. As a result of Paul's present-truth message on Sabbath to both Jews and Gentiles, what happened the next Sabbath? Acts 13:44. What jealous reaction followed this outpouring of enthusiasm? Verse 45.
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- b. Finally, what was Paul constrained to declare—and with what results? Acts 13:46–49. What are we to understand by his aim?
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“[The Gentiles] rejoiced exceedingly that Christ recognized them as the children of God, and with grateful hearts they listened to the word preached. Those who believed were zealous in communicating the gospel message to others, and thus ‘the word of the Lord was published throughout all the region.’ . . .

“In turning to the Gentiles in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas did not cease laboring for the Jews elsewhere, wherever there was a favorable opportunity to gain a hearing. Later, in Thessalonica, in Corinth, in Ephesus, and in other important centers, Paul and his companions in labor preached the gospel to both Jews and Gentiles. But their chief energies were henceforth directed toward the building up of the kingdom of God in heathen territory, among peoples who had but little or no knowledge of the true God and of His Son.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 173–175.

- c. What was the next tactic of the envious ones? Acts 13:50. How did the believers respond—and what words of their Master made this possible? Acts 13:51, 52; Matthew 5:11, 12.
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“When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan's kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ. The character of the persecution changes with the times, but the principle—the spirit that underlies it—is the same that has slain the chosen of the Lord since the days of Abel.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

4. ICONIUM

- a. **Why can every single one of us be inspired by the results achieved at the missionary visit to Iconium? Acts 14:1.**
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“Each is to learn of the Great Teacher, and is then to communicate what he has learned. God has given to each of His messengers an individual work. There is a diversity of gifts, but all the workers are to blend in harmony, controlled by the sanctifying influence of the Holy Spirit. As they make known the gospel of salvation, many will be convicted and converted by the power of God. The human instrumentality is hid with Christ in God, and Christ appears as the chiefest among ten thousand, the One altogether lovely.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 274, 275.

- b. **Why should we not be disheartened by what promptly followed the success at Iconium? Acts 14:2; Psalm 69:7–9.**
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“There was never one who walked among men more cruelly slandered than the Son of man. He was derided and mocked because of His unswerving obedience to the principles of God’s holy law. They hated Him without a cause. Yet He stood calmly before His enemies, declaring that reproach is a part of the Christian’s legacy, counseling His followers how to meet the arrows of malice, bidding them not to faint under persecution.

“While slander may blacken the reputation, it cannot stain the character. That is in God’s keeping. So long as we do not consent to sin, there is no power, whether human or satanic, that can bring a stain upon the soul. A man whose heart is stayed upon God is just the same in the hour of his most afflicting trials and most discouraging surroundings as when he was in prosperity, when the light and favor of God seemed to be upon him. His words, his motives, his actions, may be misrepresented and falsified, but he does not mind it, because he has greater interests at stake. . . .

“Christ is acquainted with all that is misunderstood and misrepresented by men. His children can afford to wait in calm patience and trust, no matter how much maligned and despised.”—*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, p. 32.

5. THE LOVE OF CHRIST MANIFESTED

- a. How did the apostles manage to melt away much of the prejudice facing them due to malicious rumors? Acts 14:3, 4.
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“By means of false and exaggerated reports [the envious, unbelieving Jews] led the authorities to fear that the entire city was in danger of being incited to insurrection. They declared that large numbers were attaching themselves to the apostles and suggested that it was for secret and dangerous designs.

“In consequence of these charges the disciples were repeatedly brought before the authorities; but their defense was so clear and sensible, and their statement of what they were teaching so calm and comprehensive, that a strong influence was exerted in their favor. Although the magistrates were prejudiced against them by the false statements they had heard, they dared not condemn them. They could but acknowledge that the teachings of Paul and Barnabas tended to make men virtuous, law-abiding citizens, and that the morals and order of the city would improve if the truths taught by the apostles were accepted.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 178.

- b. What did the apostles finally need to do? Acts 14:5–7; Matthew 10:23.
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“Friends of the apostles, though unbelievers, warned them of the malicious designs of the Jews and urged them not to expose themselves needlessly to the fury of the mob, but to escape for their lives. Paul and Barnabas accordingly departed in secret from Iconium, leaving the believers to carry on the work alone for a time. But they by no means took final leave; they purposed to return after the excitement had abated, and complete the work begun.”—*Ibid.*, p. 179.

PERSONAL REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How might I, like John Mark, be tempted to shrink back at hardships?
2. Why should I pray for opportunities such as Paul found at Antioch?
3. Just as Gentiles rejoiced at the gospel, how will many soon do likewise?
4. When faced with unjust slander, what should I always remember?
5. Why can I be inspired by the tremendous love shown by the apostles?

First Sabbath Offerings



APRIL 3
for Spanish hymnal
(see p. 4.)

MAY 1
for World Missions
(see p. 25.)



JUNE 5
for a headquarters in
DR Congo
(see p. 51.)

