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REFORMATION
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Vol. 61, No. 6



IT'S TIME

Week of Prayer, December 4-13, 2020

the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 61, Number 6

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THE WEEK OF PRAYER

It has been a whirlwind of a year. Many have suffered serious trials and heavy losses. Yet, despite the tremendous difficulties, we must keep in mind that the Almighty of Heaven—the Monarch of the universe—tenderly watches over all that mourn. Those of us in the land of the living still have much for which to be thankful—especially for the precious promise of life eternal through the abundant grace of Jesus Christ.

This year's collection of readings entitled *It's Time . . .*, covers a range of topics to inspire and remind us of the distinct purpose God has for us on this planet. Every single one of us is still here for a definite reason and we are called—in fact, urged—to be fervently about our Master's business.

Let us each deeply and prayerfully consider the readings for this Week of Prayer, sharing them also with others who may be isolated or homebound, and remember the following dates:

- **Prayer with fasting:** Sabbath, December 12
- **Offering for missions:** Sunday, December 13

May the Holy Spirit divinely invigorate and bountifully energize us with fresh vitality to be more faithful servants in the Lord's cause in whatever ways He empowers us—and strengthen our trust through His words, "Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope," "for we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it" (Zechariah 9:12; Romans 8:24, 25). Yes, our Lord is indeed coming very soon! Let us cooperate together to hasten the time to see Him! Amen!

Official Church Publication of the
Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement

"The greatest want of the world is the want of men—men who will not be bought or sold."—*Education*, p. 57.

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THE REFORMATION HERALD® (ISSN 0482-0843) features articles on Bible doctrine that will enrich the spiritual life of those who seek to know more about God. It is published bimonthly by the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement General Conference, P. O. Box 7240, Roanoke, VA 24019-0240, U.S.A.

Printed and distributed by Reformation Herald Publishing Association. Manuscripts, inquiries, address changes, subscriptions, payments, and donations should be mailed to the address below. Periodical postage paid at Roanoke, Virginia 24022.

Subscription rates:

United States: \$18.00; Foreign countries: \$16.00 plus shipping;
Single issue: \$4.00 plus shipping
www.subscriptions.reformationherald.com

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to The Reformation Herald, P. O. Box 7240, ROANOKE, VA 24019.

Vol. 61, No. 6; Copyright © 2020 November–December issue.

Illustrations: Adobe Stocks on the front cover and pp. 2, 3, 13, 18, 20, 22, 28, 32; Light Stocks on p. 11; Sermonview on pp. 4, 8, 16, 24.

IT'S TIME



Often when we need to be reminded, “It’s time,” it’s because we’ve got to shift our frame of mind from where it’s been to where it needs to go. If we were really ready to do something, it might not be necessary to mention the time at all—things would just seamlessly flow from one to another.

But with this Week of Prayer, we are all reminded that “It’s Time” for us to be more proactive in some things that we evidently have not been thinking about enough. If we had really been thinking of them, the world could be a very different place.

God has blessed His people with the tremendous privilege to hear, be empowered, live, and proclaim the last message of mercy to be given to a fallen planet:

“The last rays of merciful light, the last message of mercy to be given to the world, is a revelation of [the Bridegroom’s] character of love. The children of God are to manifest His glory. In their own life and character they are to reveal what the grace of God has done for them.”¹

Over the years, we have been blessed with various means and ways to carry out this task. Have we appreciated the resources entrusted to us as we should? It has been observed: “The missionary movement is far in advance of the missionary spirit.”²

Now we see that things are becoming more difficult, and “the work which the church has failed to do in a time of peace and prosperity she will have to do in a terrible crisis under most discouraging, forbidding circumstances.”³

Yes, it’s time for many things to happen on our part—the sooner the better. We are at the very door of

eternity. On which platform will we stand? For which side will we speak? It’s time for the Spirit of Christ to be poured out without measure upon a people who are hungering and thirsting to receive it and share it with a world that is dying for it.

“On the day of Pentecost the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the praying disciples, and they testified as to its source to all, wherever they went.

“The missionary spirit was poured out in unlimited supplies, and the disciples testified of a crucified and risen Saviour, and convinced the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment to come. They did just as their risen Lord had directed them to do, and began at Jerusalem to publish the gospel, in the very place where the deepest prejudice existed, and where the most confused ideas prevailed in regard to Him who had been crucified as a malefactor. Three thousand received the message, and were converted. They were not intimidated through persecution, imprisonment, and death; but they continued to speak with all boldness the words of truth, setting before the Jews the work and mission and ministry of Christ, his crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension; and believers were added daily to the Lord, both of men and women.”⁴

Are we willing to heed the prophetic clock telling us plainly that it’s time to pray and take action in harmony with our prayers—or do we vainly try to stifle and silence the alarm under a pillow while we snooze on? The choice is ours—and the decision is now. Are we willing to be emptied of selfishness and filled with the Holy Spirit?

“It is the privilege of every Christian, not only to look for, but to hasten the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. . . .

“My brethren and sisters, plead for the Holy Spirit, God stands back of every promise He has made.”⁵

“We must pray that God will unseal the fountain of the water of life. And we must ourselves receive of the living water. Let us, with contrite hearts, pray most earnestly that now, in the time of the latter rain, the showers of grace may fall upon us. At every meeting we attend our prayers should ascend, that at this very time God will impart warmth and moisture to our souls. As we seek God for the Holy Spirit, it will work in us meekness, humbleness of mind, a conscious dependence upon God for the perfecting latter rain. If we pray for the blessing in faith, we shall receive it as God has promised.”⁶

May our hearts be sublimely softened with the outpouring love of our wonderful Saviour during this Week of Prayer and be bountifully energized with His awesome creative power to redeem the time! Amen. *R*

References:

- ¹ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 415, 416.
- ² *The Review and Herald*, October 12, 1886.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 463.
- ⁴ *The Review and Herald*, November 6, 1894.
- ⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 8, pp. 22, 23.
- ⁶ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 509.

Compiled from the writings of Ellen G. White

IT'S TIME

TO KNOW YOUR SAVIOUR
FRIDAY, DECEMBER 4, 2020

DIVINITY SPEAKS TO OUR CONSCIENCE TODAY

The Old and the New Testament Scriptures need to be studied daily. The knowledge of God and the wisdom of God come to the student who is a constant learner of His ways and works. The Bible is to be our light, our educator. . . . The first great lesson in all education is to know and understand the will of God.¹

As the works of God are studied, the Holy Spirit flashes conviction into the mind. It is not the conviction which logical reasoning produces; but unless the mind has become too dark to know God, the eye too dim to see Him, the ear too dull to hear His voice, a deeper meaning is grasped, and the sublime, spiritual truths of the written word are impressed on the heart.²

LIFE-SAVING KNOWLEDGE TO SEEK

Said the Saviour: "This is life eternal, that they might *know Thee* the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent." And God declared by the prophet: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that *he understandeth and knoweth Me*, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord."

No man, without divine aid, can attain to this knowledge of God. The apostle says that "the world by wisdom knew not God." Christ "was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not." Jesus declared to His disciples: "No man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal Him."³

THE ENEMY'S BLOCKADE

From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Hence he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. Satan hoped to so confuse the minds of those whom he had deceived that they would put God out of their knowledge. Then he would obliterate the divine image in man and impress his own likeness upon the soul; he would imbue men with his own spirit and make them captives according to his will.

It was by falsifying the character of God and exciting distrust of Him that Satan tempted Eve to transgress. By sin the minds of our first parents were darkened, their

natures were degraded, and their conceptions of God were molded by their own narrowness and selfishness. And as men became bolder in sin, the knowledge and the love of God faded from their minds and hearts. "Because that, when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God," they "became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

At times Satan's contest for the control of the human family appeared to be crowned with success. During the ages preceding the first advent of Christ the world seemed almost wholly under the sway of the prince of darkness, and he ruled with a terrible power as though through the sin of our first parents the kingdoms of the world had become his by right. Even the covenant people, whom God had chosen to preserve in the world the knowledge of Himself, had so far departed from Him that they had lost all true conception of His character.⁴

THE DEPTH OF GOD'S LOVE SHINES THROUGH

Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, full of mercy, tenderness, and compassion. The thick darkness with which Satan had endeavored to enshroud the throne of Deity was swept away by the world's Redeemer, and the Father was again manifest to men as the light of life. . . . Christ declares Himself to be sent into the world as a representative of the Father. In His nobility of character, in His mercy and tender pity, in His love and goodness, He stands before us as the embodiment of divine perfection, the image of the invisible God.

Says the apostle: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." Only as we contemplate the great plan of redemption can we have a just appreciation of the character of God. The work of creation was a manifestation of His love; but the gift of God to save the guilty and ruined race, alone reveals the infinite depths of divine tenderness and compassion. [John 3:16 quoted.] . . .

Brethren, with the beloved John I call upon you to "behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God." What love, what matchless love, that, sinners and aliens as we are, we may be brought back to God and adopted into His family! We may address Him by the endearing name, "Our Father," which is a sign of our affection for Him and a pledge of His tender regard and relationship to us. And the Son of God, beholding the heirs of grace, "is not ashamed to call them brethren." They have even a more sacred relationship to God than have the angels who have never fallen.

All the paternal love which has come down from generation to generation through the channel of human hearts, all the springs of tenderness which have opened in the souls of men, are but as a tiny rill to the boundless ocean when compared with the infinite, exhaustless love of God. Tongue cannot utter it; pen cannot portray it. You may meditate upon it every day of your life; you may search the Scriptures diligently in order to understand it; you may summon every power and capability that God has given you, in the endeavor to comprehend the love and compassion of the heavenly Father; and yet there is an infinity beyond. You may study that love for ages; yet you can never fully comprehend

the length and the breadth, the depth and the height, of the love of God in giving His Son to die for the world. Eternity itself can never fully reveal it. Yet as we study the Bible and meditate upon the life of Christ and the plan of redemption, these great themes will open to our understanding more and more."⁵

THE SPIRITUAL BATTLEFIELD

It is Satan's constant study to keep the minds of men occupied with those things which will prevent them from obtaining the knowledge of God. He seeks to keep them dwelling upon what will darken the understanding and discourage the soul. We are in a world of sin and corruption, surrounded by influences that tend to allure or dishearten the followers of Christ. The Saviour said: "Because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold." Many fix their eyes upon the terrible wickedness existing around them, the apostasy and weakness on every side, and they talk of these things until their hearts are filled with sadness and doubt. They keep uppermost before the mind the masterly working of the archdeceiver and dwell upon the discouraging features of their experience, while they seem to lose sight of the heavenly Father's power and His matchless love. All this is as Satan would have it. It is a mistake to think of the enemy of righteousness as clothed with

By dwelling upon the love of God and our Saviour, by contemplating the perfection of the divine character and claiming the righteousness of Christ as ours by faith, we are to be transformed into the same image.

so great power, when we dwell so little upon the love of God and His might. We must talk of the mightiness of Christ. We are utterly powerless to rescue ourselves from the grasp of Satan; but God has appointed a way of escape. The Son of the Highest has strength to fight the battle for us, and “through Him that loved us” we may come off “more than conquerors.”⁶

There is no spiritual strength for us in constantly brooding over our weakness and backslidings, and bemoaning the power of Satan. This great truth must be established as a living principle in our minds and hearts—the efficacy of the offering made for us; that God can and does save to the uttermost all who come unto Him complying with the conditions specified in His word. Our work is to place our will on the side of God’s will. . . .

Said Jesus: “The Father Himself loveth you.” If our faith is fixed upon God, through Christ, it will prove “as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil; whither the Forerunner is for us entered.” It is true that disappointments will come; tribulation we must expect; but we are to commit everything, great and small, to God. He does not become perplexed by the multiplicity of our grievances nor overpowered by the weight of our burdens. His watchcare extends to every household and encircles every individual; He is concerned in all our business and our sorrows. He

marks every tear; He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. All the afflictions and trials that befall us here are permitted, to work out His purposes of love toward us, “that we might be partakers of His holiness” and thus become participants in that fullness of joy which is found in His presence.⁷

OBTAINING A KNOWLEDGE OF GOD

“The god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.” But the Bible in strongest terms sets before us the importance of obtaining a knowledge of God. Says Peter: “Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the *knowledge of God*, and of Jesus our Lord.” “His divine power hath given unto us *all things* that pertain unto life and godliness, *through the knowledge of Him* that hath called us to glory and virtue.” And the Scripture bids us: “Acquaint now thyself with Him, and be at peace.”

God has commanded us, “Be ye holy; for I am holy;” and an inspired apostle declares that without holiness “no man shall see the Lord.” Holiness is agreement with God. By sin the image of God in man has been marred and well-nigh obliterated; it is the work of the gospel to restore that which has been lost; and we are to cooperate with the divine agency in this

work. And how can we come into harmony with God, how shall we receive His likeness, unless we obtain a knowledge of Him? It is this knowledge that Christ came into the world to reveal unto us. . . .

It is the work of the Christian in this life to represent Christ to the world, in life and character unfolding the blessed Jesus. If God has given us light, it is that we may reveal it to others. But in comparison with the light we have received, and the opportunities and privileges granted us to reach the hearts of the people, the results of our work thus far have been far too small. God designs that the truth which He has brought to our understanding shall produce more fruit than has yet been revealed. But when our minds are filled with gloom and sadness, dwelling upon the darkness and evil around us, how can we represent Christ to the world? How can our testimony have power to win souls? What we need is to know God and the power of His love, as revealed in Christ, by an experimental knowledge. We must search the Scriptures diligently, prayerfully; our understanding must be quickened by the Holy Spirit, and our hearts must be uplifted to God in faith and hope and continual praise. . . .

Brethren and sisters, it is by beholding that we become changed. By dwelling upon the love of God and our Saviour, by contemplating the perfection of the divine character and claiming the righteousness of Christ as ours by faith, we are to be transformed into the same image. Then let us not gather together all the unpleasant pictures—the iniquities and corruptions and disappointments, the evidences of Satan’s power—to hang in the halls of our memory, to talk over and mourn over until our souls are filled with discouragement. A discouraged soul is a body of darkness, not only failing himself to receive the light of God, but shutting it away from others. Satan loves to see the effect of the pictures of his triumphs, making human beings faithless and disheartened.

When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd’s voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost.

There are, thank God, brighter and more cheering pictures which the Lord has presented to us. Let us group together the blessed assurances of His love as precious treasures, that we may look upon them continually. The Son of God leaving His Father's throne, clothing His divinity with humanity, that He might rescue man from the power of Satan; His triumph in our behalf, opening heaven to man, revealing to human vision the presence chamber where Deity unveils His glory; the fallen race uplifted from the pit of ruin into which sin had plunged them, and brought again into connection with the infinite God, and, having endured the divine test through faith in our Redeemer, clothed in the righteousness of Christ and exalted to His throne—these are the pictures with which God bids us gladden the chambers of the soul."⁸

FOCUSING ON HEAVENLY THINGS

In heaven God is all in all. There holiness reigns supreme; there is nothing to mar the perfect harmony with God. If we are indeed journeying thither, the spirit of heaven will dwell in our hearts here. But if we find no pleasure now in the contemplation of heavenly things; if we have no interest in seeking the knowledge of God, no delight in beholding the character of Christ; if holiness has no attractions for us—then we may be sure that our hope of heaven is vain. Perfect conformity to the will of God is the high aim to be constantly before the Christian. He will love to talk of God, of Jesus, of the home of bliss and purity which Christ has prepared for them that love Him. The contemplation of these themes, when the soul feasts upon the blessed assurances of God, the apostle represents as tasting "the powers of the world to come."

Just before us is the closing struggle of the great controversy when, with "all power and signs and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness," Satan is to work to misrepresent the character of God, that he may

"seduce, if it were possible, even the elect." If there was ever a people in need of constantly increasing light from heaven, it is the people that, in this time of peril, God has called to be the depositaries of His holy law and to vindicate His character before the world. Those to whom has been committed a trust so sacred must be spiritualized, elevated, vitalized, by the truths they profess to believe. Never did the church more sorely need, and never was God more solicitous that she should enjoy, the experience described in Paul's letter to the Colossians when he wrote: We "do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be *filled with the knowledge of His will* in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God."⁹

THE ACTION FOR TODAY

When the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest. No one of the true believers will say: "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas." The testimony of one and all will be: "I cleave unto Christ; I rejoice in Him as my personal Saviour."

Thus will the truth be brought into practical life, and thus will be answered the prayer of Christ, uttered just before His humiliation and death: "That they all may be one; as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be one in Us: that the world may believe that Thou hast sent Me" (John 17:21). The love of Christ, the love of our brethren, will testify to the world that we have been with Jesus and learned of Him. Then will the message of the third

angel swell to a loud cry, and the whole earth will be lightened with the glory of the Lord.¹⁰

"Depend on God; wait His pleasure; follow Him; rely in obedience on the strength of His Word.

"To obey when it seems the hardest is true surrender to God. This will quicken your moral nature and subdue your pride. Learn to submit your will to God's will, and you will be made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light."¹¹

THE CALL OF THE HOUR

A general faith is not enough. We must put on the robe of Christ's righteousness and wear it openly, bravely, decidedly, exhibiting Christ, and not expect too much of finite man, but keep looking unto Jesus, and become ravished with the perfections of His character. Then we shall individually make manifest the character of Jesus, and make it evident that we are invigorated by the truth; because it sanctifies the soul and brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ.

Every missionary will have hard battles to fight with self, and these combats will not become fewer. But if we are constantly growing in Christian experience, if we continue to look to Jesus in faith, strength will be given us for every emergency. All the powers and faculties of a regenerated nature must be brought into constant, daily exercise. Every day we shall have occasion to crucify self, to war against inclination and a perverse temperament that would draw the will in a wrong direction. The repose and triumph of victory are not yet ours, except as we by faith enter into the victory that Christ has gained for us.¹² R

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- ¹ *Special Testimonies on Education*, pp. 14, 15.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 59.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 737.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 738.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 738–740.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 740, 741.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 741, 742.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 742–745.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 745, 746.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 401. (1901 ed.)
- ¹¹ *Reflecting Christ*, p. 108.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 108.

IT'S TIME

TO BE BORN AGAIN

SABBATH, DECEMBER 5, 2020

One of the most precious divine promises is: “Behold, I make all things new” (Revelation 21:5). Whenever it is necessary to renew an object, it’s because the one that is currently being used doesn’t match anymore with the requirements of the user.

The decision to make “new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness” (2 Peter 3:13) is taken by the Creator Himself. It is because He is needing to end the dark, sin-stained history in the universe.

It is interesting that all of God’s creation, though affected by sin, will be renewed by the power and absolute will of our Creator. Yet mankind, having chosen to sin, is invited to accept in advance a special renewal performed by God through the Holy Spirit, because in the city of God “there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth” (Revelation 21:27).

The warning given to Nicodemus is still valid for all beings affected

by sin: “Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3).

Such an approach is given because God wants everyone to be saved. For, He declares: “I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye” (Ezekiel 18:32). At the same time, God respects the will of every man.

He is using all possible ways to make man conscious of his need and presents him with opportunities to accept the offer of salvation.

WHERE DOES THE RENEWAL BEGIN?

“And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God” (Romans 12:2). Here the term “transformed” means changed.

“When Jesus speaks of the new heart, he means the mind, the life, the whole being. To have a change of heart is to withdraw the affections from the world, and fasten them upon Christ. To have a new heart is to have a new mind, new purposes, new motives. What is the sign of a new heart?—A changed life. There is a daily, hourly dying to selfishness and pride.”¹

“The mind is the capital of the body.”²

“The mind controls the whole man. All our actions, good or bad, have their source in the mind. It is the mind that worships God and allies us to heavenly beings.”³

So, the place where genuine renewal begins is the mind.

THE WILL

After the Lord has spoken to our mind and His offer impresses—becomes attractive to—us, He asks for our consent saying: “If thou wilt” (Matthew 19:21).

God never forces our will, but whenever possible, He meets us in the way with the appeals of the Holy Spirit to remind us of the only chance of salvation.

"Your will is the spring of all your actions. This will, that forms so important a factor in the character of man, was at the Fall given into the control of Satan; and he has ever since been working in man to will and to do of his own pleasure, but to the utter ruin and misery of man.

"But the infinite sacrifice of God in giving Jesus, His beloved Son, to become a sacrifice for sin, enables Him to say, without violating one principle of His government: 'Yield yourself up to Me; give Me that will; take it from the control of Satan, and I will take possession of it; then I can work in you to will and to do of My good pleasure.' When He gives you the mind of Christ, your will becomes as His will, and your character is transformed to be like Christ's character."⁴

"The Spirit of God does not propose to do our part, either in the willing or the doing. This is the work of the human agent in cooperating with the divine agencies. As soon as we incline our will to harmonize with God's will, the grace of Christ stands to cooperate with the human agent; but it will not be the substitute to do our work independent of our resolving and decidedly acting. Therefore it is not the abundance of light, and evidence piled upon evidence, that will convert the soul it is only the human agent accepting the light, arousing the energies of the will, realizing and acknowledging that which he knows is righteousness and truth, and thus cooperating with the heavenly ministrations appointed to God in the saving of the soul."⁵

THE ACTION

To say "*I believe, I want*" is fundamental, but that is not enough.

"And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to

patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity" (2 Peter 1:5-7).

"Through the cultivation of righteous principles, man may gain the victory over the bias to evil. If he is obedient to the law of God, the senses are no longer warped and twisted; the faculties are no longer perverted and wasted by being exercised on objects that are of a character to lead away from God. In and through the grace bestowed by Heaven, the words, the thoughts, and the energies may be purified; a new character may be formed, and the debasement of sin overcome."⁶

IT IS TIME

Even though we did not ask for our existence, we still enjoy the life given by God, a period in which we are subjected to the most important examination that has eternal consequences. The Holy Spirit wants us to realize what that means today.

"As the Holy Ghost saith, *To day if ye will hear his voice*" (Hebrews 3:7). [Emphasis added.]

The Bible abounds in examples of people who have received the invitation of grace and have been transformed, renewed, and prepared to live with sinless beings. But many are those who have rejected and disregarded the appeal of the Holy Spirit, letting the time for a change, for their new birth, to pass by.

THE EXAMPLE OF PHARAOH

"Pharaoh king of Egypt is but a noise; he hath passed the time appointed" (Jeremiah 46:17).

Let us observe an essential aspect of the second plague that fell upon Egypt. Pharaoh had called Moses and Aaron, saying:

"Then Pharaoh called for Moses and Aaron, and said, Intreat the LORD, that he may take away the frogs from me, and from my people; and I will let the people go, that they may do sacrifice unto the LORD. And Moses said unto Pharaoh, Glory over me: when shall I intreat for thee, and for thy servants, and

for thy people, to destroy the frogs from thee and thy houses, that they may remain in the river only? And he said, To morrow" (Exodus 8:8-10).

"He set the next day, secretly hoping that in the interval the frogs might disappear of themselves, and thus save him from the bitter humiliation of submitting to the God of Israel."⁷

In other words, "tomorrow" is Satan's working policy, and is one of the most effective for destruction. On the other hand, the Holy Spirit says "today" because we do not have the guarantee of tomorrow.

"God speaks to men through His servants, giving cautions and warnings, and rebuking sin. He gives to each an opportunity to correct his errors before they become fixed in the character; but if one refuses to be corrected, divine power does not interpose to counteract the tendency of his own action. He finds it more easy to repeat the same course. He is hardening the heart against the influence of the Holy Spirit."⁸

"Those who are quieting a guilty conscience with the thought that they can change a course of evil when they choose, that they can trifle with the invitations of mercy, and yet be again and again impressed, take this course at their peril. They think that after casting all their influence on the side of the great rebel, in a moment of utmost extremity, when danger compasses them about, they will change leaders. But this is not so easily done. The experience, the education, the discipline of a life of sinful indulgence, has so thoroughly molded the character that they cannot then receive the image of Jesus. Had no light shone upon their pathway, the case would have been different. Mercy might interpose, and give them an opportunity to accept her overtures; but after light has been long rejected and despised, it will be finally withdrawn."⁹

NEBUCHADNEZZAR

How impressive and uplifting are the changes made by the work

of the Holy Spirit! After his renewal, Nebuchadnezzar recounts his experience of change:

“At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase” (Daniel 4:36, 37).

“The once proud monarch had become a humble child of God; the tyrannical, overbearing ruler, a wise and compassionate king. He who had defied and blasphemed the God of heaven, now acknowledged the power of the Most High and earnestly sought to promote the fear of Jehovah and the happiness of his subjects.”¹⁰

SAUL OF TARSUS

Being one of the most zealous persecutors of the church of Christ, caring not how much blood was shed as long as he achieved his purpose, Saul wrote: “I persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women” (Acts 22:4).

Saul’s unbelief was honest, but not excusable. “The mind that resists the truth will see everything in a perverted light. It will be fastened in the sure toils of the enemy, and view things in the light of the enemy.”¹¹

“Always the LORD gives the human agent his work. Here is the divine and the human cooperation. There is man working in obedience to divine light given. If Saul had said, Lord, I am not at all inclined to follow your specified directions to work out my own salvation, then should the Lord have let ten times the light shine upon Saul, it would have been useless. It is man’s work to cooperate with the divine. And it is the very hardest, sternest conflict which comes with the purpose and hour of great resolve

and decision of the human to incline the will and way to God’s will and God’s way. . . . The character will determine the nature of the resolve and the action. The doing is not in accordance with the feeling or the inclination, but with the known will of our Father which is in heaven. Follow and obey the leadings of the Holy Spirit.”¹²

As soon as Saul understood and accepted the truth, he began to work for the cause of Christ tirelessly, saying: “I made myself servant unto all, that I might gain the more” (1 Corinthians 9:19) for Christ.

MY CASE AND YOUR CASE

“And that, knowing the time, that now it is high time to awake out of sleep: for now is our salvation nearer than when we believed. The night is far spent, the day is at hand: let us therefore cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light” (Romans 13:11, 12).

“When the sinner reaches the cross, and looks up to the One who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is revealed in the face of Jesus Christ; and the words of pardon are spoken: Live, O ye guilty sinners, live. Your repentance is accepted; for I have found a ransom.”¹³

“The youth especially stumble over this phrase, ‘a new heart.’ They do not know what it means. They look for a special change to take place in their feelings. This they term conversion. Over this error thousands have stumbled to ruin, not understanding the expression, ‘Ye must be born again.’”¹⁴

“One of the most earnest prayers recorded in the Word of God is that of David when he plead, ‘Create in me a clean heart, O God.’ God’s response to such a prayer is, A new heart will I give you. This is a work that no finite man can do. Men and women are to begin at the beginning, seeking God most earnestly for a true Christian experience. They are to feel the

creative power of the Holy Spirit. They are to receive the new heart, that is kept soft and tender by the grace of heaven. The selfish spirit is to be cleansed from the soul. They are to labor earnestly and with humility of heart, each one looking to Jesus for guidance and encouragement. Then the building, fitly framed together, will grow into a holy temple in the Lord.”¹⁵

“Sincere Christians have no doubtful piety. They have put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and have made no provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof. They are constantly looking to Jesus for His orders, as a servant looks to His master, or as a maid looks to her mistress. Wheresoever God’s providence may lead, they stand ready to go. They take no glory to themselves. They do not call anything they have—learning, talents, property—their own, but regard themselves as only stewards of the manifold grace of Christ, and servants to the church for Christ’s sake. These are messengers of the Lord, a light amid the darkness. Their hearts throb in unison with the great heart of Christ.”¹⁶

Since the chance to receive salvation is only when we surrender the whole being to Christ so that He may recreate us in His image, let us not be ignorant of such great salvation. This offer is made only in this short life, which we do not know how long will last. So, there is only one option for the one who wants eternal life—*renewing*—and not tomorrow, but *today*.

God expects this from us, for our eternal good and happiness.

The Lord is near. Amen. *R*

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- ¹ *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 26, 1901.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 136.
- ³ *Mind, Character, and Personality*, vol. 1, p. 72.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 515.
- ⁵ *Mind, Character and Personality*, vol. 2, p. 691.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 30, 31.
- ⁷ *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 265, 266.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 268.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 269.
- ¹⁰ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 521.
- ¹¹ *The SDA Bible Commentary* [E. G. White Comments], vol. 6, p. 1057.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1058.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, vol. 5, p. 1033.
- ¹⁴ *The Youth’s Instructor*, September 26, 1901.
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- ¹⁶ *Ibid.*, vol. 6, p. 1081.

IT'S TIME

TO BE A TRUE REFORMER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 6, 2020

THE SITUATION IN THE WORLD

Planet earth—our home—arrived in beauty and splendor from the hands of the Creator. Everything was perfect, prepared with love and dedicated to the human race to fully enjoy it. (See Genesis 1:31.) The first man and woman were created physically beautiful, but, above all, they had intellectual perfection and an upright character, which was to be solidified by communion with the Creator. “The sinless pair wore no artificial garments; they were clothed with a covering of light and glory, such as the angels wear. So long as they lived in obedience to God, this robe of light continued to enshroud them.”¹

This perfect scene lasted until sin entered, plunging the world into the terrible state of corruption, immorality and sin.

The divine principles presented in the Holy Bible were abandoned and degraded into mere customs

subject to human preferences. Most who remained in defense of the truth were sadly led to maintain a religion of outward show, establishing forms and rites devoid of love.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE A REFORMER?

Such a chaotic scenario requires the presence of reformers. “And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in” (Isaiah 58:12). This important mission presented by the prophet Isaiah identifies the people who work to restore divine principles that have been nullified and misrepresented.

To be a reformer is not to accommodate to this scenario. It is to fight with vigor and conviction to restore the destroyed pillars of truth. It is to remain faithful to the duty to defend

the law of God, even in the face of fierce opposition.

Nehemiah was the servant of the most powerful king of his day. However, his heart was troubled by the knowledge that Jerusalem, his homeland, had been devastated and destroyed. But he was not discouraged by the difficulties and impossibilities. With the disposition common to reformers, he took all the necessary steps to reach his goal. Under God’s direction, he overcame all barriers and arrived in Jerusalem with the resources to restore the city of his forefathers. And when the enemies tried to distract him from his tasks—or even destroy him—so that the renovation work would not continue, he would say with conviction: “I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3).

Satan wants to involve us in things that make us incapable of being reformers. He wants to di-

vert our attention from the solemn legacy we have received through the eternal Gospel; but, as true reformers, we must answer: "I am doing a great work, so that I cannot stop!"

THE TIME IN WHICH WE LIVE

Our days are compared to the days before the Flood. Just as at that time, the sacred principles established by God are forgotten, abandoned and ridiculed. According to the world, being faithful today is not a virtue. As in Noah's day, debauchery, immorality and dishonesty are common to the human race. "And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matthew 24:12).

Obedience to the law of God as a result of a life transformed by Jesus is an increasingly rare feature in our day. Relativism leads humanity into the swamp of sin. "Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light, and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter!" (Isaiah 5:20).

All of this shows that Christ is at the door. His return to this world is closer than we can imagine. Inspiration shows us, through the prophetic clock, that the hour is coming.

"When the professed people of God are uniting with the world, living as they live, and joining with them in forbidden pleasures; when the luxury of the world becomes the luxury of the church; when the marriage bells are chiming, and all are looking forward to many years of worldly prosperity — then, suddenly as the lightning flashes from the heavens, will come the end of their bright visions and delusive hopes."²

WHAT DOES GOD EXPECT FROM A REFORMER?

To live in this age of utter destruction of godly principles as faithful bastions and defenders of the truth, is the mission of reformers. Now is the time of restoration, and God expects from His people a real work of

reform, starting from the heart and expanding to the point of preparing for the return of Jesus Christ (see Acts 3:21).

Living and practicing the principles of the Word of God in this present age is our responsibility. God has given us the privilege of witnessing to His name, and we cannot be distracted.

"The practice, in the details of life, of the principles laid down in God's word, is too often looked upon as unimportant—a matter too trivial to demand attention. But in view of the issue at stake, nothing is small that will help or hinder."³

As God's remnant, He expects us to be true reformers. However, we cannot fall into the same mistake as the Jewish nation. They were the chosen people, the holy nation, and that filled them with satisfaction and pride. Imagining that they would always enjoy this status, they neglected true religion. They became satisfied with pleasing themselves—and they forgot about God. A mere sense of family heritage was sufficient for them, and their daily life did not match their profession of faith.

The same seems to be happening to us. We have been chosen by God to bear the standard of truth in the time of the end. We cannot be proud and allow the satisfaction of this privilege to make us forget the mission. To be reformers that God can count on, we need to be aware that our hearts must be totally transformed by the grace of Christ. (See Ezekiel 36:26.) With a new heart, we can be used by God in the great work of restoration.

THE CONCEPT OF A REFORMER

Our denominational history began with the need to emphasize the immutability of God's law. His commandments are eternal, His law is forever. When, for convenience and union with the world the sacred principles were broken, we were called to stay on the narrow path in obedience to the Word of God. "When a people are wholly satisfied with their own attainments, little

more need be expected of them."⁴ Our reform forefathers immediately took on the mission of maintaining the divine legacy.

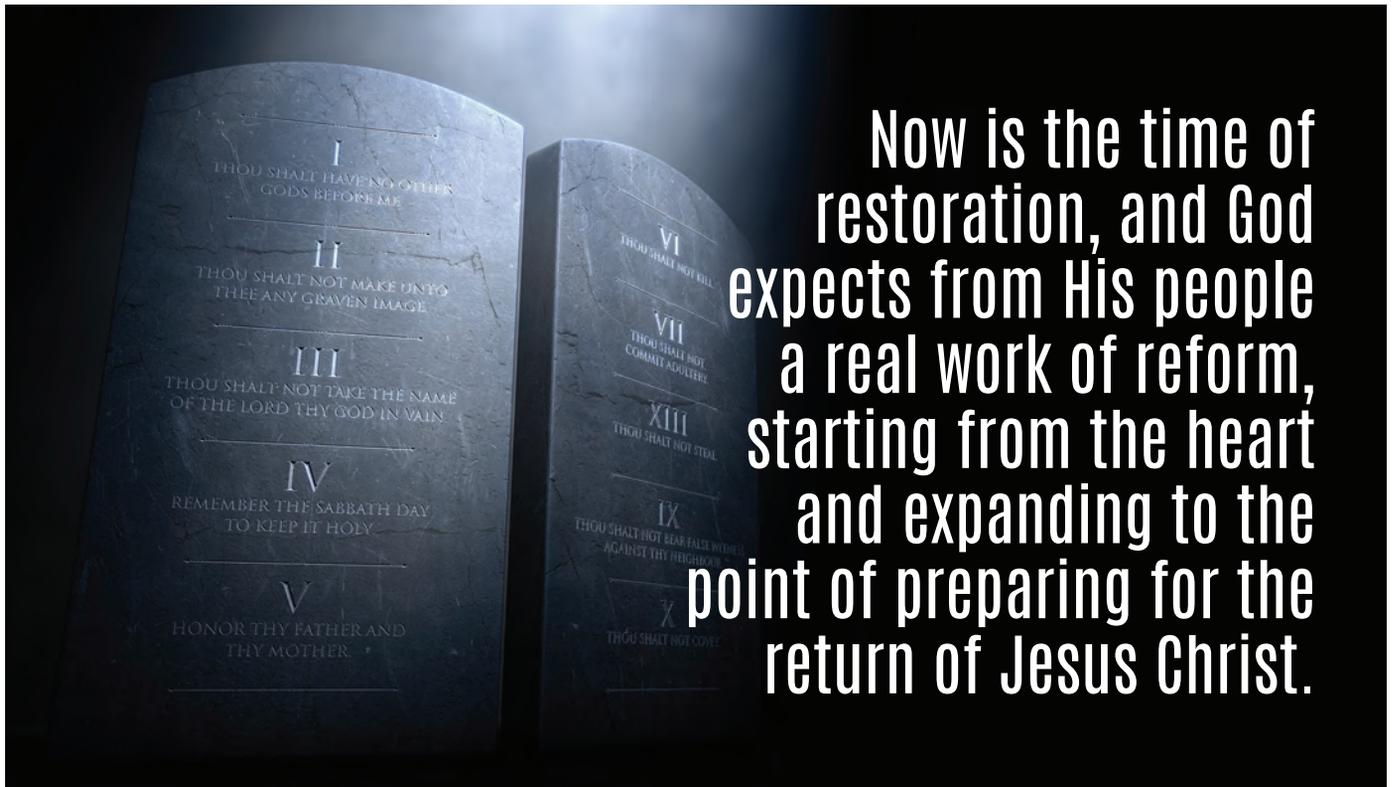
The responsibility to bear the ark is now on our shoulders. The spirit of reformation must be ours. We cannot stop the work that started more than a hundred years ago. Treading this path will not be easy, but it is the path we must follow. Our divine Companion will be with us at every step.

"Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat; because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.' These roads are distinct, separate, in opposite directions. One leads to eternal life, the other to eternal death. I saw the distinction between these roads, also the distinction between the companies traveling them. The roads are opposite; one is broad and smooth, the other narrow and rugged. So the parties that travel them are opposite in character, in life, in dress, and in conversation."⁵

To be a reformer is to live our denominational identity day by day. We inherited from our forefathers the blessed hope of the advent of Jesus to this Earth. The brightness of the fourth commandment on the tables of the law of God has been revealed, and the seventh day, the Sabbath of rest, is included as part of our Christian life. By having the description, "Reform Movement" added to our denominational name, we realize that our spiritual journey can suffer decline if we are not vigilant. To reform means to change from something worse to something better. However, in reforming, we must maintain—uphold—the Word of God in its proper place, as our only rule of faith and practice.

THE RETURN OF CHRIST

The greatest event in history is Jesus' second coming to this earth to seek His church. Because we are Adventists, because we are waiting



Now is the time of restoration, and God expects from His people a real work of reform, starting from the heart and expanding to the point of preparing for the return of Jesus Christ.

for His return, we are candidates to enjoy this epic moment with joy. Ascending with Jesus in the clouds and starting the journey to the eternal home is our ultimate goal.

However, to achieve it, preparation is necessary. Waiting for Jesus means preparation, faithfulness, and complete surrender to Him. Waiting for Him, identifying ourselves as His children—while at the same time devoting our affections to the things of this world, is treason. And Satan presents countless attractions to divert our attention from Christ and His return in order to fix our eyes and hearts on the world and its attractions, just as in the days of Noah (see Luke 17:26, 27).

“I was shown our danger, as a people, of becoming assimilated to the world rather than to the image of Christ. We are now upon the very borders of the eternal world, but it is the purpose of the adversary of souls to lead us to put far off the close of time. Satan will in every conceivable manner assail those who profess to be the commandment-keeping people of God and to be waiting for the second appearing of our Saviour in the clouds of heaven with power

and great glory. He will lead as many as possible to put off the evil day and become in spirit like the world, imitating its customs.”⁶

We cannot, for a moment, take our eyes off Heaven and its wonders promised to the faithful. Many of us don’t think much about eternity, but we do everything we can to get the most out of this earthly life. For that, we invest all of our time, strength and money. We may even achieve everything possible in this world, but miss the mark. “For what is a man advantaged, if he gain the whole world, and lose himself, or be cast away?” (Luke 9:25.) Do you want to live in Heaven? If so, it’s time to be a real reformer, awaiting and hastening Jesus’ return!

THE SABBATH

One of the great biblical truths hidden from nearly the entire human race for many centuries is the validity of the Sabbath of the fourth commandment of the law of God. It was given to our first parents as an emblem of His love and care for humanity. And ever since, Satan has fought to hide, cancel, and destroy the Lord’s holy day. Why? Because the Sabbath

points to Jesus as our Creator, Redeemer and supreme King of the universe.

“Had the Sabbath been universally kept, man’s thoughts and affections would have been led to the Creator as the object of reverence and worship, and there would never have been an idolater, an atheist, or an infidel. The keeping of the Sabbath is a sign of loyalty to the true God.”⁷

When the Lord’s messenger received a vision of the heavenly sanctuary, she was shown an intense glow surrounding the fourth commandment, giving it prominence over the other commandments. This served not only to show that this commandment was not void, but also to say it is God’s seal identifying His people.

“To those who keep holy the Sabbath day it is the sign of sanctification. True sanctification is harmony with God, oneness with Him in character. It is received through obedience to those principles that are the transcript of His character. And the Sabbath is the sign of obedience. He who from the heart obeys the fourth commandment will obey the whole law. He is sanctified through obedience.”⁸

And how are we keeping the Sabbath? What have been our conversations and thoughts during God's sacred hours? We have come a long way in this regard—we don't work on Saturday, we don't buy or sell that day, we don't cook on it and we dedicate it to church and missionary work. But the sanctification of the Sabbath is not just about these things. It begins with preparation, taking care that everything is ready in order to enjoy the Sabbath in the company of Jesus. The limits of the holy day are sacred. We must be faithful at both the opening and closing of the Sabbath. The family must enjoy these hours in harmony. Our thoughts must be captive to Jesus that day. On Sabbath, our only goal should be to focus on doing God's will, not our own. (See Isaiah 58:13, 14.) It's time to be a true reformer in upholding the Sabbath!

WORLDLINESS

From the beginning, it has been Satan's intention to separate us from God. And for that, he presents the world and its theories to us as something very precious, implying that its loss will bring us unhappiness, just as he allured Eve with the forbidden fruit. When Satan took Jesus up to a high mountain, he showed Him all the greatness of the world, its kingdoms and their glory, promising Him possession of it if He would only worship him. "But Christ was unmoved. He felt the strength of

this temptation; but He met it in our behalf, and conquered."⁹

Satan also presents the world and its practices to us as an achievement. We are bombarded at all times with the "beautiful fruit" of worldliness and invited to participate in it. And, unfortunately, it has achieved success. The church has suffered great loss for giving in to the enemy's attacks. We have not repelled it with "it is written," as Jesus did. In this solemn time of sealing, our minds are absorbed in secular matters. The apostle John warns us: "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him" (1 John 2:15).

"Intense worldliness has been one of Satan's most successful temptations. He designs to keep the hearts and minds of men so engrossed with worldly attractions that there will be no room for heavenly things. He controls their minds in their love of the world. Earthly things eclipse the heavenly, and put the Lord out of their sight and understanding. . . . Men are charmed with the glitter and tinsel of the world. They are so attached to the things of the earth that many will commit any sin in order to gain some worldly advantage."¹⁰

CLOTHING

One of the main evidences of our religion is our appearance—the way we present ourselves. The Word of God reveals how a true Christian

should dress. But the desire to be like unbelievers has led the children of God to dress according to the world. They ignore the instructions that God has left for us and decide to follow their own taste. Like Eve, they disbelieve the Word of God in favor of the words of the enemy.

"Many dress like the world, in order to have an influence over unbelievers; but here they make a sad mistake. If they would have a true and saving influence, let them live out their profession, show their faith by their righteous works, and make the distinction plain between the Christian and the worldling. The words, the dress, the actions, should tell for God. Then a holy influence will be shed upon all around them, and even unbelievers will take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. If any wish to have their influence tell in favor of truth, let them live out their profession, and thus imitate the humble Pattern."¹¹

"Self-denial and sacrifice will mark the Christian's life. Evidence that the taste is converted will be seen in the dress of all who walk in the path cast up for the ransomed of the Lord."¹²

PROTECTION AGAINST IMMORALITY

Fig-leaf garments are not pleasing to God. Moral protection is a virtue of Christian dress. Sensuality is a trap that Satan has set for us. And the children of God must be protected from falling into that temptation by being constantly connected to Christ. He who does not have his feet planted on the rock will not be able to resist temptation. Not only that, whoever provokes temptation in others through any attitude—such as inappropriate clothing—will be equally guilty as the one tempted. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world" (1 John 2:16).

"The world must not be introduced into the church, and married to the church, forming a bond of unity."¹³

By God's grace, we can have His character implanted in our hearts. And when that character is fully fixed in our lives, we will be reformers like Christ was.

It is time for us to be true reformers! Our clothing must be of good taste, of durable quality. But that which displeases God—lack of modesty, sensuality and “fig leaves”—must be rejected by Christians.

“Be not hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. Fashion is deteriorating the intellect and eating out the spirituality of our people. Obedience to fashion is pervading our Seventh-day Adventist churches and is doing more than any other power to separate our people from God. I have been shown that our church rules are very deficient. All exhibitions of pride in dress, which is forbidden in the word of God, should be sufficient reason for church discipline. If there is a continuance, in face of warnings and appeals and entreaties, to still follow the perverse will, it may be regarded as proof that the heart is in no way assimilated to Christ. Self, and only self, is the object of adoration, and one such professed Christian will lead many away from God.”¹⁴

EXAMPLES OF TRUE REFORMERS

Elijah was a true reformer. He put principles above everything else. At the risk of his own life, he led the people to a decision to abandon idolatry and return to God. The Bible mentions him as a symbol of the work of restoration in the last days (Mark 9:12; Malachi 4:5, 6). The faithful who do not bow the knee to Baal are those whom God can count on now.

John the Baptist, in the spirit of Elijah, also preached unpopular truths, calling sin by its right name, thus preparing the way for the Messiah. He lost his life for fulfilling his duty as a reformer. However, his name is among the greatest in the kingdom of Christ, who declared of him: “Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist” (Luke 7:28).

In the Middle Ages, valiant reformers rose up in defense of biblical truths. Luther and others were used by God in the great

work of uplifting the principles of His Word; he was often exposed to death by his persecutors, but he never shied away from the clear duty to speak and live the truth found in Christ. On one occasion, when advised not to appear before the authorities who accused him, Luther declared: “If there were as many devils at Worms as its tiles on roofs, I would enter.”¹⁵

This courageous spirit, characteristic of all reformers, was also found in the pioneers of the Reform Movement. In the face of scorn and accusations, they stood firm in defense of the truth, even at the cost of their lives. And, due to the efforts of these brave warriors of faith, we are here today.

The Spirit of Prophecy emphasizes the importance of a Christlike character in the work of reform for today.

“Reformers are not destroyers. They will never seek to ruin those who do not harmonize with their plans and assimilate to them. Reformers must advance, not retreat. They must be decided, firm, resolute, unflinching; but firmness must not degenerate into a domineering spirit. God desires to have all who serve Him firm as a rock where principle is concerned, but meek and lowly of heart, as was Christ. Then, abiding in Christ, they can do the work He would do were He in their place.”¹⁶

We cannot afford to mar the work by “a rude, condemnatory spirit,” this “is not essential to heroism in the reforms for this time.”¹⁷

By God’s grace, we can have His character implanted in our hearts. And when that character is fully fixed in our lives, we will be reformers like Christ was. We will have divine wisdom to apply the right words to the sinful woman or to rebuke the impetuous Peter. We will succeed in both blessing the people and overturning the tables of the moneychangers. But we will never be true reformers without the Spirit of Christ. We live in the time of restoration of all things, and Christ must dwell in us to fulfill what He expects of us.

Elijah was chased and hunted everywhere, yet God hid him. He was sentenced to death by the idolatrous queen when he called the people to reform. After fulfilling his ministry, he was elevated to Heaven without seeing death.

John the Baptist was mistreated, defamed and imprisoned. His short and blessed ministry ended when he was arrested and beheaded.

Most reformers in the Middle Ages were persecuted and executed for fulfilling their call to reform the cause of God. “Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:12).

It doesn’t matter what happens to us as a result of our profession of faith. Before us is one of the darkest chapters in earthly history. We will be brought before the authorities, tried and unjustly condemned. However, what is more important? Jesus bids us, “be thou faithful unto death, and I will thee a crown of life” (Revelation 2:10). The promise for the true reformers, who live in the last days, is: “To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne” (Revelation 3:21). Isaiah 51:11 shows that the reward of the faithful reformer will be incomparable and eternal.

A true reformer will suffer persecution, rejection, and offense. But the work needs to be done. I have been called to fulfill this mission. You have been called to fulfill this mission. What are we waiting for? May the Holy Spirit guide us to be true reformers! *R*

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³ *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 313, 314.
⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 239.
⁵ *Christian Experience and Teachings of Ellen G. White*, p. 156.
⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 306.
⁷ *The Great Controversy*, p. 438.
⁸ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 350.
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¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 254, 255.
¹¹ *Evangelism*, p. 672.
¹² *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 523.
¹³ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 265.
¹⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, pp. 647, 648.
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TESTIMONY



TO KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 9, 2020

The time has come to make known the truths of the faith. There is a present truth for this time revealed in the precious light of the heavenly sanctuary.

This is how the pen of Inspiration describes it:

“The subject of the sanctuary and the investigative judgment should be clearly understood by the people of God. All need a knowledge for themselves of the position and work of their great High Priest. Otherwise it will be impossible for them to exercise the faith which is essential at this time or to occupy the position which God designs them to fill. Every individual has a soul to save or to lose. Each has a case pending at the bar of God. Each must meet the great Judge face to face. How important, then, that every mind contemplate often the solemn scene when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, when, with Daniel, every individual must stand in his lot, at the end of the days.

“All who have received the light upon these subjects are to bear testimony of the great truths which God has committed to them. The sanctuary in heaven is the very center of Christ’s work in behalf of men. It concerns every soul living upon the earth. It opens to view the plan of redemption, bringing us down to the very close of time and revealing the triumphant issue of the contest between righteousness and sin. It is of the utmost importance that all should thoroughly investigate these subjects and be able to give an answer to everyone that asketh them a reason of the hope that is in them.”¹

The time has come to know what you believe about the truth of the sanctuary, since all the truths for this time are embodied therein. The sanctuary speaks of the incarnation of Christ and His death on the cross. It reveals the truth about justification, sanctification, and redemption. It teaches the truth about baptism, the truth about the Sabbath (the sealing) and the law, as well as the truth about

the laws of health reform. And as mentioned above, the truth about the investigative judgment (Christ’s ministry in the Most Holy Place), the final judgment, and other truths that we profess all are embodied in the sanctuary.

At this time, let us focus especially on the message of the three angels of Revelation 14 and that other angel of Revelation 18.

THE EVERLASTING GOSPEL

“The third angel of Revelation 14 is represented as flying swiftly through the midst of heaven crying: ‘Here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.’ Here is shown the nature of the work of the people of God. They have a message of so great importance that they are represented as flying in the presentation of it to the world. They are holding in their hands the bread of life for a famishing world. The love of Christ constraineth them. This is the last message.

There are no more to follow, no more invitations of mercy to be given after this message shall have done its work. What a trust! What a responsibility is resting upon all to carry the words of gracious invitation: 'And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.'

"Everyone who heareth is to say: Come. Not only ministers, but the people. All are to join in the invitation. Not only by their profession, but by their character and dress, all are to have a winning influence. They are made trustees for the world, executors of the will of One who has bequeathed sacred truth to men. Would that all could feel the dignity and glory of their God-given trust."²

We need to know what is the third angel's message that is to be given to all the world. It is the law and the everlasting gospel. Sometimes people ask why it is called the everlasting gospel. It is because the law is eternal and the gospel—the good news of salvation—is eternal, as well.

"No man can rightly present the law of God without the gospel, or the gospel without the law. The law is the gospel embodied, and the gospel is the law unfolded. The law is the root, the gospel is the fragrant blossom and fruit which it bears."³

"The law and the gospel are in perfect harmony. Each upholds the other. In all its majesty the law confronts the conscience, causing the sinner to feel his need of Christ as the propitiation for sin. The gospel recognizes the power and immutability of the law. 'I had not known sin, but by the law,' Paul declares (Romans 7:7). The sense of sin, urged home by the law, drives the sinner to the Saviour. In his need man may present the mighty arguments furnished by the cross of Calvary. He may claim the righteousness of Christ; for it is imparted to every repentant sinner. God declares, 'Him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out' (John 6:37). 'If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our

sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness' (1 John 1:9)."⁴

In Revelation 14:12, we read about "the faith of Jesus." What constitutes the faith of Jesus enshrined in the third angel's message? Jesus bore our transgressions as the sin-pardoning Saviour. He came to our world and took our sins upon Him so that we could receive His righteousness. And faith in the power of Christ to save us fully and completely, is the faith of Jesus. But while the law reveals our sins, it does not provide the remedy. Only the gospel of Christ can offer forgiveness. To be forgiven, sinners must exercise repentance toward God, whose law has been transgressed, and to have faith in Christ and His atoning sacrifice.

THE LIGHT OF THE MESSAGE FROM THAT OTHER ANGEL

Sadly, "the Lord has been insulted. The standard of truth, of the first, second, and third angels' messages has been left to trail in the dust. If the watchmen are left to mislead the people in this fashion, God will hold some souls responsible for a lack of keen discernment to discover what kind of provender was being given to His flock."⁵

"We are in danger of giving the third angel's message in so indefinite a manner that it does not impress the people. So many other interests are brought in that the very message which should be

proclaimed with power becomes tame and voiceless."⁶

Therefore, the Lord was kind enough to send another angel, who unites his voice with the third angel. He does not bring a new message, but rather strengthens the existing one.

"The third angel's message is to be given with power. The power of the proclamation of the first and second messages is to be intensified in the third. In the Revelation John says of the heavenly messenger who unites with the third angel: 'I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice.' Revelation 18:1, 2."⁷

"The third angel's message must go over the land, and awaken the people, and call their attention to the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Another angel unites his voice with the third angel, and the earth is lighted with its glory. The light increases, and it shines out to all the nations of the earth. It is to go forth as a light that burneth. It will be attended with great power, until its golden beams have fallen upon every tongue, every people, and every nation upon the face of the whole earth. Let me ask you, What you are doing to prepare for this work? Are you building for eternity? You must remember that this angel represents the people that have this message to give to the world. Are you among that people? Do you really believe that this work in which we are engaged



**Are you building for eternity?
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is truly the third angel's message? If so, then you understand that we have a mighty work to do, and that we ought to be about it. We must sanctify ourselves by a strict obedience to the truth, placing ourselves in right relation to God and His work."⁸

There are some who think that it does not matter what denomination you are in—but according to this statement, we are encouraged to be among that people represented by the angel who illuminates the earth with his glory. These are the people engaged in proclaiming the precious truth for this time.

There is still a people who set aside their own will and seek to do God's will, a people in whose heart and life the divine law is written.

"Revelation 18 points to the time when, as the result of rejecting the threefold warning of Revelation 14:6–12, the church will have fully reached the condition foretold by the second angel, and the people of God still in Babylon will be called upon to separate from her communion. This message is the last that will ever be given to the world; and it will accomplish its work. When those that 'believed not the truth, but had pleasure in

unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:12), shall be left to receive strong delusion and to believe a lie, then the light of truth will shine upon all whose hearts are open to receive it, and all the children of the Lord that remain in Babylon will heed the call: 'Come out of her, my people' (Revelation 18:4)."⁹

The message brought by the fourth angel is based on Revelation 3:18, 19. This is how the pen of Inspiration describes it:

"Several have written to me, inquiring if the message of justification by faith is the third angel's message, and I have answered, 'It is the third angel's message in verity.'"¹⁰

A WORK OF PURIFICATION, PREPARATION, REFORM

The prophecies of Revelation chapter 18 will soon be fulfilled. During the proclamation of the third angel's message, that other angel who descends from heaven, fills the earth with the glory of God and through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our Saviour, the Holy Spirit will conclude His work of purification on the minds and hearts of all believers. The Lord declares,

"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you. 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. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them" (Ezekiel 36:25–27). This is the work of the Holy Spirit sent by God to do a special work. It began in 1888.

All of Revelation 18 will be accomplished at the glorious conclusion of this work, which is not yet finished. The light of the fourth angel's message began to shine in that impressive movement in Minneapolis in 1888. The only reasonable conclusion is that the light has been hindered by human instruments.

"The time of test is just upon us, for the loud cry of the third angel has already begun in the revelation of the righteousness of Christ, the sin-pardoning Redeemer. This is the beginning of the light of the angel whose glory shall fill the whole earth. For it is the work of every one to whom the message of warning has come, to lift up Jesus, to present Him to the world as revealed in types, as shadowed in symbols, as manifested in the revelations of the prophets, as unveiled in the lessons given to His disciples and in the wonderful miracles wrought for the sons of men."¹¹

The message of hope brought by this angel (Revelation 18:1) is the message of the faithful witness to the church in Laodicea, symbolizing the movement of reformation.

This angel who unites his voice to the proclamation of the third message, will lighten the whole earth with his glory. This is how a work of universal extent and extraordinary power is predicted. All obstacles will be overcome by the powerful movement developed under the proclamation of the last warning of the third angel. Some do not realize that this is a religious movement, but the following reference clarifies this for us:



Why not love the things that Christ loved, and hate the things that Christ hated? He has made provision ample enough for you that you can, through Him, be more, yea, more than overcomers.

“Of Babylon at this time it is declared, ‘Her sins have reached unto heaven, and God hath remembered her iniquities.’ [Revelation 18:5.] She has filled up the measure of her guilt, and destruction is about to fall upon her. But God still has a people in Babylon; and before the visitation of His judgments, these faithful ones must be called out, that they ‘partake not of her sins, and receive not of her plagues.’ Hence the movement symbolized by the angel coming down from Heaven, lightening the earth with his glory, and crying mightily with a strong voice, announcing the sins of Babylon. In connection with his message the call is heard, ‘Come out of her, my people.’ As these warnings join the third angel’s message, it swells to a loud cry.”¹²

“The question of most vital importance for this time is, ‘Who is on the Lord’s side? Who will unite with the angel in giving the message of truth to the world? Who will receive the light that is to fill the whole earth with its glory?’”¹³

DENYING SELF AND LIVING FOR CHRIST

The third angel, flying in the midst of heaven and proclaiming the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus, is a representation of our work. The message loses nothing of its strength as the angel advances in its flight,

and John the Revelator sees it increasing in strength and power until the whole earth is illuminated with his glory. The path of God’s commandment-keeping people is forward, always forward. The message of truth that we carry has to go to every nation, tongue, and people, until the earth is filled with its glory. Are we preparing for this great outpouring of the Spirit of God?

“We need not worry about the latter rain. All we have to do is to keep the vessel clean and right side up and prepared for the reception of the heavenly rain, and keep praying, ‘Let the latter rain come into my vessel. Let the light of the glorious angel which unites with the third angel shine upon me; give me a part in the work; let me sound the proclamation; let me be a colaborer with Jesus Christ.’ Thus seeking God, let me tell you, He is fitting you up all the time, giving you His grace.

“You need not be worried. You need not be thinking that there is a special time coming when you are to be crucified. The time to be crucified is just now. Every day, every hour, self is to die; self is to be crucified; and then, when the time comes that the test shall come to God’s people in earnest, the everlasting arms are around you. The angels of God make a wall of fire around about and deliver you.

“All your self-crucifixion will not do any good then. It must be [done] before the destiny of souls

is decided. It is now that self is to be crucified—when there is work to do; when there is some use to be made of every entrusted capability. It is now that we are to empty and thoroughly cleanse the vessel of its impurity. It is now that we are to be made holy unto God. This is our work, this very moment. You are not to wait for any special period for a wonderful work to be done; it is today. I give myself to God today. . . .

“Are you ready to make the surrender now? You are to put away your sin right now when you see it. . . . Do not make leeway [that] you are going to overcome by degrees; you are going to try little by little to give up sin. Now, while it is called today, heed the invitation and harden not your hearts.

“Oh, my soul, why not leave the cursed thing today? Sin crucified my Lord. Why not turn from it with loathing? Why not love the things that Christ loved, and hate the things that Christ hated? He has made provision ample enough for you that you can, through Him, be more, yea, more than overcomers.”¹⁴

CONCLUSION

“Our time is precious. We have but few, very few days of probation in which to make ready for the future, immortal life. We have no time to spend in haphazard movements. We should fear to skim the surface of the word of God.”¹⁵

May the Lord Jesus guide your life always, may you be a bearer of the precious truths of this time, and may the Lord bless you abundantly! Amen. *R*

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- ¹¹ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.
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BY Samuel Andres – *Philippines*

IT'S TIME

TO BE HEALTHY AND HEAL THE WORLD

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2020

Dear brethren, we are the people living in this final generation in the history of a world full of woe, misery, and death—yet we are challenged to be like Christ, the healer of the world. How can this be accomplished?

As the Lord's messenger describes a scene from the resurrection, "those who lived before the flood, come forth with their giant-like stature, more than twice as tall as men now living upon the earth, and well proportioned. The generations after the flood were less in stature. There was a continual decrease through successive generations, down to the last that lived upon the earth. The contrast between the first wicked men who lived upon the earth, and those of the last generation, was very great. The first were of lofty height and well proportioned—the last came up as they went down, a

dwarfed, feeble, deformed race."¹

As the human race as a whole has weakened, it is not only our physical stature that has undergone degradation. Our physical health and morals have as well—so our entire being is in need of healing in order for us to enjoy the blessing bestowed at our creation and extend it to our fellowmen.

THE ORIGINAL PLAN

It is not the plan of God for humanity to be unhappy in its existence, for "God made man perfectly holy and happy; and the fair earth, as it came from the Creator's hand, bore no blight of decay or shadow of the curse. It is transgression of God's law—the law of love—that has brought woe and death."² We cannot even imagine how much we would have developed into men and women according to God's plan in our

creation if our first parents had not committed sin.

"It was [God's] purpose that the longer man lived the more fully he should reveal this image—the more fully reflect the glory of the Creator. All his faculties were capable of development; their capacity and vigor were continually to increase. Vast was the scope offered for their exercise, glorious the field opened to their research. . . . More and more fully would he have fulfilled the object of his creation, more and more fully have reflected the Creator's glory.

"But by disobedience this was forfeited. Through sin the divine likeness was marred, and well-nigh obliterated. Man's physical powers were weakened, his mental capacity was lessened, his spiritual vision dimmed. He had become subject to death."³

The healing of body, mind and soul sickened due to sin is to be

the work of God's people. We are called to bring healing to the world from all the maladies which sin has wrought. Christ is our pattern in this aim:

"Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23). So, there is a double target of healing—both the moral and the physical. There is no real recovery if either of these is left uncured. "Virtue of character depends upon the right action of the powers of the mind and body."⁴

THE WORK OF CHRIST

The work of Christ is to redeem man from the depth of sin into which he was sunken. "To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. . . .

"It means that in the whole being—the body, the mind, as well as the soul—the image of God is to be restored."⁵ The restoration of the image of God is the healing of body, mind, and soul. This was the work of Christ when He came to this world—not only the healing of the physical ailments, but also cleansing from the disease of sin. Remember that the physical diseases were closely connected with sin; in healing the disease, Christ healed the soul. When Jesus was in this world, this was His mission. The prophet Isaiah foretold what Jesus was to declare in Nazareth: "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound" (Isaiah 61:1).

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing

all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matthew 4:23). Indeed, through the scriptures, we have the wonderfully inspiring record of "how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:38).

"Our Lord Jesus Christ came to this world as the unwearied servant of man's necessity. He 'took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses,' that He might minister to every need of humanity. (Matthew 8:17.) The burden of disease and wretchedness and sin He came to remove. It was His mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character."⁶

OUR WORK

"Christ is our example. He went about doing good. He lived to bless others. Love beautified and ennobled all His actions."⁷ Not only is Christ our example, as mentioned, His work is our work, to "bring to men complete restoration" and to give men "health and peace and perfection of character."⁸ As we do the work of Christ, we "are to learn Christ's method of laboring," and keep in mind that "the same Spirit that dwelt in Christ as He imparted the instruction He was constantly receiving." This is the source of "knowledge and the secret" of "power in carrying on the Saviour's work in the world."⁹ We are the channels in His hands in the work of redemption.

"To restore in man the image of his Maker, to bring him back to the perfection in which he was created, to promote the development of body, mind, and soul, that the divine purpose in his creation might be realized—this was to be the work of redemption. This is the object of education, the great object of life."¹⁰

The commission to go to all the world and preach the gospel included the healing of the sick—and the assurance that Jesus has given is to be with us unto the end

of the world (see Matthew 28:20). Glorious was the result in the experience of the apostles. The same commission is extended to us who are living in this last generation—and when we are ready to carry out this blessed task with all our heart, more extensive and more glorious will be the result.

At this point, we have not much time left because we are now living on the very verge of the close of this world's history. The Lord will no longer delay His time because of individuals who do not care; He will have others. If you don't want others to take your place, see to it that you make your calling and election sure. As a church and as individuals, our main concern is to prepare ourselves and our people: PREPARE, PREPARE, AND PREPARE.

A COMPLETE MESSAGE

Yes, it's time to be healthy and heal the world. As generally understood, we cannot give something we don't have. In other words, before we can go and bring healing to the people, we must be healthy first. As mentioned, our diseases are not merely physical but rather are both physical and moral. So, it's high time to do something about this! We should be the first ones to be healthy and not to be the last, since we have so much light and many advantages available to us.

First of all, we have the three angels' messages intended for this very purpose. The Lord's messenger explains that justification by faith is "the third angel's message in verity."¹¹ We are the advocates of the three angels' messages—and what is that? Justification by faith, which "invited the people to receive the righteousness of Christ, which is made manifest in obedience to all the commandments of God."¹² When we receive the righteousness of Christ, it is to be manifested in obedience to all the commandments of God. This message is the answer to the disease of sin which has caused man to be physically ill. "This is the message



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The commission to go to all the world and preach the gospel included the healing of the sick—and the assurance that Jesus has given is to be with us unto the end of the world.

that God commanded to be given to the world. It is the third angel’s message, which is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, and attended with the outpouring of His Spirit in a large measure.”¹³

Then we have the message of health reform. The Lord gave a vision to His servant to bring us this message. She relates, “It was at the house of Brother A. Hilliard, at Otsego, Michigan, June 6, 1863, that the great subject of Health Reform was opened before me in vision.”¹⁴ Why was the health reform given? It is for the benefit of God’s people and for them to share with others: “The light God has given on health reform is for our salvation and the salvation of the world.”¹⁵ We should be the first to implement the principles of health reform and then share it with the world. Disease is a great hindrance to the development of Christian character. “Since the mind and the soul find expression through the body, both mental and spiritual vigor are in great degree dependent upon physical strength and activity; whatever promotes physical health, promotes the development of a strong mind and a well-balanced character. Without health, no one can as distinctly understand or as completely fulfill his obligations to himself, to his fellow beings, or to his Creator. Therefore, the health should be as faithfully guarded as the character.”¹⁶

Sometimes we are confused. What is the connection between Justification by Faith—or Righteousness by Faith—and the message of health reform in relation to the restoration of the image of God in man and the perfecting of Christian character? We have a clear revelation on this point. The message of Justification by Faith is for the conversion of mind and heart to bring man to a new direction in life—“New thoughts, new feelings, new motives, are implanted. A new standard of character is set up—the life of Christ.”¹⁷

“Justification is wholly of grace.”¹⁸ “Without the grace of Christ, the sinner is in a hopeless condition; nothing can be done for him; but through divine grace, supernatural power is imparted to the man and works in mind and heart and character.”¹⁹

The message of health reform, in turn, has a specific purpose to reduce the strong animal propensities in human nature and instead fortify our moral decisions towards character perfection.

HOW SHOULD THIS AFFECT HOW WE PREPARE OUR FOOD?

“Many mothers who deplore the intemperance which exists everywhere do not look deep enough to see the cause. They are

daily preparing a variety of dishes and highly seasoned food which tempt the appetite and encourage overeating. The tables of our . . . people are generally prepared in a manner to make drunkards. Appetite is the ruling principle with a large class. Whoever will indulge appetite in eating too often, and food not of a healthful quality, is weakening his power to resist the clamors of appetite and passion in other respects in proportion as he has strengthened the propensity to incorrect habits of eating. Mothers need to be impressed with their obligation to God and to the world to furnish society with children having well-developed characters.”²⁰

“When persons are spoken to on the subject of health, they often say: ‘We know a great deal better than we do.’ They do not realize that they are accountable for every ray of light in regard to their physical well-being, and that their every habit is open to the inspection of God. Physical life is not to be treated in a haphazard manner. Every organ, every fiber of the being, is to be sacredly guarded from harmful practices.”²¹

“God has given us great light upon the health reform, which He requires us all to respect. He does not send light to be rejected or disregarded by His people without their suffering the consequences.”²²

Sadly, “the moral powers are beclouded, because men and women will not live in obedience to the laws of health.”²³

LEARNING TO LIVE THE MESSAGE

“The subject of health reform has been presented in the churches; but the light has not been heartily received. The selfish, health-destroying indulgences of men and women have counteracted the influence of the message that is to prepare a people for the great day of God. If the churches expect strength, they must live the truth which God has given them. If the members of our churches disregard the light on this subject, they will reap the sure result in both spiritual and physical degeneracy. And the influence of these older church members will leaven those newly come to the faith. The Lord does not now work to bring many souls into the truth, because of the church members who have never been converted and those who were once converted but who have backslidden. What influence would these unconsecrated members have on new converts? Would they not make of no effect the God-given message which His people are to bear?”

“Let all examine their own practices to see if they are not indulging in that which is a positive injury to them. Let them dispense with every unhealthful gratification in eating and drinking. Some go to distant countries to seek a better climate; but wherever they may be, the stomach creates for them a malarious atmosphere. They bring upon themselves suffering that no one can alleviate. Let them bring their daily practice into harmony with nature’s laws; and by doing as well as believing, an atmosphere may be created about both soul and body that will be a savor of life unto life.

“Brethren, we are far behind. Many of the things which the church should do in order to be a living church are not done. Through the indulgence of perverted appetite many place themselves in such

a condition of health that there is a constant warring against the soul’s highest interests. The truth, though presented in clear lines, is not accepted. I wish to set this matter before every member of our churches. Our habits must be brought into conformity to the will of God. We are assured, ‘It is God which worketh in you,’ but man must do his part in controlling appetite and passion. The religious life requires the action of mind and heart in harmony with the divine forces. No man can of himself work out his own salvation, and God cannot do this work for him without his cooperation. But when man works earnestly, God works with him, giving him power to become a son of God.”²⁴

Satan knows that if we violate the laws of health, our ruin is sure—but if we follow God’s health reform, the enemy’s temptations can be more readily resisted. “The great enemy knows that if appetite and passion predominate, the health of body and strength of intellect are sacrificed upon the altar of self-gratification, and man is brought to speedy ruin. If enlightened intellect holds the reins, controlling the animal propensities and keeping them in subjection to the moral powers, Satan well knows that his power to overcome with his temptations is very small.”²⁵

So, to make our pathway more conducive to perfection, we follow the health reform. With the combination of the message of justification and health reform—if we sincerely live by them, the victory is ours.

“When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own”²⁶, together with the people whom we have brought to the feet of our Lord.

CONCLUSION

“The Lord desires through His people to answer Satan’s charges by showing the result of obedience to right principles. He desires our health institutions to stand as witnesses for the truth. They are to

give character to the work which must be carried forward in these last days in restoring man through a reformation of the habits, appetites, and passions. Seventh-day Adventists are to be represented to the world by the advance principles of health reform which God has given us.”²⁷

Finally, brethren, we have a very serious mission to fulfill—to evangelize and heal the world from the deadly miasma of disease which has contaminated humanity ever since the fall of our first parents. Our prayer should be: “God be merciful unto us, and bless us; and cause his face to shine upon us. . . . That thy way may be known upon earth, thy saving health among all nations” (Psalm 67:1, 2). The church is the agency which the Lord will use to save the world. But unless the church itself is cured and healthy, it cannot realize its mission. So, I am appealing to all members of the church (the Seventh Day Adventist Reform Movement) around the world, that we may dedicate our lives fully to God and ask the Lord to heal us as individuals and as a church. Over the 95 years of our experience, we have not yet fulfilled our mission—and we are already more than double a 40-year journey in the wilderness! But it is not yet too late. LET’S WAKE UP! IT’S TIME TO BE HEALTHY AND HEAL THE WORLD. *R*

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- ⁴ *Counsels on Health*, p. 505.
- ⁵ *Education*, pp. 15, 16.
- ⁶ *The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17.
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- ⁹ *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 365.
- ¹⁰ *Education*, pp. 15, 16.
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- ¹² *Ibid.*
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- ¹⁴ *Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 276.
- ¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 136.
- ¹⁶ *Child Guidance*, pp. 360, 361.
- ¹⁷ *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 98, 99.
- ¹⁸ *Faith and Works*, p. 20.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 100.
- ²⁰ *Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 563.
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- ²³ *Christian Education*, p. 10.
- ²⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 370, 371.
- ²⁵ *Confrontation*, p. 58.
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IT'S TIME

TO PREPARE FOR THE FINAL EVENTS TO UNITE AND WORK TOGETHER

S A B B A T H , D E C E M B E R 1 2 , 2 0 2 0

THE END IS NEAR!

“Today the signs of the times declare that we are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Everything in our world is in agitation. Before our eyes is fulfilling the Saviour’s prophecy of the events to precede His coming: “Ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars. . . . Nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places” (Matthew 24:6, 7).

“The present is a time of overwhelming interest to all living. Rulers and statesmen, men who occupy positions of trust and authority, thinking men and women of all classes, have their attention fixed upon the events taking place about us. They are watching the

relations that exist among the nations. They observe the intensity that is taking possession of every earthly element, and they recognize that something great and decisive is about to take place—that the world is on the verge of a stupendous crisis.

“The Bible, and the Bible only, gives a correct view of these things. Here are revealed the great final scenes in the history of our world, events that already are casting their shadows before, the sound of their approach causing the earth to tremble and men’s hearts to fail them for fear.”¹

Humanity is fearful about the end of the world. In various nations and cultures there are ideas defining the moment in history when the old system would be destroyed and an age of prosperity and abundance

would begin—or, on the contrary, the destruction of all the living and the desolation of planet Earth would occur.

A secure seed bank in Spitsbergen, artificial intelligence, underground bunkers around the world—these are a few of the means that many suppose are necessary in order to save humanity (or some of its representatives) from the end of the world. Fortunately, believers in Christ have the Word of God, and that’s why all the preparations for the last, final events for the people awaiting His return do not include underground cities, building of an ark or some other material means for salvation. Thanks to the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy we understand that in the last crisis, no such material things can endure.

How can we pass these trials?

How do we stand fast when “the end of the world” comes? What is the responsibility of the last generation on the earth? Undoubtedly, having found the answers to these questions, every sincere Christian will not reduce his vigilance. (See Luke 12:45, 46.) On the contrary, the warning, “take ye heed, watch and pray: for ye know not when the time is” (Mark 13:33) always resounds in his mind and influences his life and actions!

These are not just declarations, loud boastings sounding from our pulpits, or appeals at spiritual meetings—no, the pen of Inspiration explains:

“In order to confess Christ, we must have Him to confess. No one can truly confess Christ unless the mind and spirit of Christ are in him. If a form of godliness, or an acknowledgment of the truth, were always a confession of Christ, we might say: Broad is the way that leadeth unto life, and many there be that find it. We must understand what it is to confess Christ and wherein we deny Him. It is possible with our lips to confess Christ yet in our works deny Him. The fruits of the Spirit manifested in the life are a confession of Him. If we have forsaken all for Christ, our lives will be humble, our conversation heavenly, our conduct blameless. The powerful, purifying influence of truth in the soul, and the character of Christ exemplified in the life, are a confession of Him. If the words of eternal life are sown in our hearts, the fruit is righteousness and peace. We may deny Christ in our life by indulging love of ease or love of self, by jesting and joking, and by seeking the honor of the world. We may deny Him in our outward appearance by conformity to the world, by a proud look or costly apparel. Only by constant watchfulness and persevering, and almost unceasing prayer shall we be able to exhibit in our life the character of Christ or the sanctifying influence of the truth. Many drive Christ from their families by an impatient, passionate spirit. Such have something to overcome in this respect.”²

CHRISTIAN CHARACTER

This is the only thing that remains with a person even when he dies: “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them” (Revelation 14:13).

“Those who have sought for the development and perfection of Christian character by exercising their faculties in good works, will, in the world to come, reap that which they have sown.”³

“It is moral worth that God values. A Christian character unblotted with avarice, possessing quietness, meekness, and humility, is more precious in His sight than the most fine gold, even the golden wedge of Ophir.”⁴

There is an entire arsenal of means that the enemy of souls uses to make the work of our character formation to fail. The Word of God reveals them to us: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” (1 John 2:16). There is also a list of works of the flesh listed in Galatians 5 as well as many habits, inclinations and affections that are dangerous for our spirituality. Unfortunately, we as Christians cannot boast of great success in this struggle. . . .

“Let no one deceive his own soul in this matter. If you harbor pride, self-esteem, a love for the supremacy, vainglory, unholy ambition, murmuring, discontent,

bitterness, evil speaking, lying, deception, slandering, you have not Christ abiding in your heart, and the evidence shows that you have the mind and character of Satan, not of Jesus Christ, who was meek and lowly of heart. You must have a Christian character that will stand.”⁵

SAFETY IN THE TIME OF STORM

A small fishing boat was once caught in a storm. Typically, a storm begins unexpectedly and so it was this time. A strong wind and huge waves were beating into the ship. Those inside the ship were wrestling for their lives, but their attempts were ineffective. Nothing could help them until they remembered about Jesus, sleeping at the stern. “Master, we’re perishing!”—they cried stridently, trying to shout down the storm—“Save us!” Christ never turns away those who plead with Him for salvation. But did the disciples understand what Christ’s presence meant? Did they understand it was impossible to perish with Him on board? The only problem was that their attention was focused on the storm, not on Christ. All that Jesus had to do to stop the storm was: “He arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm” (Mark 4:39).

In reality, none of us is ready for the future storm. And no one knows what it will be like. Even the most prepared saints cannot imagine what they will need in order to endure it! And just as the disciples

The signs of Christ’s coming are too plain to be doubted, and in view of these things everyone who professes the truth should be a living preacher.

could not calm the storm on the Sea of Galilee, so God's children will not be able to quiet the storm soon to engulf our planet. Only Christ is able to do this! Christ is in the boat with us if we don't forget Him. In His presence everything is different. We would perish without Him, but He can calm the tempest and dispel the fear. Let us look to the Saviour instead of looking at the storm!

HASTE AND SLUGGISHNESS

These actions that are opposite in their meaning often are simultaneously present in our life. Everyone is in a hurry in our world today. . . . We push to do everything faster, we rush around to visit many places; we hastily try to solve many problems. People eat quickly, marry quickly, live quickly and die quickly. . . . Even the funerals are shorter with every passing year!

"Work and hurry and drive are the order of the day, and their intense worldliness has had its molding influence upon their children, upon the church, and upon the world. It is the example of those who hold the truth in righteousness which will condemn the world."⁶

People rushing forward without thinking where they're going are like the person that gets into a taxi and doesn't tell the driver the address, but instead shouts "onward" and the car whirls along. But where? The address is unknown to all! To where is the world hurrying? Why are we rushing so fast? The prophet Zephaniah says: "The great day of the LORD is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the LORD" (Zephaniah 1:14).

"God's people must take warning and discern the signs of the times. The signs of Christ's coming are too plain to be doubted, and in view of these things everyone who professes the truth should be a living preacher. God calls upon all, both preachers and people, to awake. All heaven is astir. The scenes of earth's history are fast closing. We are amid the perils of the last days. Greater perils are before us, and yet we are not awake.

This lack of activity and earnestness in the cause of God is dreadful."⁷

Please, pay attention to the last sentence of that paragraph: We are always in a hurry, yet in the work of our soul's salvation there is a lack of activity and earnestness! It's a striking contrast! In the things of this world, there is zeal, speed, flash-like reaction, but in spiritual life, the condition is as if we would have seven more lives and nowhere to go in such a hurry! The scriptures warn that we don't have time to tarry as Lot did in Sodom, to delay rather than haste from our perdition.

"Beware of procrastination. Do not put off the work of forsaking your sins and seeking purity of heart through Jesus. Here is where thousands upon thousands have erred to their eternal loss. I will not here dwell upon the shortness and uncertainty of life; but there is a terrible danger—a danger not sufficiently understood—in delaying to yield to the pleading voice of God's Holy Spirit, in choosing to live in sin; for such this delay really is. Sin, however small it may be esteemed, can be indulged in only at the peril of infinite loss. **What we do not overcome, will overcome us and work out our destruction.**"⁸

Our personal relationship with the Lord, sincere repentance, open-hearted confession of our sins—unless we are active in these matters, we will be unprepared to meet Jesus at His coming.

TIME TO UNITE

The important factor that defines the readiness of the church and its individual members for the final solemn events is the ability or the desire to unite.

"Dear Brethren: As all the different members of the human system unite to form the entire body, and each performs its office in obedience to the intelligence that governs the whole, so the members of the church of Christ should be united in one symmetrical body, subject to the sanctified intelligence of the whole."⁹ But why? Many

Christians consider that this is not necessary as they have their personal relationship with God and they don't need anything else! Can a man be saved independent of others? In exceptional cases—yes, but at all times Jesus has had an organized church on the Earth.

Once when visiting a quarry, I noticed neatly piled up stones with rounded corners and wondered how the quarrymen make such beautiful rounding; how do these stones become oval? The worker explained to me the process: it turned out to be very simple, they take rectangular stones, put them into a big barrel and with a help of special machinery they rotate it all day long. As a result of friction, the corners rub off and the stones take on a beautiful form. The pen of Inspiration writes: "We are now in God's workshop. Many of us are rough stones from the quarry. But as we lay hold upon the truth of God, its influence affects us. It elevates us and removes from us every imperfection and sin, of whatever nature. Thus we are prepared to see the King in His beauty and finally to unite with the pure and heavenly angels in the kingdom of glory. It is here that this work is to be accomplished for us, here that our bodies and spirits are to be fitted for immortality."¹⁰

UNITING IN THE TRUTH

In John 17:21–23, Christ uttered a poignant prayer to His Father for unity among His disciples. How is this to come to fruition in our day? The Lord's messenger explains:

"I saw a company who stood well guarded and firm, giving no countenance to those who would unsettle the established faith of the body. God looked upon them with approbation. I was shown three steps—the first, second, and third angels' messages. Said my accompanying angel, 'Woe to him who shall move a block or stir a pin of these messages. The true understanding of these messages is of vital importance. The destiny of souls hangs upon the manner in which they are received.'

Christ is in the boat with us if we don't forget Him. In His presence everything is different. We would perish without Him."

"I was again brought down through these messages, and saw how dearly the people of God had purchased their experience. It had been obtained through much suffering and severe conflict. God had led them along step by step, until He had placed them upon a solid immovable platform. I saw individuals approach the platform and examine the foundation. Some with rejoicing immediately stepped upon it. Others commenced to find fault with the foundation. They wished improvements made, and then the platform would be more perfect and the people much happier.

"Some stepped off the platform to examine it, and declared it to be laid wrong. But I saw that nearly all stood firm upon the platform and exhorted those who had stepped off to cease their complaints; for God was the Master Builder, and they were fighting against Him. They recounted the wonderful work of God, which had led them to the firm platform, and in union raised their eyes to heaven and with a loud voice glorified God. This affected some of those who had complained and left the platform, and they with humble look again stepped upon it."¹¹

THE SABBATH AS A UNITING FACTOR

"The value of the Sabbath as a means of education is beyond estimate. Whatever of ours God claims from us, He returns again, enriched, transfigured, with His own glory. . . .

"The Sabbath and the family were alike instituted in Eden, and in

God's purpose they are indissolubly linked together. On this day more than on any other, it is possible for us to live the life of Eden. It was God's plan for the members of the family to be associated in work and study, in worship and recreation, the father as priest of his household, and both father and mother as teachers and companions of their children. But the results of sin, having changed the conditions of life, to a great degree prevent this association. Often the father hardly sees the faces of his children throughout the week. He is almost wholly deprived of opportunity for companionship or instruction. But God's love has set a limit to the demands of toil. Over the Sabbath He places His merciful hand. In His own day He preserves for the family opportunity for communion with Him, with nature, and with one another."¹²

IT'S TIME!

In the book of Nehemiah, there is a description of a wonderful collaboration in God's work. Today, we have something to learn from the displaced Jews.

1. A goal unites. Nehemiah appealed: "Ye see the distress that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach" (Nehemiah 2:17). Besides intermediate goals (such as building of churches, organization of different establishments) God's people today have a general goal—to get ready to meet Jesus! This

is the thing that, first of all, has to unite all those who await His coming.

2. Various kinds of people have united to attain the goal. In Nehemiah chapter 3 it is written that in the restoration of the wall, there were priests, rulers, Levites, merchants, goldsmiths and keepers of the gates—that means people of different social and spiritual positions. It is similar today. "It is not the greatness of the work, but the love with which it is done, the motive underlying the action, that determines its worth."¹³

3. When there is a goal and a unification, there will be some that will be against it. "And next unto them the Tekoites repaired; but their nobles put not their necks to the work of their Lord." (Nehemiah 3:5). There will be those around to mock, just as Sanballat did against the builders of the wall—taunting that their work for God was in vain. (See Nehemiah 4:1–3.)

4. The highest goal is spirituality. Nehemiah chapter 8 is a wonderful story about the sanctifying influence of the reading of the book of the law upon Israel. Truth upon truth has been revealing now to Israel, "And he read therein before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and **the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law**" (Nehemiah 8:3). [Emphasis added.]

Dear brothers and sisters, can the people of God today follow this same path? Understanding our mission, uniting and reforming in humility and repentance with communication and forgiveness. May the Lord give us the possibility and desire to unite and work together while the day lasts! *R*

References:

- ¹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 537.
- ² *Testimonies*, vol. 1, pp. 303, 304.
- ³ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 83.
- ⁴ *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 538.
- ⁵ *Testimonies to Ministers*, p. 441.
- ⁶ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 434.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 260, 261.
- ⁸ *Steps to Christ*, pp. 32, 33. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁹ *Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 16.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 355.
- ¹¹ *The Story of Redemption*, pp. 385, 386.
- ¹² *Child Guidance*, pp. 535, 536.
- ¹³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 279.

BY Gatera Sylvan – Rwanda

IT'S TIME

TO BE AN ACTIVE MISSIONARY SUNDAY, DECEMBER 13, 2020

INTRODUCTION

“We should all become witnesses for Jesus. Social power, sanctified by the grace of Christ, must be improved in winning souls to the Saviour. Let the world see that we are not selfishly absorbed in our own interests, but that we desire others to share our blessings and privileges. Let them see that our religion does not make us unsympathetic or exacting. Let all who profess to have found Christ, minister as He did for the benefit of men.”¹

As believers, we are called to actively spread God’s words—clearly, fearlessly, graciously, and respectfully whenever an opportunity presents itself, with a commitment to reverence God as the core of our lives. We thus can make a positive difference in the world—whether it be toward our loved ones or toward strangers from another country. Before His ascension, Jesus gave the

Great Commission to the disciples then present—but it applies to us as well. He urges us to make disciples of all people, to go out into the world and teach and live the truth of the plan of redemption. While we are simply channels, we never act alone. Christ is always with us, expressing Himself *as* us. Our success is therefore assured.

THE MISSION BEFORE US

A missionary is a member of a religious group sent into an area to proselytize or perform ministries of service, such as education, literacy, social justice, health care, and economic development.²

In Matthew 28:19, Jesus connects His authority to the Great Commission and that authority enables His disciples to execute the task. He asks us to be active, not inert. **The thrust is to cross any boundary to spread the gospel, geographical or otherwise.**

There’s a reason for being involved in global mission; a congregation that is not deeply and earnestly involved in the worldwide proclamation of the gospel does not understand the nature of salvation. The disciples’ mission was to extend to earth’s remotest bounds.

In her writings, Ellen White noted that missionaries are not doing 1/20th of the work they should for the salvation of souls.³ Instead of calling people and waiting for them to come to us to inquire for the truth, the appeal was made regarding our need to put forth more thorough and earnest efforts to bring the truth before the world.

The time has now come to be an active missionary, including using social media to share Bible truths instead of worldly opinions and portraits. This is very useful in today’s world since global media outreach demonstrates that the Internet is a powerful, low-cost tool

that can penetrate every country in the world and transform every Christian into an international missionary.

One challenge we face is that there are too few missionaries. Second, there are too few missionaries who go to the frontlines. In fact, there's a very small percentage (10%) of missionaries who are reported to be working among unreached group of people, while nearly 90% work among those already reached.

The gospel has to reach all people. We are bidden: *"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"* (Mark 16:15). Jesus gave the disciples the straightforward command to go out in different ways. First, the word of God had been shared among the lost sheep of Israel, but then the commission was broadened. Jesus is not only commanding this, but in His deity, He is giving the authority to go into the world and preach the gospel to all people.

Like the disciples in our scripture passage, we, too, have been taught the truth and thus are being sent out to:

1. Preach the gospel
2. Perform miracles, and
3. Confirm the word of God. We are given the clear command to go out and preach the gospel.

The apostle Paul exclaims, "For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!" (1 Corinthians 9:16.)

Men and women of God do not become pastors, preachers, Sabbath school teachers, etc., for the purpose of obtaining a title or for personal recognition. The blessings of sharing knowledge and leading others and watching them grow is sufficient of itself. Glory and rewards await in the kingdom of heaven.

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Timothy's task was to preach the word of God not only to his church members as they eagerly awaited a word from the Lord ("in season"), but also

to those who may not be ready or willing to receive God's word ("out of season").

A good example of preaching "in season" is when people heartily welcome you to share the truth. "Out of season" is more like the street preacher or the evangelist who dares to take on a jail ministry, or preach on playgrounds in the inner cities **or through social media**. That is out of season, where more than likely those around are not very interested in the word of God.

How do we proceed? We can learn much from our seniors—those outstanding teachers who impact subsequent generations—as well as learning from the perfect Example, Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ is the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6), who loves us and died for us. He bids us to uplift His name to everyone who will listen by the words we speak and the life we live, bearing fruit by faith (Hebrews 11:1), for "faith without works is dead" (James 2:26).

Most of the teachers in Christ's day focused mainly on the intellectual aspects of a subject, but Jesus addressed the whole being of His audience, inviting them to make a decision in favor of God. (See Mark 1:22.) He taught the truth, because He is the Truth.

Today, since information is so readily available in books and over the Internet, this generation assumes that it can learn everything there is to know about life from schools and online research. However, some of the best and the most valuable lessons in life do not come from inanimate objects—but rather from people who have lived longer than us.

"Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God: I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:32). One of the best verses about learning from those older than ourselves is found in Psalm 141:5, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities." It sounds painful doesn't it? But all

need to be corrected at times and we are certainly no exception. Age brings the elderly not only wisdom, but also stories, experiences, and biblical knowledge to us.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PRINTED PAGES

It's very important to consider the power of the printed pages. In fact, the art of recording God's principles for reference started very early; **we see God Himself writing the Ten Commandments on tables of stone at Mount Sinai**. We also know that **the first book, printed in a large number of editions, was the Bible**.

After printing, technology evolved and the written word started spreading at a much faster rate. With the advancement of flat-bed printing in the 15th century and electronic media including the telegraph and telephone in the 18th century, the church started to see a new type of audience which might best be called the "on-demand" audience.

In the book *Colporteur Ministry*, we learn that **even the fragments of truth-filled publications are precious** and every line of printed matter containing present truth is a sacred treasure. Who can estimate the influence that a torn page containing the truths of the third angel's message may have upon the heart of some seeker after truth? "Let us remember that somebody would be glad to read all the books and papers we can spare. Every page is a ray of light from heaven, to shine into the highways and the hedges, shedding light upon the pathway of truth."⁴

OTHER AUDIENCES

Besides written or printed papers, there have also been other forms of audiences which include the following:

a) **The Face-to-Face Live Audience:** Most ministries actually occur face-to-face. Jesus ministered in front of a live audience. In the early church, sermons, prayer sessions, evangelical meetings, counseling

sessions and other kinds of ministry typically took place in front of a live audience.

b) **The Broadcast Audience**, which came into being with the advent of radio and TV technology.

c) **The Online Audience**, when internet technology enabled online media and gave birth to the online audience who use the internet to obtain information.

d) **The Connected Audience** that has emerged out of the combination of social media and mobile technology.

This latter audience, the connected audience, is the hero of our story and the central subject for the rest of this reading.

WE SHOULD USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR EVANGELISM

Jesus has bid us to go into all the world and make disciples of all nations—and to do so in our digitalized world, you don't even have to leave your home. We can now begin to reach and teach the world through a device we hold in our hand, or a small computer that sits on our lap. The world has changed, and there are great opportunities for the church.

Throughout history, the method by which the church performed the Great Commission has been propelled by technology. For the apostle Paul, it was the Roman road system.⁵ For the Reformation, it was the printing press. For us today, it is the power of the Internet in the palm of the hand of nearly all the members of your church, and certainly almost every man, woman, and child in the neighborhood of your church.

In some parts of the planet, particularly in North America, church attendance is generally on the decline. Even for churches that have a large attendance, the local church only hosts a believer or seeker for 1–3 hours per week. Yet your congregation and everyone they know are spending increasingly significant amounts of their waking hours connected on the Internet.

LIVING IN A DIGITAL WORLD

When we say “digital world,” we are emphasizing that almost the entire world is connected to digital technology. *Adweek* reports that the consumer's attention is shifting from television to mobile devices and social media. People are connecting online for more hours a day than almost any other activity. This is where our culture is spending its life—and **this is the new frontier providing opportunities for the life-changing presence of the Good News of Jesus Christ.**

Researcher Jason Mander at *Global Web Index* recently published that the **total hours spent online via PCs, laptops, mobiles, and tablets grew from 5.5 hours per day in 2012 to 6.5 hours per day in 2016.** One of the main drivers of this online engagement is social networks. According to Mander's research, the average person spends two hours every day on social networks like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram; and that number is increasing year after year.

Let's take a look at some of the statistics that illustrate just how crucial social media is to church growth, how poorly churches currently take advantage of it, and key takeaways to help you build (or fix) your social media strategy.

Research done by Barna Group shows that **in 2017, more than half of Bible readers used the Internet (55%) or a smartphone (53%) to access Bible texts—a significant increase from 2011 (37%, 18% respectively).**⁶ People are using the Internet and social media as part of their worship routine in ever-increasing numbers. There is then a need to have an active social media presence to take advantage of that fact, since that's where a big part of our audience is.

Another research found that **almost 70% of churches offer Wi-Fi for staff and guests.**⁷ If a church doesn't offer Wi-Fi, it actually could be driving guests away.

The *Nonprofit Marketing Guide* indicates that **more than 70% of nonprofit communicators consider social media one of their most im-**

portant communication channels.⁸ According to *Nonprofit Marketing Guide's* 2016 report, 71% of nonprofit communication professionals consider social media one of their most important channels, second only to their website (80%). Therefore, if a pastor wants to market his church successfully and increase membership, social media is no longer a “nice to have,” but an essential line of communication.

Almost 85% of churches use Facebook.⁹ The point here is that Facebook is the king of church social media tools. If the church doesn't have a Facebook profile set up, that should be made a key priority. A Facebook page doesn't just give your members a place to interact with each other—it also gives you access to a network of active, online communities where you can get ideas and ask questions.

Only about 15% of churches are using Twitter and Instagram. According to *Statista*, Instagram has more than 800 million users, and Twitter had about 330 million as of the end of 2017. That's an enormous audience to tap into.

Approximately 51% of churches claim that at least one staff member regularly blogs or posts on social media.¹⁰ Consistent posting is crucial to social media success, but the good news is that social media posting is easy; virtually anyone can do it with some initial guidance.

62% of churches use social networking to connect with individuals outside of their congregation, while an even larger number, 73% use social media to interact with their congregation.¹¹

Social media is a lifeline to the outside community, and one we need to use if we want our churches to thrive and grow.

GO TO WHERE PEOPLE IN THE DIGITAL AGE ARE

“Evangelization is a process of bringing the gospel to people, especially young people (Generation Z),¹² where they are, not where you would like them to be. . . . When the gospel reaches

a people where they are, their response to the gospel is the church in a new place.”¹³

It’s astounding how fast things can change in a single year, and 2019 has a range of surprising statistics on which to reflect. Let’s look at the statistics for 2019:

Social Channel	Monthly Active Users ¹
Facebook	2.27 billion users
Twitter	326 million users
Instagram	1 billion users
LinkedIn	260 million users
Pinterest	250+ million users
Snapchat	255 million users
YouTube	1.9 billion users
Reddit	330+ million users
WhatsApp	1.5 billion users
Flickr	90+ million users
Wechat	1.08 billion users
Weibo	446 million users
Telegram	200 million users
Viber	260 million users
Messenger	1.3 billion users ¹⁴

Given the above statistics, we really can’t deny the incredible benefit to using social media tools to **spread the gospel** among your own church members, and to attract new members by promoting events.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND THE CHURCH: THE GOOD AND THE BAD

Strengths: Sharing information quickly to a wide audience.

On the downside: Can consume too much time and be a pointless distraction—or worse yet, a tool to promote negativity, curse words, gossip, slanders, negative news, and evil tidings.

Still, the positive benefits of social media outweigh the

negatives, and present an awesome opportunity to further the gospel, which Christ established as being transmitted socially. The key is to not be ignorant of the challenges and go in blindly—but rather be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

It is therefore up to the church to make use of this remarkable invention and take the spotlight away from Satan, who would like to dominate this fabulous technology with peddlers of rubbish. To do so, there is an urgent need to plan, research, and pray. “A man’s heart deviseth his way: but the Lord directeth his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

If we choose to venture into this digital networking world, we can then learn how our church can best use social media for only good. There are numerous blogs, websites, and even companies that can help churches with social media best practices or with the technical side of getting a profile up and running.

Would our churches be able to afford the costs of an internet ministry? Yes, if it’s a priority.

GIVING FROM HIS WEALTH

God’s work is now to advance rapidly, and if His people will respond to His call, He will make the possessors of property willing to donate of their means, and thus make it possible for His work to be accomplished. “Faith in the word of God will place His people in the possession of property which will enable them to work the large cities that are waiting for the message of truth.”¹⁵ (See 1 Timothy 6:17–19.)

“We are not to spend our money on things that are not essential. God requires that every available dollar shall be given to the work of opening new fields for the entrance of the gospel message and in lessening the mountains of difficulty that seek to close up our missionary work.”¹⁶

Our money is the Lord’s entrusted capital. It should be held in readiness to answer the calls in places where the Lord has need of it.

CONCLUSION

Social media is increasingly prevalent in our society and continues to impact the ways people communicate. It’s not a mere trend that will fade away—it’s here to stay. With the overwhelming majority of the world’s population now online, it is the mandate of the 21st century church to use this “worldwide pulpit” for the great life-changing message of Jesus Christ—the sooner the better.

Let us go out with creativity, boldness, and these amazing new tools in our hands to share the best news in the world with more people than ever before. As Jesus did, let us become incarnational—finding ourselves with people wherever they are. The Word becomes digital and makes its dwelling accordingly. “With God all things are possible”; “With God nothing shall be impossible” (Matthew 19:26; Luke 1:37). *R*

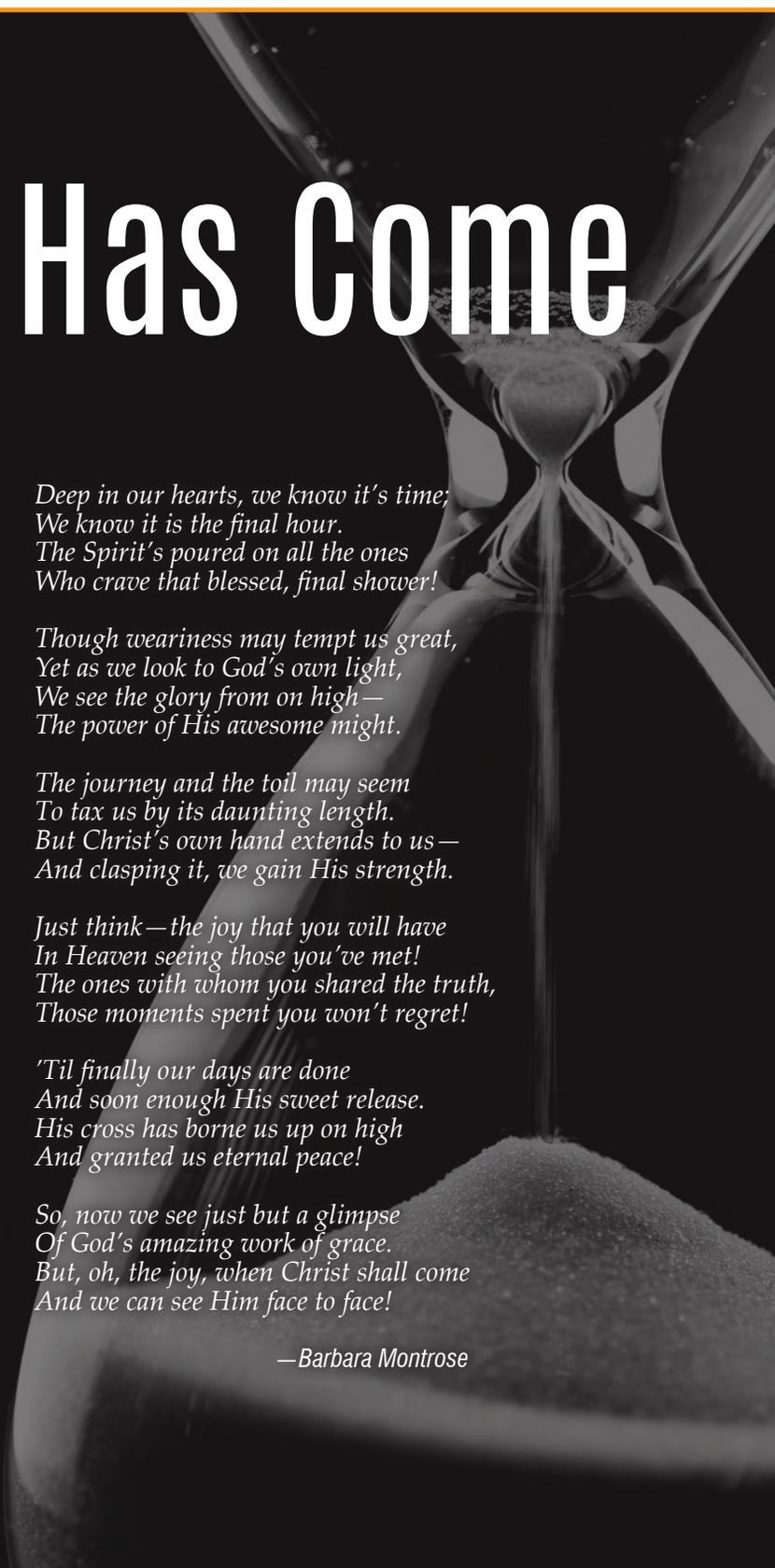
References:

- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 152.
- ² *Wikipedia*.
- ³ *Testimonies*, vol. 5, p. 11.
- ⁴ *Colporteur Ministry*, p. 151.
- ⁵ Because of the *Pax Romana* (Roman Peace) of Emperor Augustus (27 B.C.–A.D. 14), safe conditions prevailed when Paul traveled the Roman world. The Stoic philosopher Epictetus (died around A.D. 135) declared, “There are neither wars nor battles, nor great robberies nor piracies, but we may travel at all hours, and sail from east to west.”
- ⁶ Barna Group (for research, under the umbrella of the Isaacar Companies, Ventura, California, since 1984.) The Word of God is also available to anyone on the internet, and online Bibles are being read by people in countries that prohibit the reading of the Holy Scriptures.
- ⁷ LifeWay Research.
- ⁸ Nonprofit Marketing Guide complies from the answers of over 1,000 nonprofit professionals who take Nonprofit Communications Trends Survey.
- ⁹ LifeWay Research.
- ¹⁰ *Buzzplant*, a Christian-centered digital advertising agency.
- ¹¹ *Facts & Trends*, a platform which has been providing Christian leaders with relevant information, practical ministry ideas, and biblical resources January 1957.
- ¹² Generation Z: Those born between 1995–2010 (or 1998–2016). Most Millennials (Generation Y, born between 1980–1994 approximately) remember the arrival of the internet, as well as the various transformations that smartphones underwent in the early 2000’s.
- ¹³ *Christianity Rediscovered*, by Vincent Donovan (missionary to the Masai people of Tanzania during the 1960’s and 1970’s).
- ¹⁴ *Statista*: Portal with statistics and studies from more than 22,500 sources.
- ¹⁵ *Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 273.
- ¹⁶ *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 10, pp. 216, 217.

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MOVING? Please let us know.

The **Time** Has Come



*The earth and all its people moan,
For suffering reigns, and it is dark.
Yet we who have great light speak not
Like dogs so dumb they will not bark.*

*To fail to speak when, yes, we should,
Is nothing less than certain crime.
The world is surely needing truth
And we must know that now's the time.*

*For all they have is but a dream
Of circus, work, and stirring fright.
Yet Christ will come for all to see,
Amidst the bleakest hour of night.*

*We must not fail to tell the world;
God gives to each of us a role.
There's no excuse for sitting back
When urgent is the sacred goal!*

*The difficulties loom like peaks
Unreachable, so it may seem.
But we are told to trust our King
And pressing on, the time redeem.*

*As each of us shall pray to God
For wisdom how to use each gift,
To shorten misery and woe—
And Christ's return will be so swift!*

*Deep in our hearts, we know it's time;
We know it is the final hour.
The Spirit's poured on all the ones
Who crave that blessed, final shower!*

*Though weariness may tempt us great,
Yet as we look to God's own light,
We see the glory from on high—
The power of His awesome might.*

*The journey and the toil may seem
To tax us by its daunting length.
But Christ's own hand extends to us—
And clasping it, we gain His strength.*

*Just think—the joy that you will have
In Heaven seeing those you've met!
The ones with whom you shared the truth,
Those moments spent you won't regret!*

*'Til finally our days are done
And soon enough His sweet release.
His cross has borne us up on high
And granted us eternal peace!*

*So, now we see just but a glimpse
Of God's amazing work of grace.
But, oh, the joy, when Christ shall come
And we can see Him face to face!*

—Barbara Montrose