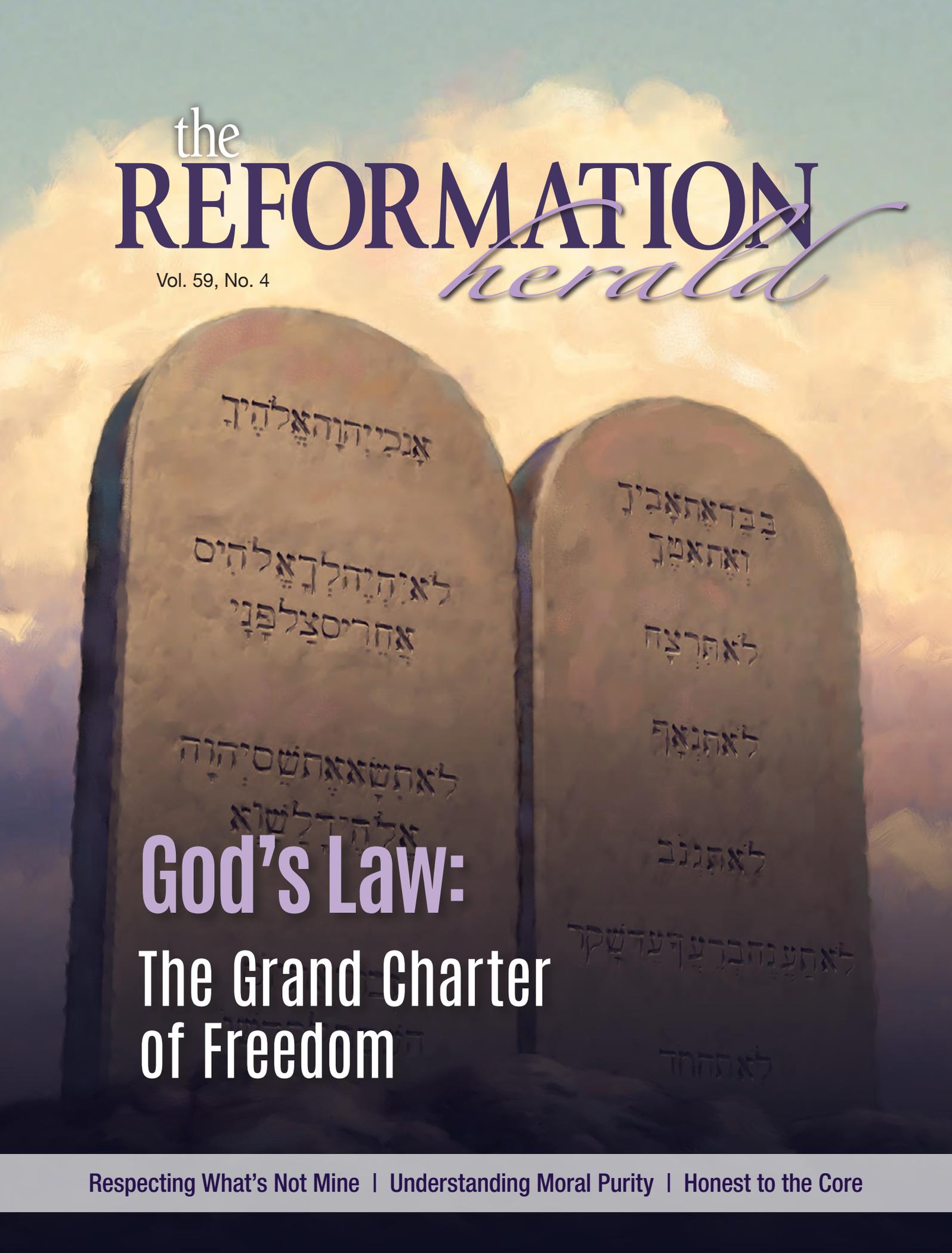


the
REFORMATION
herald

Vol. 59, No. 4



God's Law:
The Grand Charter
of Freedom

Respecting What's Not Mine | Understanding Moral Purity | Honest to the Core

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 59, Number 4

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"The age in which we live calls for reformatory action."
— *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 488.

Editor D. P. Silva
Assistant to the Editor B. Montrose
Layout and Design E. Lee
D. Lee

Web: <http://www.sdarm.org>
E-mail: info@sdarm.org

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The Law of Liberty

Whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law. So, speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty” (James 2:10–12).

The Law of God is the reflection of His lovely, just, and perfect character. Since God is love, His moral law of Ten Commandments is based on perfect love. This is its fundamental principle. Consequently, no one can be happy while at enmity against this law. There is no happiness, justice, or freedom outside of its principles. It protects us.

The harmony of the entire universe depends on perfect obedience to God’s commandments. They are as deep and broad as their divine Author—and all the principles enshrined therein can be summarized in one simple word: Love.

The apostle James calls the Law of God “the law of liberty.” How could it be that a law that forbids people to do whatsoever they want be called a law of liberty?

In Romans 13, Paul declares that those who love their neighbors fulfil the Law, and he explains by quoting several commandments related to love for our neighbors.

Do not commit adultery. Why not? Because we love our neighbors as ourselves and adultery hurts people. Do not kill. Why not? Because we love people, so we would not want

to destroy them. Do not steal. Why not? Because of love. Do not covet. Why not? Again because of love. “Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law” (Romans 13:10).

In 1 Corinthians 13:1–8, the apostle gives a beautiful explanation of love—the fulfillment of the law, explaining how can we love our neighbor indeed.

The Spirit of Prophecy expounds on this:

“No matter how high the profession, he whose heart is not filled with love for God and his fellow men is not a true disciple of Christ. . . .

“Christlike love places the most favorable construction on the motives and acts of others. It does not needlessly expose their faults; it does not listen eagerly to unfavorable reports, but seeks rather to bring to mind the good qualities of others.”¹

In Romans 7, Paul says that the law is holy, just and good. However, at the same time, he confesses that he was slave of sin, which is “transgression of the law.” If sin is a terrible slavery, then obedience to the Law of God is freedom.

But the Law cannot deliver us from slavery. The main purpose of the Law regarding the sinner is to reveal to him his real condition before the Lord. Freedom from sin is possible only by becoming one with Jesus Christ. He said: “If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed” (John 8:36).

“Sin can triumph only by enfeebling the mind, and destroying

the liberty of the soul. Subjection to God is restoration to one’s self—to the true glory and dignity of man. The divine law, to which we are brought into subjection, is ‘the law of liberty.’ James 2:12.”²

Every commandment of God is a promise. For instance, when God says: Do not kill, do not give false testimony, do not covet, He is saying: I will give you power to not kill, to not give false testimony, to not covet.

“In every command or injunction that God gives there is a promise, the most positive, underlying the command. God has made provision that we may become like unto Him, and He will accomplish this for all who do not interpose a perverse will and thus frustrate His grace.”³

In this issue of *The Reformation Herald*, we are examining some practical considerations with regard to six of the Ten Commandments through the power of Christ. The remaining four will follow in the next issue.

“We are called into the freedom of the gospel but not into the service of sin. We are called to wear Christ’s yoke, which is true liberty, not liberty to sin and disregard the plainest injunction of the Word of God, ‘If ye love Me, keep My commandments’ (John 14:15).”⁴ *R*

References

¹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 318, 319.

² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 466.

³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 76. [Emphasis added.]

⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 318.



Putting First Those Who Came First

by **Walter Lukic**

The fifth commandment is found right in the heart of the Ten Commandments written by the finger of our Creator on two tables of stone. The first four commandments govern the relationship between the individual soul and the Almighty and the last six, our relationship with our fellowmen.

A closer look at the fifth commandment reveals that this commandment is actually a transitional commandment, a link between the first four and the other five. Indeed, it governs the relations within the human family but also embodies a principle firmly rooted in God's sovereignty and His ultimate authority to make laws and receive all honor and glory.

Divine origin and delegated authority of the human family

The fifth commandment reads as follows: "Honour thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee" (Exodus 20:12).

We all can easily agree that the explicit objective of the fifth

commandment is the protection of the human family. But this is not the only commandment among the ten that protects family. Even a brief glance of the Ten Commandments can show that three other commandments also protect the interests of this divine institution originating from the time of Eden. The seventh commandment "Thou shalt not commit adultery," and the tenth commandment "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife . . ." do it directly; and the eighth commandment "Thou shalt not steal," does it indirectly.

Such strong emphasis on the family makes it clear that the family is central to the biblical way of life. Yet not just any family has this centrality—it is the family that is under God. According to the Bible, human origin and the origin of human family are indissolubly connected with God's act of creation. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them. And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every

living thing that moveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:27, 28).

Upon creating the first man, God saw that Adam, the first human being, needed a companion: "And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet for him" (Genesis 2:18). And God made Adam a suitable companion, a woman, flesh of his flesh and bones of his bones. God united man and woman in a permanent, heterosexual and monogamous marriage covenant: "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh" (Genesis 2:24).

This simple but highly significant biblical record lays the foundation of the human family. It also serves as the necessary background for the fifth commandment. God created man and woman in His own image; He united them in a sacred bond of marriage; He made them fruitful and told them to multiply and fill the earth with godly offspring that would continue to reflect the image of God. Further, God delegated to the first humans authority over the earth, to "subdue it" and "to have dominion" over all creation.

The dominion over the earth that was originally given to Adam and Eve as God's representatives included the delegated power to care for and rule over His creation. In that creation mandate was included authority over procreated life, the future offspring of Adam and Eve. By parental care for their offspring, by parental precept and example and by a divinely imposed duty on children to obey and honor parents, the children born to Adam and Eve would bear the image of God and fulfill His noble purposes for the human race.

From the 19th century onward this centrality of human family under God has been repeatedly and viciously attacked. Evolutionary theory did not look upon the family as a basic unit of human society whose origin and purpose have been defined by God's act of creation. Evolutionary anthropology sees the origins of the family in a supposed primitive, subhuman past and not in God's creative purpose. The evolutionist's view of the origin of the family is found in "the primal horde" and the "old collectivity." This humanistic perspective sees the family as a "culturally determined" social form. In other words, the notion is that the family is entirely an evolutionary product of human culture. This view of the family is foundational to all humanistic theories, from those of Charles Darwin, Karl Marx, and Sigmund Freud to the most, if not all contemporary "scientific" theories of society. In all of these theories the family is viewed as human-centered and society-centered.

The God-centered foundations of the fifth commandment

In contrast to evolutionary theory, foundational to the fifth commandment is a God-centered view of the family which has the following characteristics:

First, the family has a **God-centered origin and function**. The family is a part of God's purpose for

humanity and its function is to bring glory to Him as the Almighty Creator and enable humans to reach their full development in His divine image, as God intended.

Second, according to Genesis 1:27–30, God created human beings to subdue the earth and to exercise dominion over it as His stewards. Man and woman, husband and wife, together with their children, form a family and they are destined to **possess the earth for a long time (perpetually)**. The second part of the fifth commandment clearly contemplates this possessive function of the godly family and its offspring:

Such strong emphasis on the family makes it clear that the family is central to the biblical way of life.

"that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." This is the first commandment with a promise (Ephesians 6:2). This promise of long life and possession of the Promised Land on condition of obedience to God applied initially to the earthly Canaan but in a secondary and more important sense it applies to the earth made new.¹

Third, the exercise of dominion and possession of land clearly involves **responsibility and authority**. This is an authority by delegation. God has entrusted parents with exercising His authority over their households:

"Parents are entitled to a degree of love and respect which is due to no other person. God Himself, who has placed upon them a responsibility for the souls committed to their charge, has ordained that during the earlier years of life parents shall stand in the place of God to their children. And he who rejects the rightful authority of his parents is rejecting the authority of God."²

No other institution in society is lawfully permitted to usurp the God-given authority placed in the human family. In most modern societies, we can readily perceive, in varying degrees, a presumed transfer of authority from the family to the state. Family and state have their respective lawful spheres of authority and the boundaries between these spheres should not be blurred or infringed upon.

Fourth, the commandment says, "Honour thy father and thy mother. . . ." This expression tells us that there is **community in their authority**. Both father and mother have their respective share of responsibility but also an equal legal claim to honor, respect and love from their children. It is of great importance for the godly education of children that the parents exercise their authority in a proper way. Especially in their fallen condition, a husband needs to show love to his wife and a wife respect for her husband. The husband needs to be submissive to Christ as his head, and the wife to her husband, as her head (Ephesians 5:23). Their love and fear of God and their mutual love and respect should inspire love and respect in their children:

"The best way to educate children to respect their father and mother is to give them the opportunity of seeing the father offering kindly attentions to the mother and the mother rendering respect and reverence to the father. It is by beholding love in their parents that children are led to obey the fifth commandment and to heed the injunction, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right."³

Privileges and obligations of the fifth commandment

In Deuteronomy 5:16 the fifth commandment is somewhat expanded: “Honour thy father and thy mother, as the Lord thy God hath commanded thee; that thy days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with thee, in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.”

This commandment carries a significant pledge to the obedient—the promise of life and wellbeing. The promise of life contained in this commandment parallels the promise of life made to those who keep the Lord’s statutes and commandments (Deuteronomy 4:40). Further, the significance of the fifth commandment is highlighted by its placement next to the Sabbath commandment in Leviticus 19:3: “Ye shall fear every man his mother, and his father, and keep my sabbaths: I am the Lord your God.” The Sabbath and the marriage (family) are the twin institutions which God established and blessed at the creation of this world. God’s special blessing still attends our respect for those institutions.

Children who dishonor and disobey their parents not only deprive themselves of temporal blessings; they will be disinherited from eternal life: “Children who dishonor and disobey their parents, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new.”⁴

The obligation laid on the children in this commandment is broad and deeply rooted in divine authority. The New Testament echoes the fifth commandment in the following verses: “Children, obey your parents in the Lord: for this is right. Honour thy father and mother; which is the first commandment with promise”

(Ephesians 6:1, 2). “Children, obey your parents in all things: for this is well pleasing unto the Lord” (Colossians 3:20).

The nature and character of this obedience is expressed by the words, “in the Lord.” The honor and obedience which children owe to their parents should be religious. It is not a service rendered from fear or from mere natural affection. The ground for children’s obedience is expressed in the words, “for this is right” and likewise, “for this is well pleasing to the Lord.” It is not merely because of the personal character



of the parent, nor because of his or her kindness, nor on the ground of expediency, but because it is right.

Why is it right to honor and obey one’s parents? The Spirit of Prophecy provides several reasons. Here are two of them: Children are indebted to their parents because they have invested much personal effort and considerable means to raise them. “The word of God abounds in precepts and counsels enjoining respect for parents. It impresses

upon the young the sacred duty of loving and cherishing those who have guided them through infancy, childhood, and youth, up to manhood and womanhood, and who are now in great degree dependent upon them for peace and happiness. The Bible gives no uncertain sound on this subject; nevertheless, its teachings have been greatly disregarded.”⁵

But there is another, more important reason why it is right to honor parents: Parents represent to their children God’s authority—and by dishonoring their parents, children dishonor God. “Satan’s enmity against God’s law had impelled him to war against every precept of the Decalogue. To the great principle of love and loyalty to God, the Father of all, the principle of filial love and obedience is closely related. Contempt for parental authority will soon lead to contempt for the authority of God. Hence Satan’s efforts to lessen the obligation of the fifth commandment.”⁶

The duty to obey parents is limited only by God’s expressed commandments. When the parents’ commands contradict the commandment of God, children should rather obey God: “When children have unbelieving parents, and their commands contradict the requirements of Christ, then, painful though it may be, they must obey God and trust the consequences with Him.”⁷

For adults and children alike

The duty to honor and obey parents lays down the principle not only of honor and respect but of personal support and care for aged and infirm parents as well as all those to whom God has delegated

authority: “The fifth commandment requires children not only to yield respect, submission, and obedience to their parents but also to give them love and tenderness, to lighten their cares, to guard their reputation, and to succor and comfort them in old age. It also enjoins respect for ministers and rulers and for all others to whom God has delegated authority.”⁸

There is no time or space limit on our obligation to parents: “Our obligation to our parents never ceases. Our love for them, and theirs for us, is not measured by years or distance, and our responsibility can never be set aside.”⁹

Let us quote from the inspired writings one specific duty of the fifth commandment that is laid upon children. It relates to the choice of the life companion. Should a young person select as a future spouse a person whom his or her godly parents strongly and wisely advise against? Here is the inspired counsel:

“‘Should parents,’ you ask, ‘select a companion without regard to the mind or feelings of son or daughter?’ I put the question to you as it should be: Should a son or daughter select a companion without first consulting the parents, when such a step must materially affect the happiness of parents if they have any affection for their children? And should that child, notwithstanding the counsel and entreaties of his parents, persist in following his own course? I answer decidedly: No; not if he never marries. The fifth commandment forbids such a course. ‘Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.’ Here is a commandment with a promise which the Lord will surely fulfill to those who obey. Wise parents will never select companions for their children without respect to their wishes.”¹⁰

Our perfect Example

The fifth commandment was under attack in the days Jesus walked

on this earth. Rabbinical Judaism gradually developed many traditions that beclouded the meaning and paralyzed the application of the fifth commandment. To bypass the requirements of the clear command regarding care for parents, the rabbis created sophisticated legal rules so that they could pledge certain property or funds to the temple by applying the word “Corban” (gift) and thus supposedly avoid the obligation of the fifth commandment to provide for their needy parents:

Jesus reproved: “Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition. For Moses said, Honour thy father and thy mother; and, Whoso curseth father or mother, let him die the death: but ye say, If a man shall say to his father or mother, It is Corban, that is to say, a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; he shall be free. And ye suffer him no more to do ought for his father or his mother; making the word of God of none effect through your tradition, which ye have delivered: and many such like things do ye” (Mark 7:9–13).

Christ clearly reaffirmed the obligation of the children under the fifth commandment to provide for their parents and nullified the man-made rule that a gift to the temple could serve as an exemption from such duty. Of these human traditions Christ said: “in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men” (Mark 7:7).

By His own example Christ affirmed the duty of children to care for their aged and dependent parents. When Christ was dying on the cross, His broken-hearted mother was standing there together with some other women, beholding the awful scene. In His greatest agony Christ did not forget the needs of His earthly mother. He looked upon John, one of His closest followers and told him:

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son!

Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home” (John 19:26, 27).

In conclusion

In our day and age, and particularly for the remnant people of God, it is of utmost importance to restore the true meaning of the fifth commandment and to demonstrate that meaning in a well-ordered family life. True reformers of the last days are represented by the work of the great prophet Elijah:

“Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse” (Malachi 4:4–6).

The work of reform in the end times cannot be accomplished without remembering and restoring to its rightful place the law which God gave to Moses on Mount Horeb (or Sinai). The specific work entrusted to those who constitute the end-time Elijah will involve turning the hearts of the fathers to their children and vice versa. This is a work of reconciliation based on the fifth commandment and on the knowledge of God’s character of love. Only those parents and the children who have experienced the pardoning love of God can become truly reconciled. May this be the experience of each parent and child! *R*

References

- ¹ See *The Adventist Home*, pp. 292, 294.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 293.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 198, 199.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 294.
- ⁵ *Fundamental Principles of Christian Education*, p. 101.
- ⁶ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 337.
- ⁷ *The Adventist Home*, p. 293.
- ⁸ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.
- ⁹ *The Review and Herald*, November 15, 1892.
- ¹⁰ *The Adventist Home*, p. 75.

*From a pamphlet addressed to sanitarium staff, entitled
Health, Philanthropic, and Medical Missionary Work, pp. 17–24*

RESPECTING What's NOT MINE

by Ellen G. White

Economy and Strict Honesty

There is a lack of care and economy in every department of this institution. Much is lost that might and should be saved. Many of these losses are caused by a neglect to look after little matters. The workers have thought it their duty to attend to the larger responsibilities, but there are hundreds of leaks daily that are not thought of or cared for; and the loss in a year is by no means small. Here is one of the special defects that exist at the Sanitarium.

The helpers at the Sanitarium should not feel at liberty to appropriate to their own use articles of food provided for the patients. The temptation is especially strong to indulge in things allowed to newcomers, who must be induced gradually to correct their pernicious habits. Employees have no right to help themselves to crackers, nuts, raisins, dates, sugar, oranges, or fruit of any kind; for, in the first place, in eating these things between meals, as is generally done, they are injuring the digestive organs, and again, those who partake of these things are taking that which is not theirs. No food should pass the lips between the regular meals. Temptation is constantly before them to taste the food which they are handling; and here is an excellent opportunity for them to gain control of their appetite. But food seems to be very abundant, and they forget that it all represents so much money value. One and another thoughtlessly indulge in the habit of tasting and helping themselves, until they fancy there is no real sin in the practice. All should beware of cherishing this view of the matter, for conscience is thus losing its sensitiveness. One may reason, "The little that I have taken does not amount to much;" but the question comes home, Did the smallness of the amount lessen the sin of the act? Again, the little which one person takes may not amount to much; but when five act on the same plan, five littles are taken. Then ten, twenty, or

even more may presume in the same way, until every day, the workers may, to their own injury, appropriate many little things that they have no right to touch. Many littles make much in the end. But the greatest loss is sustained by the ones who digress; for they are violating the principles of right, and learning to look upon transgression in small matters as no transgression at all. They forget the words of Christ, "He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much; and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much" (Luke 16:10).

When an effort is made to correct these practices, it is generally received as an evidence of stinginess on the

Whatever is done should be done with that exactness and thoroughness which will bear inspection.

part of the managers; and some will make no change, but go on hardening the conscience until it becomes seared as with a hot iron. They rise up against any restriction, and act and talk defiantly, as though their rights had been invaded. But God looks upon all these things as theft, and so the record is carried up to heaven.

The angels in heaven have a wider and more elevated sphere of action than we; but right with them and right with us are one and the same thing.

In such an institution as the Sanitarium, where many are laboring together, some will do what they would not think it honest to do were

they separately employed. They would have more respect for their reputation than to be found faulty in any of the so-called little matters. A person employed in a private family would not dare to take such liberties with his employer's property as are taken at the Sanitarium. The helpers influence one another to do unlawful acts; and they do not realize that they are, through indulgence of self, wronging one of God's instrumentalities, and crippling its powers. The fact that several are doing the same thing does not lessen their guilt. It is the act itself that is wrong, whether performed by many or by few.

Those who are employed at our Sanitarium have in many respects the best advantages for the formation of correct habits. None will be placed beyond the reach of temptation; for in every character there are weak points that are in danger when assailed. Those who begin to be careless of their steps will find that before they are aware of it their feet will be entangled in a web from which it is impossible for them to extricate themselves. It should be a fixed principle with all to be truthful and honest. Whether they are rich or poor, whether they have friends or are left alone, come what will, they should resolve, in the strength of God, that no influence shall lead them to commit the least wrong act. One and all should realize that upon them, individually, depends in a measure the prosperity of the Sanitarium.

Christ resisted Satan in our behalf. We have the example of our Saviour to strengthen our weak purposes and resolves; but notwithstanding this, some will fall by Satan's temptations, and they will not fall alone. Every soul that fails to obtain the victory carries others down through his influence. Those who fail to connect with God, and to receive wisdom and grace to refine and elevate their own lives, will be judged for the good they might have done, but failed to perform because they were content with earthliness of mind and friendship with the unsanctified.

As my guide conducted me through the different apartments, the lack of

economy everywhere stirred my soul with grief; for I had a full sense of the debt hanging over the institution. The petty dishonesty, the selfish neglect of duty, were marked by the recording angel. The waste permitted here and there in the course of a year amounts to a considerable sum. Much of this might be saved by the helpers; but each will say, "It does not belong to me to look after these things." Would they pass these things so indifferently if the loss were to be sustained by themselves?—No; they would know exactly what to do, and how to do it; but it makes all the difference that it belongs to the institution. This is the fruit of selfishness, and is registered against them under the heading of selfishness.

Some have labored faithfully, while others have done their work mechanically, as though they had no interest in it, except to get through as quickly as possible. Order and thoroughness were neglected because no one was near to watch them and criticize their work. Unfaithfulness was written against their names.

Faithfulness in the work

The helpers should take Jesus with them in every department of their labor. Whatever is done should be done with that exactness and thoroughness which will bear inspection. The heart should be in the work. Faithfulness is as essential in washing dishes, sweeping the floors, and doing chamber work, as in caring for the sick or administering baths. Some may receive the idea that their work is not ennobling; but this is just as they choose to make it. They alone are capable of degrading or elevating their employment. Would that every drone might be compelled to toil for his daily bread; for work is a blessing,

not a curse. Diligent labor will keep up from many of the snares of Satan, who ever finds some mischief for idle hands to do.

None of us should be ashamed of work, however small and servile it may appear. Labor is ennobling. All who toil with head or hands are working men and women; and all are doing their duty and honoring their religion as much while working in the laundry or washing dishes, as they are in going to meeting. While the hands are engaged in the most common labor, the mind may be elevated and ennobled by pure and holy thoughts. When any of the workers manifest a lack of respect for religious things, they should be separated from the work. Let none feel that the institution



is dependent upon them.

Helpers who have been longest at our Sanitarium should now be responsible workers, reliable in every place, faithful to duty as the compass to the pole. Had they rightly improved their opportunities, they might now have had symmetrical characters and a deep, living experience in religious things. But many of these workers have separated from God. Religion is laid aside. It is not an inwrought principle, carefully cherished wherever they go, into whatever society they are thrown, proving as an anchor to the soul. I wish all the workers carefully to consider that success in this life, and success in gaining the future life, depends largely

upon faithfulness in performing the duties just where God has placed them.

The perfection of God's work is as clearly seen in the tiniest insect as in the king of beasts. The soul of the little child who believes in Christ is as precious in his sight as are the angels about his throne. "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matthew 5:48). As God is perfect in His sphere, so may man be perfect in his sphere. Whatever the hand finds to do should be done with thoroughness and dispatch. Faithfulness and integrity in little things, the performance of little duties, and little deeds of kindness will cheer and gladden the pathway of life; and when our work on earth is ended, every one of the little duties performed with fidelity will be treasured as a precious gem before God.

If this institution is what God designed it should be, as His instrumentality it will not copy any institution in our land in its practices or moral standing. It will stand as a peculiar institution, governed and controlled after the Bible standard. No motive will be of sufficient force to move those engaged here from the straight line of duty. It will be reformatory in all its teachings and practice. There

will be no uniting in closer harmony with the world in order to receive worldly patronage. If Jesus presides in the Sanitarium, there will be a greater and more distinct separation from the world. Pleasure cannot entice from the way of justice. Those who are under the control of the Spirit of God will not be found seeking their own pleasure or amusement. They will answer the injunction, Come out from among them and be separate, touching not the unclean, and in no wise partaking of sin. They will aim to reach the high, pure, noble, elevated standard erected by our Lord Jesus Christ. The world, in its practices, and ways, and manners, will have no attractions to entice from duty. *R*

Understanding Moral Purity

Excerpts adapted from A Solemn Appeal by James White

What is impurity

Impurity [historically referred to as unchastity] includes all the action, whether of body or mind, which is forbidden by the seventh commandment. And all that is therein forbidden, may be included under the two following heads:

1. Impurity of the mind.
2. Impurity of the conduct.

The mind

By impurity of the mind, is meant the conception of impurity in the mind, the cherishing of impure desire. All sin has its seat in the mind. The seventh commandment, like every other, extends to “thoughts, and intents of the heart” (Hebrews 4:12). . . . “Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart” (Matthew 5:28). And with this agrees another scripture, which says, “Out of the heart proceed . . . adulteries” (Matthew 15:19).

The conduct

By impurity of the conduct, we are to understand the acting out of impurity in any of its various ways of developing sinful thoughts, as,

1. By impure conversation, writing, looks, and gestures. “Speech is the mirror of the soul.” And hence it is that “by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned” (Matthew 12:37). But significant looks, writing, gestures, etc., being but substitutes for words and the tongue, are, like them, capable of being made the ministers of sin; hence, also, they must be subject to the same general law.

Impurity in the sight of God

Impurity, loathsome and abhorrent as it is in the sight of good men, is infinitely more so in the sight of God. This is sufficiently evident in the conduct of the divine Being in relation to it. The prominent place He has given to the law forbidding it—having written it in common with nine others, on tables of stone, for the universal government of universal man—and, also, the sanction He has placed upon it—having announced it amid the most sublime and awful, symbols of the divine presence which the world ever witnessed—these considerations make it abundantly evident that God looks upon impurity with the extreme of loathing and abhorrence.

This view, however, is further evidenced in the fact that throughout both Testaments, impurity is made

the subject of frequent rebuke, in language of the greatest detestation. Against no other form of sin are men more frequently and earnestly admonished. . . .

Causes of impurity:

1. Early corruption

We notice bad education as a cause of impurity. Children are born in a perfectly uneducated state. They know absolutely nothing until they learn something. Now, by education, we mean the conveying of knowledge to the mind in any and every possible way. Thus, if the mind be compared to an unsoiled, white sheet, then the writing and impressing of ideas thereon we call education. Well has the poet said:

“’Tis education forms the common mind;” and certainly it has much to do in forming the moral character. By bad education we mean the filling of the mind with bad ideas. . . .

Paul says that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” No sooner is it said, “A child is born,” than an infant is subjected to “evil communications,” i.e., put in communication with an evil, sensual world. And that manners are thereby corrupted, has been often proved while the child has been yet

Sedentary habits, unrelieved by sufficient exercise, increase the liabilities to impurity. Exercise is the law of the human constitution.



in the nurse's arms, and this, too, in a most serious manner. Nurses, by manipulating infants to cure their crying, have been known to give them a notion, which has resulted in the habit of solitary vice. This, the reader will say, is early education with a vengeance. And yet, numbers of instances of this kind are on record. The reader must judge for himself how many are unrecorded. In these cases, the victims, with a fatal precocity, live but to linger a little, unless they are saved by some happy influence next to miraculous.

2. Tainted influence

The society of impure parents educates children in impurity. It is surprising to see how early the child catches the traits of the parental character. So intimate is the parental relation, that to avoid this is quite impossible. The looks, the gestures, the words, the insinuations, at first a mystery to the child, are soon solved by its tiny reflection. Children are

listeners at a very early age; and the smile of approbative indifference with which the parent speaks of deeds of lewdness, as they are occasionally occurring in community, is very soon transmitted to the little listener; and the child concluding, of course, that that cannot be very wrong which is smiled over, learns to look upon such deeds without abhorrence.

Again, children are ever associating with their superiors in age, in a series, extending from earliest childhood, up through youth, to manhood and womanhood. And this association is so intimate that generally what one knows all know, and what one does all are tempted to do. Now, through this series of associations, every licentious adult necessarily throws a licentious influence back down to the borders of the nursery. Thus, while one instructed child becomes himself an instructor, and indeed, while every child is both pupil and teacher—receiving lessons from the older, and handing them down to the younger—it is by no means wonderful

that the process of education goes on so rapidly. And when this education is of a sensual character, why should it be thought remarkable that some of the forms of impurity should be found in very early childhood. . . .

3. Awareness of dangers at school

Children at school are sometimes educated more in wickedness by bad associates, than they are in righteousness by their proper teachers. But even the education proper of the schools has sometimes been very unfavorable to chastity. The mind has, even there, sometimes lost its balance by constant efforts to strain upon the intellect to the neglect and expense of the moral sentiments. The animal propensities left to a constant revel, man grows sensual and brutish.

4. Reforming the mental choices

We notice ignorance as one of the causes of impurity. Ignorance of the extent of the claims of the law

of chastity is a negative cause of sad mischief. That this law demands a chaste mind, as well as chaste words and actions, is to many a new idea. That it forbids solitary vice, is unknown to very many of the oldest men of our day. And many who deem solitary vice wrong, see nothing wrong in the cherishing of amorous reveries and “lascivious day-dreams.” And still more are they who have no idea of the excesses of married life being by this law forbidden. The consequences of this ignorance are, as we have already seen, just what might be expected—one is a mental adulterer, another is an onanist, and another still is a married, legal, sensualist—and all three, if not perfectly at ease morally, are kind of conscientious, and think themselves innocent of any violation of revealed law! Now who will wonder that impurity should, under these circumstances, spread itself so rapidly? . . .

5. Escaping the “couch potato” lifestyle

Sedentary habits, unrelieved by sufficient exercise, increase the liabilities to impurity. Exercise is the

law of the human constitution.

6. Guarding the eyes

Bad books, pictures, etc., are a powerfully exciting cause of licentiousness. No one has ever seriously disputed the apostolic declaration that “evil communications corrupt good manners.” Neither is the old proverb questioned that “a man is known by the company he keeps.” But evil communication with books, no less than with men, corrupts good manners. And the sentiment is worthy of passing into a proverb, that a man is known by the books he reads. Books are men. Not paper men, but men on paper. And these influence the character of their readers as do men in the flesh the character of their companions. Show me a man’s books, the books of his choice, and I will show you the man himself. Let me control the reading of a rising generation, and I will prophesy. A bad book is a bad associate; a good book, a good one. Sensual books tend strongly to make sensual readers. Many novel readers know this, and every reflecting, candid person will admit it. [This is even more true today with

the easy access to movies, videos, and DVD materials in circulation.] . . .

When the mind and the body are not properly employed, and the person is living on without any sufficient object, a sort of sluggish inanity pervades the system, time hangs heavily, and he feels that a want of employment is a want of happiness. The restless imagination now roves the fields of sensuality in pursuit of pleasure. It revels amid the amours and loves of its own creation, and soon brings the system under strong lascivious influences. The higher feelings of the soul finding no objects worthy their activity, the lower feelings—the propensities—enter into it, and take possession. Hence it is that the idle and the lazy are far more generally the victims of vile habits, and especially of licentious ones. . . .

7. Cultivating the intellect

As the moral sentiments do most to form the character, so should they be most carefully educated. Children should be taught the importance of right and wrong, and the consequences of them. They should be early taught to make right a primary



Children should be taught the importance of right and wrong, and the consequences of them.

Nothing is more important to the prevention and cure of impurity than activity.



source of enjoyment, and to look upon wrong as a primary source of misery. They will then see that a life of mere sensuality is quite unworthy of their dignity, and hence will look higher into the sublimer region of the moral virtues for the means of happiness.

The intellectual education of children must also be attended to. The power of perception and of reasoning from causes to consequences must be early improved. Then will they be far more likely to see and flee from the sins of destruction. They will be more capable of appreciating any arguments used with them against their evil practices—and indeed they will be far more likely to discover the evil of any secret practice, of the evil of which they may never have been admonished.

When the intellect and moral sentiments are justly cultivated, the subject may be regarded as comparatively safe. But the cultivation of these would be far less important, were it not that when they are healthy

and active, the lower passions, and especially the amative one, find far less motive power in the imagination, and consequently are comparatively and sufficiently quiet. The person with an active intellect, sanctified by the moral sentiments, rises above the world of passionate sensuality, and looks down upon it with unmingled disgust.

8. Choosing the environment

We have elsewhere noticed society as an educator. Parents and guardians will see the importance of withdrawing their children as much as possible from bad society. Children, however, must not be secluded from society altogether. This were, under ordinary circumstances, as injudicious as it is judicious to give them the purest society which their case and location admit. Let parents and guardians remember, too, that they are necessarily the prime educators of their children, and govern themselves as an enlightened love for children will

dictate. Much may be done, too, by school teachers, ministers, and indeed by every one whose influence extends to children. But, in order to teach, parents, teachers, ministers, etc., must be themselves instructed. But some there are who tell us that instruction on the subject of impurity can serve only to aggravate the evil, or at least that it does more hurt than good. . . .

9. Walking in the light

Is it better that man should be governed by passion, than that passion should itself be subject to enlightened reason, and he be governed by the latter, aided by revelation? If it be not better, then let reason be enlightened upon the subject. If light is better than darkness (and Jesus says he that walketh in the dark stumbleth), then let light be poured upon the path of every son and daughter of Adam. Raise the light over the shoals! Lift the beacon indicating the whirlpool. Hoist the flag over the precipice! Point to the cloud in which

wrathful fires are gathering, and cry in the ears of all, DANGER! DANGER! "Do thyself no harm!" "Because there is wrath, beware!!!" In a word, say anything—do anything which can serve to alarm the old, the young, the middle aged, of the dangers from any and all the forms of impurity. . . .

10. Constructive activity

Nothing is more important to the prevention and cure of impurity, than activity. More lust is generated during the leisure hours of sluggish inactivity than during all others. It is during these stupid seasons of dreamishness, that the blood accumulates upon the venereal system, while the imagination strolls about creation, bringing in the fruits and flowers of every forbidden tree. . . . Let parents take the hint, and bring up their children to active labor. . . .

In summary to those in difficulty

"What shall we do?" was the significant inquiry of certain persons of John the Baptist. Would to God that this might be the language of all my readers in view of the claims of the cause of moral purity. Now we do not profess to stand in the place of Christ's forerunner. But, as reflection and examination have taught us something, we think we may safely presume to give some directions to as many readers as are sincerely asking the above question. . . .

As a parent, then, you are to consider well the exposure of your children. You are to read with interest whatever professes to be able to open your eyes on this point. You are to feel the exposure of your children, and count no labor too great or too expensive to secure them in virtue. You must shut up from them the avenues to impurity. You must early make them see that you are solicitous for them, and also make them understand why you are so. Against the mischievous habit of solitary vice, you must watch and warn faithfully.

You must begin this work early. If you wait till foul society has filled their minds with lascivious idea and images, you will not only find the task of instructing them far more difficult, but also far less promising of permanent good. Begin early, then. Fix a pure habit upon a child, and a fear of breaking it while it is yet greatly incapable of understanding the whys and wherefores of your wishes. But do not neglect the whys and wherefores too long. Introduce these into the minds of your children as soon as their minds open sufficiently

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to receive them. John Newton said he had no fear of the enemy's filling the hearts of the young with tares if he could first get them filled with wheat. But be assured, parent, that in order to get the advance of Satan in this matter, you must begin early, even at break of day.

Your own example, as we have elsewhere intimated, must be every way correct. You must make your

children see that you discountenance and detest impurity in all its forms. You must watch the social influences which your children are receiving from abroad. It is easy to crush the viper in the egg. Whenever your children become impurely insinuating, as is too often the case among children generally, correct at once by judicious measures (but always more by moral persuasion than by force), the dangerous symptom. Pay strict regard to diet, to cleanliness, to education. Be judicious in the selection of pictures, books, etc., for the amusement and improvement of your children. But for more of this see above, where we have already considered some of these points.

But if your children are already large, and your duties yet undone, even in this case do not despair. To be sure, no future faithfulness can atone for past neglect. For this you must seek forgiveness. But still you may do much for their benefit and salvation. Instruct them at once; not, however, in the nature of the sin; nine-tenths of them understand this already; but instruct them in the consequences. . . .

Would you be purified, you must pay strict attention to your diet. Avoid condiments, spices, and all highly-seasoned and highly-stimulating food and drinks. Confine yourself to a light vegetable diet; a diet which, if possible, shall overcome all tendency to costiveness. This is very important. Drink only water. Eat light suppers. Rise early—as early as you awake. You know your danger from morning lounging. Be active. Labor all you can without great fatigue. Bathe often in cold, or nearly cold, water. Carefully avoid excitement of every kind. Consider your dignity as a moral and intellectual being, "bearing the impress of Divinity." Rise above sensual thoughts. Remember that you are allied to angels no less than to brutes—to the purely spiritual no less than to the exclusively sensual. Lift up your head and heart. Feel above sensuality, and, under God, you will soon be above it. *R*

HONEST

to the Core

By Tobias Stockler

The apostle Paul talks frankly of his own past. “I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might show forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting. Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever. Amen” (1 Timothy 1:12–17).

Paul’s honest admission is refreshing. He does not pretend that he was always a good person, or always did what was right. He admits that his past was filled with sinful actions, that he did evil. He does not

talk of his credential to work as a minister in the present as based on his past good deeds, but on the grace and forgiveness of God.

The apostle’s teaching was consistent with his own experience. Paul based his gospel message on the power of God’s forgiveness. In the heart of his explanation about the gospel, Paul anchors that gospel to the credibility of the Christian as a child of God. This certainty that we are God’s children comes not from our own good performance, but from our reconciliation with God over our past poor performance. It is in our own heartfelt acknowledgment that we have wronged God that we find His forgiveness to reconcile us to Himself. And in the experience of Divine forgiveness, we find that we are blessed.

“To him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth

righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin” (Romans 4:5–8).

Paul relies on the Psalms to support his declarations, quoting from Psalm 32. The full passage out of which Paul quotes a part describes the joy of being forgiven as follows:

“Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile. When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah. I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah. For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found” (Psalm 32:1–6).

David speaks here about the joy of being innocent with God, of having His smile. But the joy described here is the joy of being pardoned. “Thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” My “transgression is forgiven.”

David describes this person as one whose spirit has no guile. Such are honest in their personality and they are honest in their thoughts. They do not defend wrong even when they are the ones who did the wrong. “I acknowledge my sin.” “Mine iniquity have I not hid.”

Our tendency to blame

It is the easiest thing in the world to acknowledge someone else’s wrongs.

We do that on a regular basis. We complain against the ministers. We find fault with church administrators. We expose the faults of the government and of our boss at work. Perhaps we even find fault with our spouses, our parents, our children, and our coworkers. We are experts at admitting the faults of everyone else in the world. But David and Paul do not talk of the blessing or the happiness of those that find fault with others. They celebrate those that are honest with the faults in themselves. “I acknowledge my own sin.”

So often we do not even acknowledge our own sin to ourselves. We do not believe that we are wrong. We find someone else to blame. To blame others is, after all, human nature.

When Adam and Eve had to explain their own strange behavior to God, they blamed anyone but

themselves. Adam blamed his wife, and his wife blamed the snake. And to a certain extent, they both blamed the Creator.

Job’s friends came to comfort him. We read of great and long speeches that these friends made. The summary of those speeches are an attack on the character of Job. All of his friends accuse him of being guilty of some sin; they just cannot agree on which sin it is. But God states at the beginning and the end of the book of Job that Job is without fault. We cannot agree with

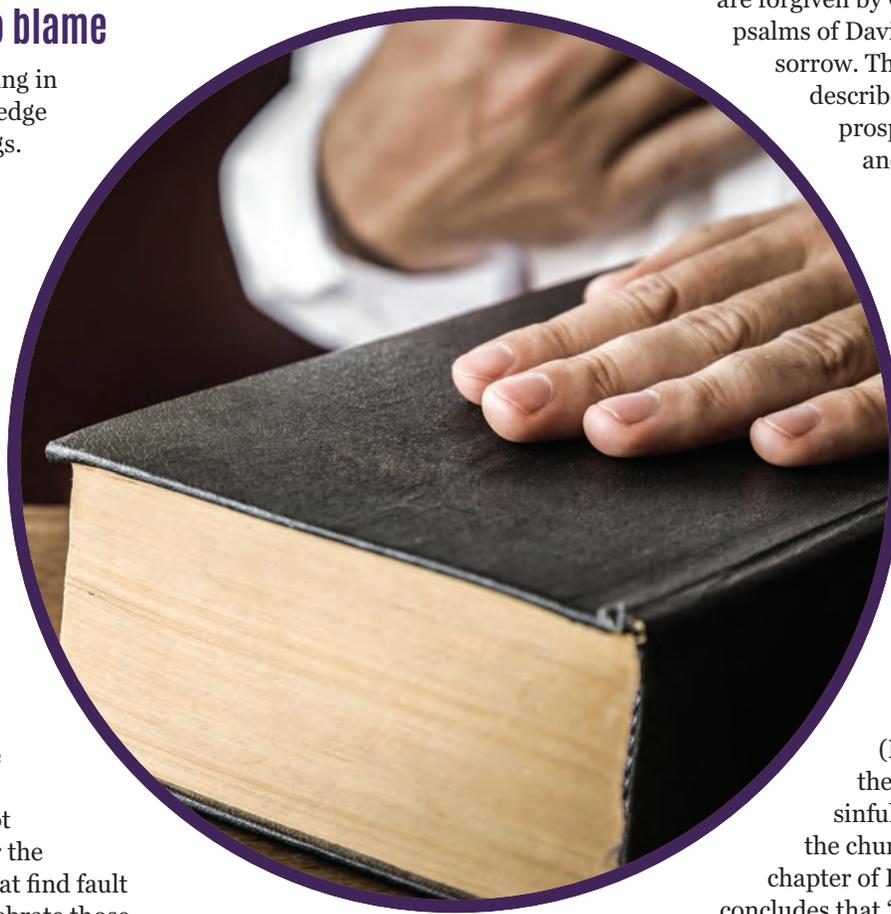
of our friends are trying to accuse us and destroy us. Job is described by the Bible as living in great pain and through even greater sorrow. But the attitude of Job throughout his experience is humble and respectful. There is no hatred or bitterness, no blame and hostility. The very attitude that most of us show when life does not go our way is not the attitude of Job while living with worse circumstances than we face. Job was blessed that in the heartache he did not lose his character or serenity.

David says we are blessed when we are forgiven by God. Yet many of the psalms of David express anguish and sorrow. The blessing that David describes is not necessarily prosperity. It is integrity and contentment.

We are all in need of this forgiveness. Paul is careful to talk about the sin of people outside the church and declares that God hates their sins. “The wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness” (Romans 1:18). But then Paul details the sinfulness of people inside the church in the second chapter of Romans. He then concludes that “we have before proved both Jews [church members] and Gentiles [non-church members], that they are all under sin” (Romans 3:9).

Every person needs God’s forgiveness to be blessed. And when we have His forgiveness then we are blessed, whether we are rich or poor, healthy or sick, praised by men or accused by men.

Yet this blessedness from God that comes from reconciliation with Him does not come to us arbitrarily. There



Job’s friends that Job is guilty and agree with God that Job is innocent at the same time. Why did the friends add to Job’s sorrow by falsely accusing him? It is human nature to find fault with someone else even when God declares them to be innocent. It is sinful human nature to blame others.

But the story of Job teaches us more. We are blessed by God even when the devil, our spouse, and all

is a work of repentance. David writes, “My sorrow is continually before me. For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin” (Psalm 38:17, 18). We must admit to ourselves and to God that we have wronged God, that we have injured Him. Only in our honesty with God can we be changed into His children, reconciled to Him.

Reconciliation with God

We often speak about various religious doctrines. We urge ourselves and others to do good, and have a list of good acts that we believe we all ought to do. But there is no salvation in doing good. We are not accepted as God’s child because we force ourselves into carrying out good deeds. We are children of God, when we are “born again” into God’s family, when we are reconciled to God over our past behavior.

God is waiting and longing to be reconciled to us. “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation; to wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:17–21).

If we are not reconciled to God, it is not because of any failure on His part. “If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things” (Romans 8:31, 32).

There is only one thing that separates us from God. We are so used to the thought that many of you have already said in your minds, “sin

is the only thing that separates us from God.” But that is trite. In truth, Jesus came and lived among sinners. Sin did not separate us from God, for God came to us in our sin. Moses murdered and still was reconciled to God. David did worse that murder his own friend and was reconciled to God. Paul tried to eradicate Christians before he was reconciled to God. Sin did not separate these great men of old.

Paul explains in the verses we quoted from 1 Timothy, “I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief.” He as much as says, I was wrong; mistaken but wrong. And this implies that he was honest enough to admit he was wrong and be reconciled to God when he realized his error.

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We can talk of the ninth commandment that prohibits dishonesty; do not bear a false witness. But the most important honesty in the world is the honesty with our own hearts and with God. Only as we are honest inside of ourselves can we be honest to those in the world around us.

Paul orders us to “walk honestly” (Romans 13:13).

Jesus tells us that Christians “are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word [of God], keep it” (Luke 8:15).

“Do that which is honest,” 2 Corinthians 13:7. Pray “that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty” (1 Timothy 2:2).

Honesty under all circumstances

Perhaps another example will illustrate the value of this honesty in all circumstances. The story comes down to us of an honest man, faced with the temptation to lie. After Martin Luther had challenged the papal world with 95 reasons to reject the false doctrine of indulgences, the renowned reformer became a hero to some and an enemy to others. Just 500 kilometers southwest of where Luther was, the Count Eberhard of Erbach Im Odenwald was determined to stop him. The Count took a band of his own soldiers and set out on a trip to find Luther and do what no one else was doing—to silence the reformer’s influence. The Count determined to capture his prey while the reformer was visiting the town of Miltenberg, approximately 25 kilometers east of his castle. Arriving in town, the Count took rooms in the Inn for himself and his men and promptly tried to go to sleep in preparation for his work the next morning. He found he could not sleep but ended up listening to the devotions of some pastor in the room next to him. These included reading Psalm 7 and a hymn and a prayer.

The following morning the same person on the other side of the thin wall held another devotional service. The Count again listened and admired. Tears came to this tough man’s eyes as he heard the voice in the next room. Finally, the Count asked the innkeeper to introduce himself to the devoted person whose worship service was so impressive to him.

The count soon greeted the priest in the neighboring room—a middle-sized, thick-set man in his thirties. His face showed energy and gentleness, zeal and love. This pastor was astonished to see before him the Count in his armor, with his sword by his side.

The Count declared, "I come to you, venerable father, to express my gratitude to you for the spiritual encouragement that you prepared for me last night and this morning. And I take this opportunity to ask you cordially to sing one more beautiful song for my comfort."

Again the Count's heart was deeply moved. Holding the hand of the priest he said: "Your wonderful songs have put a question in my mouth. What do you think of the new doctrine that is being preached everywhere? You are a God-fearing and intelligent man. I would like to have your advice and instruction."

The stranger, more than willing to fulfill the desire of the Count, immediately began to explain the Holy Scriptures to him. The Count listened with close attention, interjecting a question or objection now and then, which prolonged the conversation. Finally the innkeeper walked in and said that the Count's soldiers, who were waiting outside, were becoming impatient.

"Excuse me, venerable father. I must hurry off. I am engaged in a pious work which is pleasing to God and which will certainly have your approval," the Count explained.

"May I know what you intend to do?"

"Of course. This work is to be done to the honor of God and to the benefit of the holy Church. And for this purpose I need your blessing."

"Tell me all about it."

"I left home with my soldiers to make a catch. I am on the lookout for a naughty heretic, and I am sure I will lay hands on him today."

"Whom do you mean?"

"That insolent Augustinian monk of Wittenberg who lifted up his sacrilegious hand against the representative of the Lord Jesus Christ and against his mother, the holy Church. He is going to travel from here to Heidelberg, as I have been informed."

"You mean Dr. Martin Luther?"

"Who else could it be but this heretic and teacher of false doctrines who has caused offense and scandal throughout the German Empire?"

"And what do you intend to do with the monk of Wittenberg once you have caught him?"

"I will incarcerate him in my tower or in a safe convent, and my priests will press him so long that he will finally retract his pernicious errors and come out as a repentant sinner."

"And if he does not meet your commendable desire, but rather persists in his conviction—what then?"

"Do you think I am incurring such a heavy expenditure to no purpose—only to find out that he is going to escape? He will not fall into my hands in vain. If he remains stubborn I will

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send him to Rome—I myself and my soldiers will go with him—and I will deliver him to the Holy Father. If he still holds on to his errors, the Holy Father may condemn him to the stake, treating him as a heretic ought to be treated. Now I must go to do my work, but, venerable father, I cannot go without your blessing. I also ask you to give me your name, so that I can keep it in my memory and in my heart as long as I live. You are the most pious and educated priest that I have ever met."

The stranger remained silent for a while, only repeating to himself,

mentally, these words: "They shall put you out of the synagogues; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service" (John 16:2). Then he turned to the Count firmly and decidedly:

"You do not have to trouble yourself any further. The man whom you want to capture is right before you. I am Martin Luther!"

As if struck by a thunder, the Count knelt before the pious man and said:

"You are better than I am. May God, in His grace, forgive me for having thought to harm you."

Luther smiled and said:

"Stand up, honorable Count, and go your way in peace. He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. By the will of God, you shall see greater wonders than the breaking of bows and the destroying of spears by Him. They will not be able to suppress His word, for the word of the Lord remaineth forever."

"Venerable sir," the Count entreated, "I have one more petition which I would like to urge on you. I was greatly edified by your prayers and your songs; and your clear, intelligent, and cordial explanations have enlightened my heart. Come with me to my castle at Erbach. God's leading has been so wonderful that I wanted to take you there as my prisoner, and now you are taking me there as your prisoner. I am anxious to listen to you still further, as far as your time permits. Come with me so that my wife may receive, through you, the same blessings that I have received."

The Count continued as an ally of the Reformation and stood by Luther in difficult moments, encouraging his new friend. He was even there in support of Luther when the reformer made his famous speech to the Diet of Worms.

It was perhaps difficult for Martin Luther to be honest at that moment, but that honesty made him a man before God. Like Paul, Luther could speak of being reconciled to God. So, can I. And I pray, so will you. *R*

Contentment in Christ

By Barbara Montrose

The apostle bids us: “Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee” (Hebrews 13:5).

The Interlinear Greek-English New Testament refers to this “conversation” as “manner of life” and enjoins us to be satisfied with our present circumstances.

Why can we be satisfied? Because our divine Provider has given the assurance that He will not abandon us. What is the result?

“So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Verse 6). It conveys a distinct contentment, an abiding trust.

Does this faithful mindset consistently reflect our experience, as it should?

The benefit of the doubt

Let us consider what might trigger covetous behavior in professed

believers today—and examine our own hearts in the process. We may like to assume that actual symptoms of covetousness might just be indicators of the increased level of stress and anxiety rampant in our day. After all, Jesus foretold this would be characteristic as the end of time approaches:

“There shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and upon the earth distress of nations, with perplexity; the sea and the waves roaring; men’s **hearts failing them** for fear, and for looking after those things which are coming on the earth” (Luke 21:25, 26).

“We see many who are having a time of trouble beforehand; anxiety is stamped upon every feature; they seem to find no consolation, but have a continual fearful looking for of some dreadful evil.”¹

The term “stress” as we know it today was first coined as late as 1936 by endocrinologist Hans Selye. In the British journal *Nature*, Dr. Selye referred to stress as the non-specific response of the body to any demand for change.

As the ever-hastening technological revolution continues to foster an ever-faster pace of life, with it a rapid increase in change has also been experienced in the 20th and 21st centuries. So, our need to adapt to it is part of the picture.

Dr. Karl Albrecht, a stress-reduction specialist, identifies four types of stress:

1. Time Stress—pushing to meet tight deadlines.

2. Anticipatory Stress—preparing for future events.

3. Situational Stress—feeling powerless by circumstances or perhaps without support when overruled by domineering people as your point of view is lent no ear. Such situations often come as a surprise.

4. Encounter Stress—Interacting with people who may be hard to deal with.

Time stress might tempt us to covet an easier life as a way of escaping God’s assigned duty for us.

Anticipatory stress could result if we worry about falling into poverty or privation. This could certainly trigger covetousness too, as we might be tempted to doubt whether or not divine Providence will really care for our needs—even more so when we look around and assume that the needs of others appear to be adequately met (and then envy comes into play as well).

Situational stress could trigger covetousness if we feel overwhelmed and unjustly dominated by circumstances and are led to long for a better environment.

Encounter stress is often caused by having to deal with people—and even friends—who may not even be aware of how selfish they are actually behaving. (We all should constantly ask ourselves, “Am I actually the one being selfish about this?”) Yet at such moments we again may be tempted to covet a different station in life.

In general, why is human nature tempted to covet?

The characteristic of initiative is a good, healthy quality; it is considered a commendable virtue. Without goals and aims, life tends to be fruitless; we don't accomplish much. So, when, why, and how does goal-setting and moving forward in life too often deteriorate into selfish ambition and covetousness?

God commands us: “Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maidservant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is thy neighbour's” (Exodus 20:17).

Since the Ten Commandments are promises, the tenth declares that God's remnant will not “covet” the things of a neighbor. Surprisingly, the word translated as “covet” in this commandment is not some kind of negative verb with an ugly connotation. On the contrary, this Hebrew term, *chamad*, actually means “to delight in,” as toward something pleasant, desirable, or precious. But an example of the result is given in Micah 2:1–4, “Woe

evil. In that day shall one take up a parable against you, and lament with a doleful lamentation, and say, We be utterly spoiled: he hath changed the portion of my people: how hath he removed it from me! turning away he hath divided our fields.” [Emphasis added.]

Thus, the very fields that the wicked coveted had to be confiscated by the ultimate Owner of all things, in His infinite wisdom. Those fields had likely been beautiful and productive—and human pride clamors that if something is desirable, then it must surely be intended for me, myself, and mine. True? Not so!

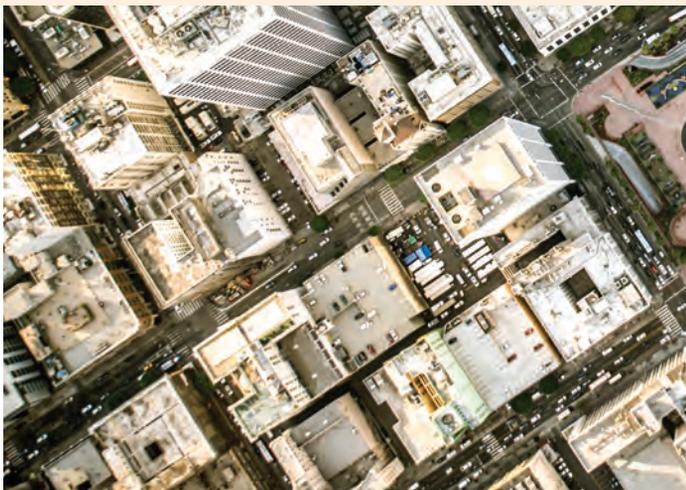
Hence this instance of covetousness revealed a violation of the fifth and sixth commandments—and ultimately a serious distrust of God and His wisdom in selecting whom He chooses to give what.

Why don't we all have all the fields, houses, equipment, money, fame, recognition, and other things we might enjoy? Wouldn't it be nice to have more? Wouldn't that make for a better life? Shouldn't all the best things on the planet be bountifully bestowed into the hands of nice, faithful people in every instance? The sparkling, natural spring waters, the richest, most fertile lands, the world's most gorgeous palaces, and so forth? If not, why not? Let's see one example, which the Lord's messenger explains:

“When Lot entered Sodom he fully intended to keep himself free from iniquity and to command his household after him. But he signally failed. The corrupting influences about him had an effect upon his own faith, and his children's connection with the inhabitants of Sodom bound



to them that devise iniquity, and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they **covet** fields, and take them by violence; and houses, and take them away: so they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. Therefore thus saith the Lord; behold, against this family do I devise an evil, from which ye shall not remove your necks; neither shall ye go haughtily: for this time is



“Those who secure for their children worldly wealth and honor at the expense of their eternal interests, will find in the end that these advantages are a terrible loss.”

up his interest in a measure with theirs. The result is before us.

“Many are still making a similar mistake. In selecting a home they look more to the temporal advantages they may gain than to the moral and social influences that will surround themselves and their families. . . .

“Those who secure for their children worldly wealth and honor at the expense of their eternal interests, will find in the end that these advantages are a terrible loss.”²

Are we being targeted?

The messenger of the Lord unveils a sinister plot strategically aimed against us right at this very moment:

“I saw that Satan bade his angels lay their snares especially for those who were looking for Christ’s second appearing and keeping all the

commandments of God. Satan told his angels that the churches were asleep. He would increase his power and lying wonders, and he could hold them. ‘But,’ he said, ‘the sect of Sabbathkeepers we hate; they are continually working against us, and taking from us our subjects, to keep the hated law of God. Go, make the possessors of lands and money drunk with cares. If you can make them place their affections upon these things, we shall have them yet. They may profess what they please, only make them care more for money than for the success of Christ’s kingdom or the spread of the truths we hate. Present the world before them in the most attractive light, that they may love and idolize it. We must keep in our ranks all the means of which we can gain control. The more means the followers of Christ devote to His service, the more will they injure our kingdom by getting our

subjects. As they appoint meetings in different places, we are in danger. Be very vigilant then. Cause disturbance and confusion if possible. Destroy love for one another. Discourage and dishearten their ministers; for we hate them. Present every plausible excuse to those who have means, lest they hand it out. Control the money matters if you can, and drive their ministers to want and distress. This will weaken their courage and zeal. Battle every inch of ground. Make **covetousness and love of earthly treasures the ruling traits of their character.** As long as these traits rule, salvation and grace stand back. Crowd every attraction around them, and they will be surely ours. And not only are we sure of them, but their hateful influence will not be exercised to lead others to heaven. When any shall attempt to give, put within them a grudging disposition, that it may be sparingly.’

“I saw that Satan carries out his plans well. As the servants of God appoint meetings, Satan with his angels is on the ground to hinder the work. He is constantly putting suggestions into the minds of God’s people. He leads some in one way and some in another, always taking advantage of evil traits in the brethren and sisters, exciting and stirring up their natural besetments. If they are disposed to be selfish and covetous, Satan takes his stand by their side, and with all his power seeks to lead them to indulge their besetting sins. The grace of God and the light of truth may melt away their covetous, selfish feelings for a little, but if they do not obtain entire victory, Satan comes in when they are not under a saving influence and withers every noble, generous principle, and they think that too much is required of them. They become weary of well-doing and forget the great sacrifice which Jesus made to redeem them from the power of Satan and from hopeless misery.”³

“Covetousness is idolatry, and no idolater will enter the kingdom of heaven.”⁴

“Those who are familiar with the denunciations against idolatry in the word of God will at once see how grave an offense this sin is.”⁵

Tragic illustrations to wake us up

“Balaam loved the reward of unrighteousness. The sin of covetousness, which God ranks with idolatry, he did not resist and overcome. Satan obtained entire control of him through this one fault, which deteriorated his character. . . .”⁶

“Covetousness is an evil of gradual development. Achan had cherished greed of gain until it became a habit, binding him in fetters well-nigh impossible to break. . . .

“We are as directly forbidden to indulge covetousness as was Achan to appropriate the spoils of Jericho. God has declared it to be idolatry. We are warned, ‘Ye cannot serve God and mammon’ (Matthew 6:24). ‘Take heed, and beware of covetousness’ (Luke 12:15). ‘Let it not be once named among you’ (Ephesians 5:3). We have



before us the fearful doom of Achan, of Judas, of Ananias and Sapphira. Back of all these we have that of Lucifer, the ‘son of the morning,’ who, coveting a higher state, forfeited forever the brightness and bliss of heaven. And yet, notwithstanding all these warnings, covetousness abounds.

“Everywhere its slimy track is seen. It creates discontent and dissension in

families; it excites envy and hatred in the poor against the rich; it prompts the grinding oppression of the rich toward the poor. And this evil exists not in the world alone, but in the church. How common even here to find selfishness, avarice, overreaching, neglect of charities, and robbery of God ‘in tithes and offerings.’ Among church members ‘in good and regular standing’ there are, alas! many Achans. . . . The cries of the suffering poor are unheeded; the gospel light is hindered in its course; the scorn of worldlings is kindled by practices that give the lie to the Christian profession; and yet the covetous professor continues to heap up treasures.”⁷

“God reads the purposes and intents of the heart, and tries the motives of the children of men.

His signal, visible displeasure may not be manifested as in the case of Ananias and Sapphira, yet in the end the punishment will in no case be lighter than that which was inflicted upon them.”⁸

Ananias and Sapphira were not only covetousness about money—their final ambitious motive was prompted by covetousness in seeking prestige in the church.

“How many hearts through a wrong course of allowing the mind to become concentrated upon a certain course of action to distinguish self, will come under the head of covetousness, which is idolatry!”⁹

Cunning craftiness not a virtue

Most of us relish finding a great bargain. Some take immense pride in their talent to negotiate one. Others are nearly obsessed with it, even at

the expense of a fellow human being. Is such a state of mind conducive to not being able to buy or sell when the great crisis hits? Are we genuinely loving our neighbor as ourselves—a basic Christian requisite?

“Some of the Sabbathkeepers who say to the world that they are looking for Jesus’ coming, and that they believe we are having the last message of mercy, give way to their natural feelings, and barter, and trade, and are a proverb among unbelievers for their keenness in trade, for being sharp, and always getting the best end of a bargain. Such would better lose a little and exert a better influence in the world, and a happier influence among brethren, and show that this world is not their God.”¹⁰

So, when we’re looking out for me, myself, and mine to be credited with something at someone else’s expense—whether monetarily or simply to stack up my ego account—that’s a violation of the 10th commandment.

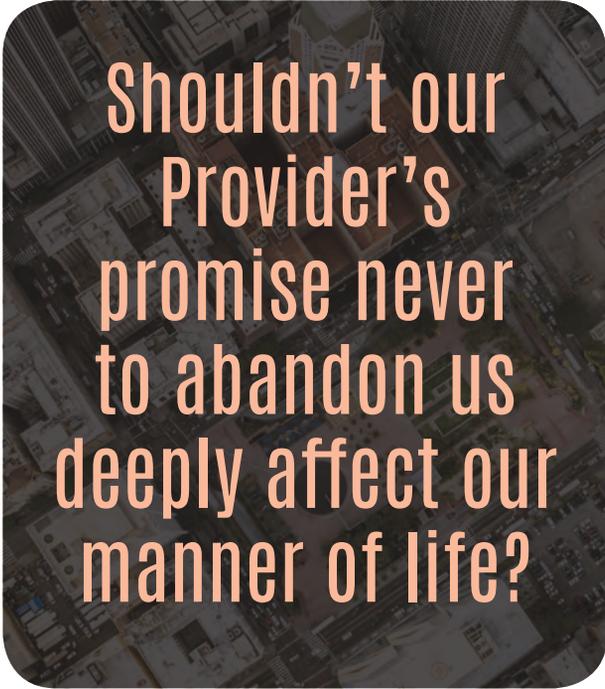
“The tenth commandment strikes at the very root of all sins, prohibiting the selfish desire, from which springs the sinful act. He who in obedience to God’s law refrains from indulging even a sinful desire for that which belongs to another will not be guilty of an act of wrong toward his fellow creatures.”¹¹

The solution

“Christ calls upon His children to rid themselves of all selfishness, all covetousness, all impurity.”¹²

“Many are making a mistake; and that is, their mind is more upon eating and drinking and dressing themselves than in feeling humble and prayerfully to serve God. . . . We want to know what shall I do to be saved? individually. And when you begin to know the word in this way, you will find that God looks upon you and He

will impart to you the understanding of His word that you shall not be covetous, after this thing and that thing and the other thing that is in the world. . . . [Matthew 6:25 quoted.] Will you weary your body, and will you worry and will you fret and will you spoil your religious experience, because you do not trust in the Lord Jesus Christ to work for you when you are doing your best on your part? . . . The Lord would help you to put your trust in Him, to look to Him, and his Holy Spirit will come upon you and you will have—not a disposition to quarrel because you do not have everything you want—but you will



Shouldn't our
Provider's
promise never
to abandon us
deeply affect our
manner of life?

have a disposition to thank God from the heart for what you have. That is what we need. And unless you have that Spirit, and unless you carry it out, you will never enter the kingdom of Heaven.”¹³

“They that will be rich,—those who are fully determined to obtain riches and to enjoy the pleasures of this world—fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts’ (1 Timothy 6:9). For a time Satan holds out before them many worldly attractions and

opportunities, but that which the word of God declares to be the sure result must come upon them. Their end is destruction and perdition. [Verse 10 quoted.]

“As Christians, we are to follow our Leader step by step in the heavenward way. His gifts are not to be absorbed in worldly pursuits. . . . [1 John 2:17–19 quoted].”¹⁴

So when stress hits, remember that “God does not bid you fear that He will fail to fulfill His promises, that His patience will weary, or His compassion be found wanting. Fear lest your will shall not be held in subjection to Christ’s will, lest your hereditary and cultivated traits of character shall control your life.”¹⁵

“If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God” (Colossians 3:1–3).

Let us therefore determine to pledge with the apostle:

“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth

me” (Philippians 4:11–13). *R*

References

- ¹ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 566.
- ² *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 168, 169.
- ³ *Early Writings*, pp. 266–268. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁴ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 21, p. 144.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 337.
- ⁶ *The Signs of the Times*, November 18, 1880.
- ⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 496, 497.
- ⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 529.
- ⁹ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 129.
- ¹⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 150.
- ¹¹ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 309.
- ¹² *The Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1902.
- ¹³ *The Paulson Collection*, pp. 178, 179.
- ¹⁴ *The Review and Herald*, December 1, 1896.
- ¹⁵ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 161.

Keeping the Sabbath, Personal Ministry, and The Baptism of the Holy Spirit

By Gerson Robles

What do keeping the Sabbath, personal ministry, and the baptism of the Holy Spirit have to do with each other? You might be surprised to find out they are inseparably linked.

The Sabbath and personal ministry are deeply connected in Isaiah 58. In this chapter, God says that you can't delight in the Sabbath day without first having a personal ministry for the less fortunate.

Isaiah 58 exposes the folly of an artificial style of Sabbathkeeping that appears when God's professed people make a religious show as a pretense. The Lord unmasks their supposed "holiness" and reveals it as nothing but sanctimoniousness. Here's what God found wrong with the Sabbath religion of His people:

1. Verses 1 & 2: While transgressing and sinning, they sought God daily and supposedly "delighted" to know his

ways. They took "delight" in approaching to God. Just like "fake news," this was fake religion.

2. Verses 3–5: The basis of their religion was not faith in God, but faith in what they could do to win the favor of God. They fasted and moped around in public—wishing that God would take notice of their sad face. But they were two-faced. While they looked holy-faced and claimed to be representatives of God on earth, they neglected the poor and were utterly cruel-faced to the less fortunate. They underpaid their employees and loved debate and strife.

Does this sound like you? Let's search our hearts for a moment. You may say, "This doesn't apply to me; I don't have any employees, I don't fast and I get along with everyone!"

You might not underpay your employees, you might not fast with a sad face, you might not delight in debate and strife—but do you have a



personal ministry for the poor, the widows, the less fortunate? If you don't, you are not truly keeping the Sabbath. See Isaiah 58:6, 7, 13 it shows us that only when we "loose the bands of wickedness," when we "undo the heavy burdens," when we "let the oppressed go free," when we "break every yoke," when you "deal your bread to the hungry," when you "bring the poor that are cast out to thy house" and when you clothe the naked—it's only then that you can call the Sabbath a delight, honorable.

Why is that so? It's because this work is gospel work. It's because the opposite of this is to be two-faced, and a two-faced, selfish person takes no delight in the Sabbath, because it interferes with his or her plans to make more money, to do "their own pleasure." To such persons, the Sabbath is an inconvenience—or worse, it becomes just another tool to use in their endeavor to appear righteous.

Too often, the Sabbath bears no relation to who we are and what we do during the week. Our Sabbath services too often consist of feeding ourselves doctrines, debating the truth to see who knows it better, and feeding ourselves a great potluck lunch and then going home to "wait it out" until sunset. This seems to me a very selfish outlook of the Sabbath.

How did Jesus spend the Sabbath?

But let's look at Jesus for a moment and see what the Sabbath meant for Him. It was His custom to go to church on Sabbath. But He also healed people on Sabbath. It seems to me that Jesus' Sabbathkeeping was never disconnected from His ministry for the lost. His Sabbathkeeping was never a selfish exercise in feeding Himself enough spiritual food to keep Him going for the rest of the week.

And here is where we see the connection between Sabbathkeeping and the baptism of the Holy Spirit for ministry. In Luke 4:14–19, we read that "Jesus returned [in the power of the Spirit] into Galilee . . . and he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day, and stood up for to read."

What did He read? "And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias [Isaiah]. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach

deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

Now let us notice something very carefully here. It was because Jesus was anointed to do this work of deliverance that He was filled with the Spirit. His Sabbathkeeping was never disconnected from His work of saving and ministering to people's needs.

So next time you go to church on Sabbath, ask yourself these questions:

Why am I keeping the Sabbath?

Is the Sabbath just a day when I go to church and feed my own soul once a week?

Or is it a day that is emblematic of my spirit-anointed ministry that brings deliverance and support to the lost, the poor, and the needy?

God made the Sabbath a sign of deliverance to the Israelites from their Egyptian bondage and the Sabbath is then truly delightful and significant when we are workers together with God in ministering to the lost, the captive, the poor, and those in need. *R*

My Two-Conversion Story

By Veronica Lee Collins

If you have ever listened to the words from the song *O Glorious Love* written by John W.

Peterson, you heard my story of conversion in a nutshell. The first line in the lyrics mention, “In my darkness Jesus found me.” Yes, languishing in my deep pit of midnight, this is exactly where my Lord and Saviour found me. Without hesitation, He called me by name through His Holy Spirit—out of darkness into His marvelous light. 1 Peter 2:9 informs us, “Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

I was 27 years of age, on my second marriage, and residing in Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the time of my conversion experience. More specifically, this established my second conversion experience because my first happened when I was eight and lasted until I turned 15. From 15 to 27 I lived in ignorance and terrible sin.

When I was eight, my parents divorced and my dad secured custody of me, my one brother, and one sister because my mother had met another man, ran away with him, and left her children behind. Mother took our furniture, including our beds. She had divorced our dad to remarry this man

who did not exactly care for (much less even like) children. Basically, my mother chose this man over her own children. After Mother’s betrayal, our estranged family began attending an Emmanuel Baptist Church in Arkansas. Daddy informed me and my brother and sister that he was searching for a wife and desired our input. What better place for him to search than in a church, right?

Happiness and hope

Meanwhile, as I walk down memory lane, I fondly recall my first experience with Jesus like it was yesterday. The Baptist preacher made an altar call and an appeal for sinners to walk down the aisle to the front of the church. I was sitting in a pew close to the middle of the church and felt a burning in my heart during that moment as if I were the worst sinner on the planet. I marvel today at how such deep conviction of sinfulness was felt at such a tender young age. Nevertheless, I recognized beyond a shadow of a doubt the Holy Spirit indeed calling me. I left my seat, made my way to the front of the church, bitterly wept my heart out, and sincerely prayed for forgiveness. I understood what I must do: With every ounce of sincerity in my heart, mind, and soul, I invited Jesus to

come into my heart. Jesus fulfilled His promise: “A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh” (Ezekiel 36:26).

Yes, Jesus came and washed away my filth and sin. Jesus gave me a new heart. My prayers were answered, “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me” (Psalm 51:10). I felt freedom, and for the first time in my eight years of life as I sensed Jesus living inside of my heart. Jesus: pure, simple, real, and best of all—alive in me! I dared not deny the desire of serving and pleasing Him. This remained my earnest aspiration . . . until I turned 15.

Let’s now backtrack a bit: When I was 9, my father had remarried a second wife, Mona. Five years later, when I was 14, he suddenly disappeared when he came home to an empty house and found a note from his second wife stating that she was divorcing him. He left his company van parked and running—and walked away from his dry cleaning business, his new house, new car, the family dog, and his five children (me, my brother and sister, and Mona’s two children).

Like a whirlwind, I was torn from my friends, my school, and my surroundings. Mona sent me to Tulsa along with my siblings to live with



my mother despite what her husband thought, as he had no choice in this situation. Mother agreed to pick us up in Arkansas and transport us to live with her in Tulsa. With Tulsa came a new life, school, friends, and a bigger city.

Trouble in Tulsa

While hanging around the house one day, I paused to consider my 13-year-old sister who was experiencing what appeared to be fun. At that moment I started to look down on my own *little miss goody two-shoes*, sweet and innocent *Polly purebred* lifestyle, marveling at my younger sister's spunk for adventure—erroneously thinking I was missing out on something. Alas, it was nothing but the sinful ways of the world!

So, in vain pursuit of “fun,” between the ages of 15 and 27, I found myself swearing like a sailor and becoming extremely vain and proud. Nobody could tell me what to do or when to do it, as I seriously thought I knew everything and understood what was best for my life. (But in reality, I soon hated the person I became and loathed my life.)

As teenagers, my sister, our friend Joann, and I began hitchhiking the length and breadth of Tulsa to get to where we thought we needed to

go. It finally took a horrifying, life-threatening living nightmare to wake me up from the dangerous hitchhiking scene.

I realize these were not lovely times of my life. I am thankful, though, for the Bible promise that “the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent” (Acts 17:30). The reality is that my life was a complete disaster as the spiral of sin ran thicker and made deeper inroads. At 25, I married my first husband after only knowing him for one month. The marriage lasted one short year. Not long afterwards, I took a second vow to a second husband who was an alcoholic. I paid dearly for the second marriage, suffering mental and physical abuse.

At last—a turning point

At 27, I was working as a receptionist at Mead Paper Company, when one of our employees, Jody Moon, stood at the reception desk and offered to sell me her jewelry. I adored jewelry and had collected bracelets for five years. I owned at least 300 pairs of earrings and a few expensive rings. How I treasured my jewelry . . . “for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also” (Matthew 6:21). My carnal mind refused to comprehend why Jody or anyone would ever consider selling such priceless items.

(Then I recalled reading that some people contemplating suicide get rid of valuable material items? . . .) But the actual reason I couldn't fathom was the reality that Jody Moon happened to be stepping forward in faith in the process of returning to her Seventh-day Adventist roots—and at that time, Adventists did not wear jewelry.

The same year Jody stood at my desk, the option of bearing children was permanently taken away from me because of endometriosis, a disease. I had never been pregnant and was learning to face the reality I would be barren for as long as I lived. After my surgery, Jody and her brother visited my hospital room with Bible in hand, read Scripture, and offered prayer.

After recovering and returning to work, Jody gave me a *Steps to Christ* book, which I hid under some magazines in my apartment because I was not sure I desired anybody to see me with a book in my home concerning Christ.

Sometime shortly after this, Jody invited me to church. I accepted partly out of curiosity—yet mostly because deep down in my soul I knew I needed Jesus.

Meanwhile, I was also friends with a married woman who was having an illicit affair. I called her Little Barbie because she was petite. Little Barbie worked with me at the same paper

company. I had lunch with her and we hung out together after work. I admired her and desired to remain her friend. I recall the time when she left her husband and was staying in a hotel room. I went to visit her and sometime shortly before this time, out of the clear blue sky, the Lord started working on my heart. I felt the Holy Spirit calling me back to Him. I could not deny the strong call in my inner spirit. I will describe this best as a gentle yet definite wooing.

IN MY DARKNESS JESUS FOUND ME!

I recognized His voice and I knew not to take it lightly because He might never call again. I became fearful of the thought of losing my soul. I was tired of living for self. My life and my marriage were on the brink of total disaster. I longed for the eight-year-old-girl experience of Jesus living in my heart. At the same time, I did not know what to do or how to get back to Jesus. I was standing in the doorway of Little Barbie's hotel room and we were talking. Barbie understood that I lived with a violent husband and began questioning me regarding my life plans. I bravely related my feelings of Jesus calling me. I felt Him tugging on my heart and knocking on the door of my heart. I told her I did not know how to explain what I felt. At that moment, I needed my friend to understand my desire to get my life right, get it straight, and somehow, some way, through the darkness find my way back to the Lord. I explained I had to make my choice and answer the call.

I am thrilled beyond words because I did answer the call, yet sadly, I lost my then-best friend in the process. Unfortunately, Little Barbie refused to have anything to do with my Jesus. But I had found a new Best Friend—an eternal One!

A wonderful new journey

Now I began my journey following the lovely Jesus. At first, I did not

possess a Bible until Jody came to the rescue and gave me one. Then, on my own, I sent off in the mail for some Bible studies geared for Seventh-day Adventists. I studied the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation. During this process of studying on my own, I learned other Seventh-day Adventist beliefs. For example, 1 Peter 3:3, 4: "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price." Bidding farewell to my makeup and jewelry was not an easy feat. As mentioned previously, I had collected bracelets for five years and owned over 300 pairs of earrings. Plus, I was one of those women who did not consider going out the door without wearing makeup.

Regardless, my mind was like a sponge, soaking up this newfound truth straight from the Bible. I was willing at every point to obey the voice of God. Because I saw with my own eyes the church that was keeping the Sabbath, it was not long before I became a baptized Seventh-day Adventist. This church had first drawn me by one person: Jody and her living testimony to God's magnificent grace. Afterwards, I met other souls for the kingdom in Jody's church who were equally as pleasant. The individual attention I received not only played a role in attracting me to this church, they made my journey a welcoming experience.

Eventually, my newfound religion became a wedge in my second marriage, which ended in a divorce. Afterwards, I married a third time.

Ready for reformation

One day after church services, a friend, Linda Sue from the SDA Church in Tulsa, invited me to attend a religious gathering in a home in Collins, Missouri. There I became friends with some fine country folks, an elderly couple named Joe and Ellie Rogers, who were members of

the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. Joe and Ellie held meetings in their home. The truths I learned from their Sabbath school lessons were unlike the Seventh-day Adventist Church because the teachings dug deeper into the word of God. At my previous church, I rarely heard a preacher or Sabbath school teacher mention the name of Ellen G. White or the Spirit of Prophecy. At the Reform Movement, however, her name and teachings were highly regarded and freely appreciated.

From my biblical studies in the SDA church, I had learned the Leviticus laws regarding diet. However, the Reform Movement teachings went straight to the sanctuary message and the pot of manna, as these relate to God's people today. The Reform Movement sent a pastor to present in-home studies and I followed along in my Bible. This type of personal touch (to my knowledge) had not been practiced at the SDA church. I enjoyed the one-on-one Bible studies from the Reform Movement, and my mind was opening up to new truths. The individuals at the Reform were equally as nice as the SDA's. However, they did not possess a double standard of living. (In the SDA church, I had become disturbed by seeing too much of a double standard style of living. For example, a dear friend of mine—an elderly gentleman who openly smoked cigarettes—experienced no problem being counted as a church member there. A second example was of a woman who had been baptized the same day I was and continued to wear makeup after her baptism.)

In the back of my mind, I had taken note of several discrepancies between the SDA church and the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. I will confess that I proved no saint at the time I visited the SDARM. I had gone back to wearing some makeup. Lipstick became the most difficult addiction to totally relinquish. I felt ashamed because I believe that the double standard I witnessed at the SDA Church had shed a negative influence on my walk with

the Lord. I began to view the SDA Church as a stumbling block because when I did wrong in the church, no one was willing to point out my fault. For example, I recall one specific incident when I deliberately wore a mini-skirt and dark red lipstick to a church event. Not one member so much as whispered a word regarding my scanty dress and crimson lips. At the Reform Movement, however, my own conscience felt conviction and shame for my sins.

A disturbing trend

Not long afterwards, while I was still attending the SDA Church, our pastor attended a seminar, and as a result, was absent for a while. Upon his return, our church suddenly changed. The announcement falling from his lips was plain: He claimed that we no longer needed a pulpit because supposedly it would obstruct the speaker. At the time, I was a choir member and our choir leader suddenly informed us that when we were singing we needed to leave our seats and walk out into the congregation. In addition, our choir leader, who doubled as our piano player, said we would be changing the beat and sound of the music. The music—instead of sounding traditional—would sound fast, furious, lively, and upbeat. I recall her demonstrating on the piano the difference in the sound.

In the interim, after implementing the changes, our church began preparations for an evangelist arriving with a series of meetings. The idea was supposed to attract the public to the meetings. In compliance, our church covered the church name and sign with a huge banner.

When the first meeting night arrived, I was hyped with everyone else and took a seat in the sanctuary. Immediately, I noticed the louder-than-usual music piped into the sanctuary. There was a woman in a wheelchair expecting a divine healing during this meeting.

The evangelist made his tall, impressive presence known from the front of the sanctuary and when the

meeting started, he began singing a familiar song in a boisterous manner. He walked the length of the middle aisle, singing with the music blasting. At his bidding, the congregation began standing, clapping hands, and some were lifting up their hands in praise. I felt the Holy Spirit leave this place; I did not wish to remain any longer and witness this mayhem. I spoke to the greeters in the front lobby and in my best efforts tried to impress what the church was doing was wrong, but the response was not what I wanted to hear. I seriously wondered, was everybody in my church in agreement with this sort of service? I became confused; doubt and disbelief crept in my mind regarding my church's actions. I refused to stay—and as I walked out of the church, another couple was also in the process of exiting. They, too, cherished my same feeling and I believe the Holy Spirit was the One telling us that this service was wrong.

A place of refuge

As a result of this experience, my visits to the SDARM became a shelter and refuge from the SDA church. The lines of distinction between the two churches became clear in the days ahead. This experience made my eventual stand with the SDARM church significant. The SDARM doctrines, principles, and teachings filled in the missing gaps and answered the long-sought-after questions in my spiritual experience. So I went from being a half-hearted, half-converted Christian to a sincere individual determined to trust God fully.

Certainly, I face serious challenges and temptations in the SDARM, yet as unworthy as I am, the Lord continues sustaining.

My third husband divorced me some years after I took my stand as a member of the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement. None of my biological family became Adventist. I remain the only Sabbathkeeper, yet

my family does try to respect me—and with God's help and grace I am able to treat my biological mother with forgiveness, respect, and honor.

As for me, I had barely passed my GED test by two points yet with God's help I was later to further my education by earning four college degrees. "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy" (James 3:17). The Lord remains an excellent lifelong stronghold and has worked tremendously in my second conversion above my expectations. He has kept me, sustained me, and is still working on me. I am thankful for every spiritual jot and tittle He continues to perform in my life.

Twenty-six years ago, I got "sand in my shoes" and have continued to shake it out ever since I moved from Oklahoma to Florida. The Lord provided this barren womb with what I refer to as my "spiritually adopted son," a sweet daughter-in-law, and four lovely grandchildren with a fifth soon to arrive. Thus, the Lord fulfilled His promise in Luke 23:29, "For, behold, the days are coming, in the which they shall say, Blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bare, and the paps which never gave suck." I remain truly blessed!

The rest of my story is found in the remainder of the first stanza from the words to the song,

O Glorious Love:

*"In my darkness Jesus found me
Touched my eyes and made me see
Broke sin's chains that long had
bound me
Gave me life and liberty!"*

"And they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and the song of the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints." "And they overcame . . . by the blood of the lamb, and by the word of their testimony" (Revelation 15:3; 12:11). *R*

By Elizabeth Poznic

From Canada to Cancun

Following texts, phone calls and emails from different brethren, in November 2017 our family was able to make contact with a small group of fellow believers in Cancun, Mexico. Finding the church was another challenge, but after receiving information about the general neighborhood and main crossroad, and stopping to ask multiple people walking along the dirt road, we turned onto a smaller bypass road and drove to the end, where we found a group of 10–15 believers sitting under the shade of a big tree next to our church.

Approximately ten years ago, a small plot of land had been purchased and a recycled galvanized tinroof was erected on a concrete slab. With the exception of 3–4 people, this church is made up of two mothers, with their mostly grown-up children and grandchildren. In 2011 (7 years ago) an appeal was made by a brother to some of our members in California, and a few hundred dollars were sent to the Cancun church. With those funds, the walls of the church were built, and that was the first time the Cancun brethren were able to meet in the chapel. They had dirt floors for several years until recently when they were able to add proper flooring.

The sisters have been working diligently on Sundays to remove the deep roots of a large tree where they are hoping to build a Sabbath school room. They had to stop working on this project because their tools broke. This year, they are hoping to install electricity for the small chapel so they will have lights, and complete a roof over a second room behind the chapel to provide for the children to have a Sabbath school class.

With their simple church, these believers faithfully meet each Sabbath and are a light to their community. Having no musical instruments, these sisters use their voices to sing out with their hearts each Sabbath. Their combined voices are stronger than any instrument—piano or organ! Praise God!!



P.O. Box 7240
Roanoke, VA 24019-0240

MOVING? Please let us know.

Sweet Rewards

The life of a worker honeybee is to visit thousands of flowers per day. Her tiny wings beat 11,400 times per minute as she flies up to 6 miles from her hive at a speed of 15 miles per hour. The busy bee might make 12 trips in a day, visiting 50–100 flowers from a single type of flower on each trip. Working with 555 other worker bees, together they may gather 1 pound of honey from about 2 million blossoms. But each little bee will make only 1/12 of a teaspoon of honey in her entire lifetime of 6 weeks long—so, to be successful, they really need one another!

There is a nice poem about a lesson we can learn from these amazing creatures. It's written by the famous hymn writer, Isaac Watts:

How Doth the Little Busy Bee

*How doth the little busy bee
Improve each shining hour,
And gather honey all the day
From every opening flower!*

*How skillfully she builds her cell!
How neat she spreads the wax!
And labors hard to store it well
With the sweet food she makes.*

*In works of labor or of skill,
I would be busy too;
For Satan finds some mischief still
For idle hands to do.*

*In books, or work, or healthful play,
Let my first years be passed,
That I may give for every day
Some good account at last.*

The bees work very hard to make their delightful product—honey. But did you know there is something we can learn to enjoy even more than this sweet treat?

“The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether. More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.” “How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!” (Psalms 19:9, 10; 119:103).

So the next time you open God's word, pray to think of this!—*BHM*.

