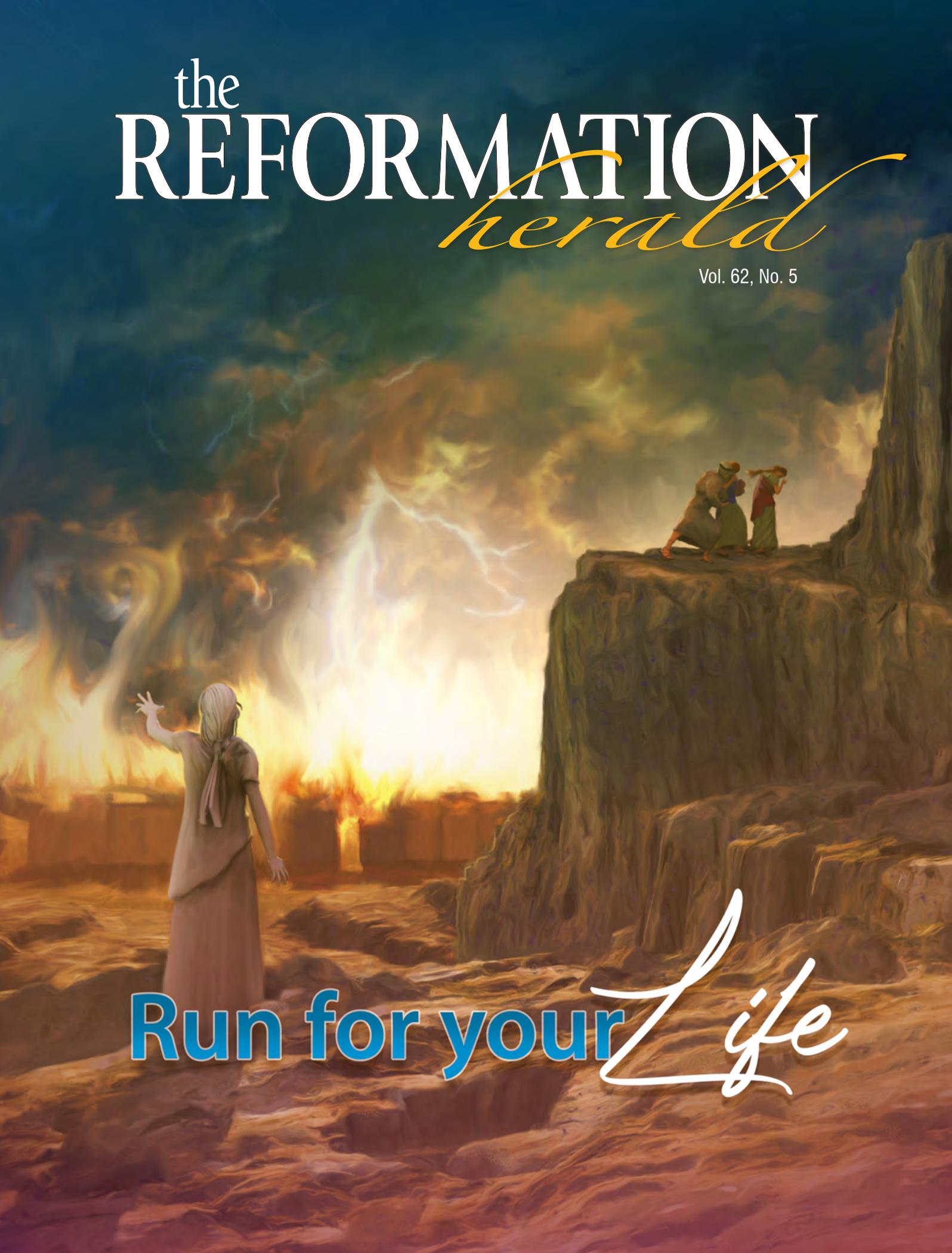


the REFORMATION *herald*

Vol. 62, No. 5



Run for your *Life*

the REFORMATION herald

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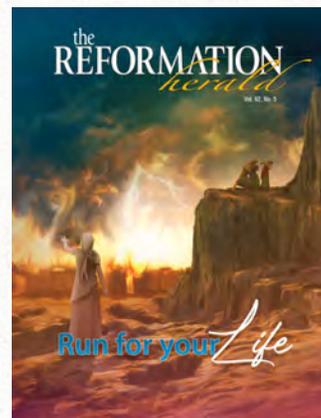
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Have you ever thought of distributing The Reformation Herald among those you meet or already know? More and more, this magazine is being designed to answer the real spiritual hunger of people in today’s society, tapping into the exact train of thought being triggered by current events. As Bible prophecy unfolds before our eyes, why not keep some of these magazines on hand in a large ziplock bag, ready to share with honest, thinking people who fear God and are eager to know what in the world is going on?

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“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 Trial of Our Faith

Everybody has problems. But, ironically enough, often it seems as if evil-minded persons have fewer. The prophet Jeremiah prayed: “Righteous art thou, O LORD, when I plead with thee: yet let me talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?” (Jeremiah 12:1).

In a similar way, at one point the psalmist was inclined to feel like he was the only one who really had serious trials and obstacles in life. It appeared to him as if everyone else—especially the ungodly—seemed to be just sailing smoothly along without a care in the world. He found this disturbing. But finally, he testified, “When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end” (Psalm 73:16, 17). That end of theirs was a slippery slope down into perdition. Not a pretty picture.

The apostle Peter, a man of God whose life was ultimately ended by crucifixion upside-down, gives a precious reminder: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations: that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ” (1 Peter 1:3–7). [Emphasis added.]

This issue of *The Reformation Herald* considers the acute trials of a few great men of faith. There are many more examples that could be given, of course; here is just a sample. We will see how these were tested intensively, yet, as the apostle describes, they come forth more pre-

cious than gold at the glorious return of Christ—which will come much sooner than we all may realize.

Like the faithful ones in Scripture, in these last days, many are to suffer trials and temptations that are nearly overwhelming—and they are driven almost to desperation. But the LORD has a solution in this situation: “Ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. **Then they that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it,** and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the LORD of hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him” (Malachi 3:14–17). [Emphasis added.]

Yes, the LORD assures us that He will spare His faithful jewels who face the fire—and during the time of trial He invites us to fellowship with one another often, telling of His abundantly gracious goodness and His tremendously awesome power.

Perhaps you may not be able to enjoy deep, genuine fellowship with like-minded believers where you are. You may feel alone. But regardless of whatever your circumstances may be, this issue of *The Reformation Herald* is exactly designed to supply you with words of hope as together we consider some who have trodden the narrow path before us—“for whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope. Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus: that ye may with one mind and one mouth glorify God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 15:4–6). May this be our mutual aim. Amen! *R*

MOSES THE GREAT ^{vs.} MOSES THE SHEPHERD

By Peter D. Lausevic
[Emphasis added throughout.]

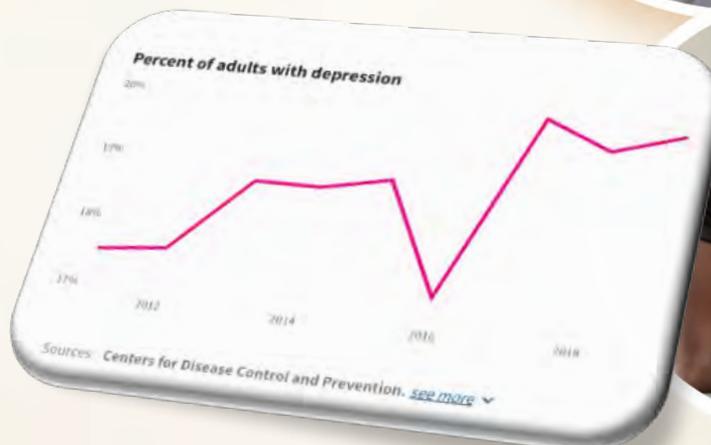
DEFEAT

It is hard to begin an article with defeat, as we are always imagining ourselves as those that gain the victory. Whenever we read the stories of Elijah on Mount Carmel, Peter on the day of Pentecost, or Martin Luther before the august councils of his time, we chiefly identify with the underdog who wins the day because they are standing for the right. The same goes for the events of the final conflict between good and evil, between the mark of the beast and those who receive the seal of God. We always imagine ourselves as being those in the victory. But in order to truly obtain victory, we need to examine defeat.

Our first parents experienced defeat at the very beginning of this world's history. After the beautiful and amazing experience of creation week, we find a common experience with sin and its aftermath. "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife **hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God** amongst the trees of the garden" (Genesis 3:8).

Guilt leads us to hide from the living presence of our Creator. Guilt is consuming the world today and it often leads to depression. According to www.usafacts.org, the current rate of depression is at about 20% of the adult population. We used to be told that the problem had been due to stigmatizing so many things that were referred to as sins and that was causing guilt. But now that so many of those very things are legalized and becoming accepted in society as the "new normal" in morality, the depression rate has actually steadily been increasing instead of being reduced.

We also need to look at the



experience of Moses when it comes to failure. At first he was well liked in the palace of the king and received the best education to make him a true prince. "And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds" (Acts 7:22). We need to keep in mind that Egypt at that time was the most powerful nation in what they called the then-known civilized world. It was not just the most powerful but also the most wealthy; and after the experience of Joseph, all that wealth and power was concentrated in the personage of the king. And Moses was to be THAT very man—Pharaoh.

In that specific environment, it was Moses that became "learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians" and coupled with his learning were his actions in both "words and in deeds." Although in the midst of constant heathenism, Moses never forgot the fact that he was supposed to rescue his people from slavery. He had gone on many military campaigns as the leader of the powerful army and in his mind, this would be the way for deliverance to occur. And so on a particular occasion when he visited the Hebrews, he saw an Egyptian abusing one from the nation of his birth family. His mind quickly assessed the situation and had a plan. "And he looked this way and that way, and when he saw that there was no man, he slew the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand" (Exodus 2:12).

The solution seemed simple enough. When there is physical abuse, just respond in the same manner and use your military experience to its most effective use. Unfortunately, however, the enslaved people were not ready for an uprising and Moses soon realized that he had committed an unpardonable offence against his adoptive people. "Now when Pharaoh heard this thing, he sought to slay Moses" (Exodus 2:15). A realization quickly came that his life had been a failure. At forty years of age, when the greatest accomplishments were ripe because of physical and mental

development, this man in the prime of his life had to leave everything behind and flee for his life to a place where very few people lived.

LESSONS TO LEARN

It is during this dark hour when all the hopes and aspirations are the greatest, that Moses needed to make a choice. Whenever we make mistakes—some of which are very costly—they bring us to a point of decision. You can see this many times throughout the Bible record when people are brought to the point of decision. Whether we are speaking of Joshua as he approached the end of his time as leader of God's people or of Elijah on the top of Mount Carmel. Some decisions take a bit of time while others are to be made in an instant.

Moses did not have the luxury of having time to evaluate all the potential risks. The king was angry and wanted to kill him. As his powerful mind assessed the critical situation, he made a lifechanging decision. "By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season" (Hebrews 11:24, 25).

Can you imagine a choice like that? On one hand you are about to be made the king with all the power and prestige that accompanies it—and then you have the other option of being with the people of God. It may seem glamorous, but let's face it, there is no glamor in being a slave. Sitting in our comfortable homes we can look at the situation of the Hebrew nation quite differently than when they were in abject slavery for about 200 years. The crack of the whip demanded instant obedience from cruel task masters and living in extreme poverty where nothing belongs to you. All is owned by the slaveholder who only knows to take and give nothing back.

In the counting of time as far as the age of our earth is concerned, our own nation has recently come out of slavery and all the horrific

stories of families being separated and being bought and sold and treated worse than farm animals in the barn are still being revealed. To what extent the racial divide in society today is still attributed directly to that enslavement, only eternity can really tell.

But Moses didn't have long to deliberate. He had to make a choice quickly or else his life would be in danger. Why was he able to make that decision firmly and decisively? Because he did not see slavery. He did not see the poverty nor the suffering they had to endure. Instead, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as **seeing him who is invisible**" (Hebrews 11:27). Moses saw a very different world than the reality that was before him. Through faith he could see the invisible world. "Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward" (Hebrews 11:26). He saw in this God "that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him" (Hebrews 11:6).

And more than that. Moses saw the invisible God Himself. What would happen to us if we saw God in everything, in every action of life, in every situation we are placed, and in every conflict that we have to encounter? "The character that Paul thus ascribes to Moses does not mean simply passive resistance of evil, but perseverance in the right. He kept the Lord ever before him, and the Lord was ever at his right hand to help him."¹ Because this man Moses constantly lived in the presence of the invisible God, he could endure anything. Victory was really within his reach. This man Moses could have been the most powerful man in the world. He could have been the most wealthy man in his time. At the end of his days they could have built the biggest pyramid that ever existed and filled it with the most costly things that wealth brings and that ever was laid alongside a Pharaoh.

But because Moses saw the invisible God and kept Him constantly in his view, Moses today walks on streets of gold. I can just imagine the

During this dark hour when all the hopes and aspirations are the greatest, Moses needed to make a choice. Whenever we make mistakes—some of which are very costly—they bring us to a point of decision.

last Pharaoh of Egypt lying on his deathbed thinking how all his accomplishments did not prevent the dreaded death sentence that we receive because of the curse sentenced on sinful man. And yet, there is Moses thinking, “I am still alive.” What a reward for those that diligently seek Him!

SEEING THE INVISIBLE WORLD

After spending 40 years in the wilderness caring for defenseless sheep, Moses was burdened with the weighty responsibility of leading a tumultuous sea of people to the promised land. What made it possible for him to lead such a diverse group of people—not only the descendants of Jacob but also a large company called the mixed multitude? During his time in the desert he had an experience that prepared him for anything. “And the LORD spake unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (Exodus 33:11). God was not just his Creator and Ruler. God was his Friend. Is God your personal friend? Are you able to speak with God not just in the formal setting of prayer—but like you speak with your friends?

But even as a friend, Moses needed more from God to give him the assurance that He would lead them to the promised land. “Now therefore, I pray thee, if I have found grace in thy sight, shew me now thy way, that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people.” How do I know that this is Your people and that You are the One leading them? The answer was quite simple. God did not go through all the evidences of the past nor of the prophecies of the future. They are important. However, the most important was His reply. “My

presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest” (Exodus 33:14).

The personal presence of God is all the assurance that Moses needed both in his leading and guiding of the people as well as identifying that this was actually the people of God. And what does a personal presence of God mean? “Moses had a deep sense of the **personal presence of God**. He was not only looking down through the ages for Christ to be made manifest in the flesh, but he saw Christ in a special manner accompanying the children of Israel in all their travels. God was real to him, ever present in his thoughts.”²

In other words, God is “a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1). What would happen if we today would have this kind of experience? “If this faith is brought into the life experience, it will enable everyone who fears and loves God to **endure trials**. Moses was full of confidence in God because he had appropriating faith. He needed help, and he prayed for it, grasped it by faith, and wove into his experience the belief that God cared for him. He believed that God ruled his life in particular. He saw and acknowledged God in every detail of his life and felt that he was under the eye of the All-seeing One, who weighs motives, who tries the heart. He looked to God and trusted in Him for strength to carry him uncorrupted through every form of temptation. He knew that a special work had been assigned to him, and he desired as far as possible to make that work thoroughly successful. But he knew that he could not do this without divine aid, for he had a perverse people to deal with. The **presence of God was sufficient** to carry him through the most trying situations in which a man could be placed.”³

We are not speaking here about some casual thoughts that turn to our Creator from time to time. “Moses did not merely think of God; **he saw Him**. God was the constant vision before him; he never lost sight of His face. He saw Jesus as his Saviour, and he believed that the Saviour’s merits would be imputed to him. This faith was to Moses no guesswork; it was a reality. This is the kind of faith we need, faith that will endure the test. Oh, how often we yield to temptation because we do not keep our eye upon Jesus! Our faith is not continuous because, through self-indulgence, we sin, and then we cannot endure ‘as seeing Him who is invisible.’”⁴

How important had the personal presence of God to Moses become during his time away from the busy court life in preparation to be Pharaoh? “And he said unto him, **If thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence**. For wherein shall it be known here that I and thy people have found grace in thy sight? is it not in that thou goest with us? so shall we be separated, I and thy people, from all the people that are upon the face of the earth. And the LORD said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name” (Exodus 33:15–17).

I really love who Moses had become. After spending 40 years in the University of the Wilderness, he learned a different kind of boldness than existed in the University of Egypt. You would think that with God’s assurance they had made a deal. But Moses wants more than that assurance. “And he said, I beseech thee, show me thy glory” (Exodus 33:18). The more he knew of God, the more he wanted to know of God. Are we so eager to know our Creator?



Our Maker? Our Redeemer? “My brother, make Christ your daily, hourly companion, and you will not complain that you have no faith. Contemplate Christ. View His character. Talk of Him. The less you exalt self, the more you will see in Jesus to exalt. God has a work for you to do. Keep the Lord ever before you. Brother and Sister Q, reach up higher and still higher for clearer views of the character of Christ. When Moses prayed, ‘I beseech Thee, show me Thy glory,’ **the Lord did not rebuke him, but He granted his prayer.** God declared to His servant: ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee.’ We keep apart from God, and this is why we do not see the revealings of His power.”⁵

Did God send Moses to the pagan University of Egypt? “In the **providence of God** he received a broad education, but a large part of that education had to be **unlearned** and **accounted as foolishness.** Its **impression** had to be blotted out

by forty years of experience in caring for the sheep and the tender lambs.”⁶ He did need to learn something there because it was God’s providence that led him there. But as a result of that education, he killed that Egyptian and thought that he would lead a revolt against the Egyptian army. But that was not how God works. If he relied on the education he received at the university, he would have come to the Red Sea and tried to figure out the engineering methods they would need to cross that sea. Realizing that that was impossible in such a short time, they would have been led to make a compromise with the approaching army and would have gone back into slavery. It took forty years to remove the impression of Egyptian learning.

What he learned in the “University of the Wilderness” is what we need today. “It was **implicit faith in God** that made Moses what he was. According to all that the Lord commanded him, so he did. All the learning of the wise men could

not make Moses a channel through which the Lord could work, until he lost his self-confidence, realized his own helplessness, and put his trust in God; until he was **willing to obey God’s commands, whether they seemed to his human reason to be right or not.**”⁷ Just imagine standing on the shore of the Red Sea and the message comes, “Go forward!” (Exodus 14:15). It seemed crazy and no man in his right mind would lead that people into the waves of the water. But Moses had learned something in the wilderness that no one with the Egyptian background could understand. Obey God regardless of how you feel or how your Egyptian equations compute disaster. It was through that very water that deliverance waited on the other side.

And what is the result of following God to that extent? “Thou wilt show me the path of life: **in thy presence is fullness of joy;** at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore” (Psalm 16:11). To really be happy we need to make

“In the providence of God [Moses] received a broad education, but a large part of that education had to be unlearned and accounted as foolishness. Its impression had to be blotted out by forty years of experience in caring for the sheep and the tender lambs.”

sure that we are living in the real presence of Jesus as revealed in His word. And if we do this, what will happen to us? “The pure in heart live as in the visible presence of God during the time He appor-tions them in this world. And they will also see Him face to face in the future, immortal state, as did Adam when he walked and talked with God in Eden.”⁸

REVEALING THE GLORY OF GOD

We are living in a world today that needs a Moses experience. “And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the **earth was lightened with his glory**” (Revelation 18:1). We always imagine that this glory is something outward. That is so Egyptian in thinking. When Moses asked to see the glory of God, what was shown him? Was it the brightness and power of the glories of heaven? How did God respond? “And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Exodus 33:19). He saw the character of God. Today the world needs not an Egyptian view of the glory of God but the revelation of the character of God in His people. “The message of Christ’s righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel.”⁹

As we look at Adventist history, we know that this work began by the message that was taught in 1888. “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.”¹⁰

Even though this message began in 1888, so many of us are not ready to accept it because of the influence of the Egyptian world around us. This is why the prophet for the last days says: “I know that a work must be done for the people, or many will not be prepared to receive the light of the angel sent down from heaven to lighten the whole earth with his glory.”¹¹ A work of the Moses wilderness experience is something that we need in preparation because the world needs to see Jesus—not the human agent.

How will the leadership of the final message to this world change once God has a people with the same experience and character of Moses? “There will be those among us who will always want to control the work of God, to dictate even what movements shall be made when the **work goes forward under the direction of the angel who joins the third angel** in the message to be given to the world. God will use ways and means by which it will be seen that He is taking the reins in His own hands. The workers will be surprised by the simple means that He will use to bring about and perfect His work of righteousness.”¹² Are we ready to let go of the reins and let God control all the movements even when it means walking into the Red Sea? How critical for us is the experience of the Shepherd Moses rather than the great man in Egypt!

This wilderness experience is so powerful that when it takes control of the work of the third angel it is called a movement that gives the final message to this sin-cursed world and prepares a people for

eternity with the Chief Shepherd. “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.’ These announcements, uniting with the third angel’s message, constitute the final warning to be given to the inhabitants of the earth.”¹³

Because we have been living in an Egyptian environment so long, we cannot automatically be ready for the final work that God has for us. There is the wilderness education that must come first. And it is clear from this work that this message of the other angel involves a preparation in that very wilderness before we can do the actual work. “Another angel unites his voice with the third angel, and the earth is lighted with its glory. . . . 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?**”¹⁴ *R*

References:

- ¹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 651.
- ² *Ibid.*
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 651, 652.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 652.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 652, 653.
- ⁶ *Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 417.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 408.
- ⁸ *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 27.
- ⁹ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 19.
- ¹⁰ *Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 363.
- ¹¹ *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 468, 469.
- ¹² *Ibid.*, p. 300.
- ¹³ *The Great Controversy*, p. 604.
- ¹⁴ *The Review and Herald*, August 18, 1885.

“I, EVEN I ONLY”

By Walter Lukic

A FUGITIVE WITHOUT A CAUSE

An elderly man, exhausted by a long run in drenching rain, finally takes his rest for the day. He will not enjoy the comfort of the royal palace in Jezreel as will his king whose chariot he has guided on foot for several hours. The bare ground outside the city walls will be his bed for the night. Not long after the wearied man falls asleep, a court messenger hastily awakens him and conveys a startling message: Queen Jezebel has just vowed to have him killed the following day!

The much-needed rest is not any more on the mind of the wanted man. Facing the threat of imminent death by that wicked and fiercely determined woman, the man whose name means, “My God is Yahweh (YHWH),” runs for his life. The queen did not hide the manner of death that awaits the fugitive: He will share the fate of the prophets of Baal and Asherah (Ashtaroth) whom, just a few hours ago, he had ordered to be arrested and put to death on Mount Carmel. Not wasting a moment, he journeys hastily in the darkness of a rainy night. In Beersheba he leaves his

servant and continues a day’s journey until reaching the Judean wilderness. Utterly exhausted and with heavy thoughts, he sits under a juniper tree and wishes to die.

SOME PUZZLING QUESTIONS

For centuries, Bible students have wrestled with some puzzling questions that are related to this remarkable man: How the man of God whose prayers had power to shut and to open heavens in the span of 3½ years, whose words brought fire from heaven to consume both animal sacrifice and the military units in pursuit of him, who prayed over a dead child and brought him back to life, how the man with so many evidences of God’s mighty acts could be intimidated and run for his life upon hearing about the threats of an unscrupulous, heathen woman. . . . Did God change His mind about him and forsake him? Or did his enemies obtain some advantage over him, making his position untenable? Or perhaps, for the honor of Jehovah, did this seasoned warrior somehow forget what Israel’s God had just done through and for him? Did he in a

moment of weakness let go of God’s hand? We wish to consider these puzzling questions and learn from the sacred history some valuable lessons for our own time.

POLITICAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The prophet Elijah appears on the biblical scene suddenly, at a time when the united monarchy of Israel had already become a divided kingdom – Judah and Israel. The kingdom of Israel, consisting of ten northern tribes, had established the seat of government in Samaria, with the secondary royal residence at the fortified city of Jezreel. Chapters 15 and 16 in 1 Kings report a major political instability in Israel (the northern kingdom). In the previous chapters we learn that the division of the once united Davidic kingdom was in accordance with God’s will. It is noteworthy that the first two rulers in Israel, Jeroboam and Baasha, both had prophetic designation. But due to their unfaithfulness to God, they could not establish stable dynasties. The first ruler, Jeroboam, and his entire house were exterminated by Baasha, and Baasha’s house was in turn

“It was only by the exercise of strong faith in the unfailing power of God's word that Elijah delivered his message. Had he not possessed implicit confidence in the One whom he served, he would never have appeared before Ahab.”

wiped out by one of his officers, Zimri. It appears that Zimri's reign did not last longer than a week. (1 Kings 16:15–23.) Omri, one of his military commanders, prevailed over Zimri who, seeing that everything was lost, took his own life. It then took Omri several years to quell the warring factions in the land and to establish himself on the throne.

Although the biblical record about Omri's reign is relatively short (1 Kings 16:23–28), Omri appears to have possessed considerable political abilities. He patterned his policy to a large extent on that of David and Solomon: Preservation of internal peace, friendly relations with Judah, close ties with Phoenicians, maintaining a strong hand east of the Jordan, particularly against the Arameans. Unlike his predecessors, Omri succeeded in establishing a dynasty, though one that was short-lived (three generations). The problem with the reign of Omri from the biblical perspective was the amalgamation of Israelites with the Canaanite enclaves that remained in the land. The mingling of biblical monotheism with Canaanite polytheism led to the blurring of the line of distinction between the Israelite religious beliefs and practices and those of the heathens. This tendency was to be carried even farther by Omri's most notable son, King Ahab.

RELIGIOUS CIRCUMSTANCES

Ahab reigned from approximately 874–853/852 B.C. He followed to a great extent the foreign policy of his father, Omri, by creating alliances with Phoenicia, Judah, and even his former enemies, the Arameans. Ahab's fatal mistake was his marriage with a Phoenician

princess, Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, the King of Sidon and Tyre. (1 Kings 16:31.) In the middle of the 9th century B.C., Tyre was at the height of her colonial expansion (later in the century Tyre was to establish a major Mediterranean naval power on the North African coast, Carthage). It should be noted that Ethbaal (“with Baal”), also known in history as Ittoba'al (Ithobalos), was formerly the priest of Astarte (Asherah). He assumed the throne by murdering Phelles, the king of Tyre.

The strong-willed Jezebel was a devotee of the chief Tyrian deity Baal Melqart, god of the underworld and death, ruler of the universe, but in several localities also thought to be the god of the annual cycle of vegetation, “The Lord of Rain and Dew,” the “storm” god, “He Who Rides in the Clouds,” etc., Jezebel also worshiped a major female deity and Baal's consort, Asherah/Astarte, goddess of fertility. Under the influence of Jezebel, Ahab established the cult of Baal and Asherah in his capital city of Samaria. (1 Kings 16:32, 33.) To appease their god, worshipers of Baal sacrificed animals, and at time of crisis, even their children. The Bible called this practice detestable. (Deuteronomy 12:31; 18:9, 10.) Asherah, venerated as goddess of fertility, was worshipped in various ways, including through religious prostitution in groves and high places. (1 Kings 14:23, 24.)

Through Moses and the prophets, God strictly prohibited any veneration of the pagan deities and any of the abominable heathen practices. (Exodus 20:3; 23:13; Leviticus 20:23; 1 Samuel 8:5, 20.) In 2 Kings, chapter 17, God gives His reasons for allowing the Assyrian king to uproot the kingdom of Israel.

These reasons represent a scathing rebuke of the northern kingdom for all the abominable things done in the land for about two centuries. Verse 15 sums up God's grievances: “And they rejected his statutes, and his covenant that he made with their fathers, and his testimonies which he testified against them; and they followed vanity, and became vain, and went after the heathen that were round about them, concerning whom the LORD had charged them, that they should not do like them” (2 Kings 17:15). About 120 years before Assyria took control of Samaria and wiped out the northern kingdom, the LORD raised up one of the mightiest prophets to stay the tide of evil and to bring the nation of Israel back to their God.

CHURCH AND STATE COMBINED OPPOSE GOD AND HIS PROPHET

When we read the story about Elijah confronting King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, we should never forget that Elijah stood up not only against an apostate religion; Elijah in fact declared Holy War on the pagan state and its pagan god. This is best seen in the dialogue between Elijah and King Ahab when Elijah reappeared after 3½ years of drought: “And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.” (1 Kings 18:17, 18.)

Prior to its inception as a monarchy, Israel had been constituted and operated as a theocracy. The only sovereign king recognized in Israel was intended

to be Jehovah—and Israel’s human monarch was only His visible representative. True, the church and state had been distinguished and had their own dedicated office bearers. However, the ten tribes, represented by the state governing structure, embraced as their God the God of their fathers who had revealed Himself at Mt. Sinai. On that mountain, also known as Horeb, the entire Jewish nation had made a solemn covenant with Jehovah, the LORD their God who had brought them out of Egypt, the house of bondage. Therefore, Israel was commanded to have no other gods before Him. (Exodus 20:2–6.) All twelve tribes promised to be Jehovah’s peculiar treasure and His witnesses, to keep His law, and remain faithful to the terms and conditions of the covenant. God, on His part, promised to bless His people in the Promised Land, and to elevate them above any other nation on earth. The division of the united monarchy of Israel in two parts did not invalidate the original covenant made at Mt. Sinai, either for Judah or for Israel.

Israel’s sliding into apostasy was already in progress at the time Jezebel became Ahab’s wife. Jezebel’s arrival only intensified the existing religious crisis and brought it to the breaking point. Being a devoted worshiper of Baal Melqart and Asherah, Jezebel was naturally allowed, together with the servants and Phoenician merchants who followed her in the interest of trade, to continue the practice of her native religion on Israelite soil. As stated before, Ahab, a weak character strongly influenced by his heathen wife, established the cult of Baal and Asherah in Samaria, and built a temple to Baal. (1 Kings 16:32.) Further, Jezebel sponsored at her court 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah (prophets of the groves). All these pagan prophets/priests ate at Jezebel’s table. (1 Kings 18:19.) Jezebel was not only a worshiper of pagan gods, but a fanatically zealous missionary prepared to use any means to spread her native religion. To achieve that objective, she did not

hesitate to use force and to purge the realm of the prophets of the true God. (1 Kings 18:4, 13.)

GOD COMMISSIONS THE RIGHT MAN AT THE RIGHT TIME

It was at this critical juncture that God sent the man of His own choosing to confront the apostate King Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel. Elijah’s origin and his background are not clearly revealed to us. He was a Tishbite, either from Tishbe near Kadesh Naphtali or from some otherwise unknown Tishbe in Gilead. The territory of Gilead from which Elijah came is a mountainous region situated east of the Jordan River and south of the Sea of Galilee. Today this territory is part of the kingdom of Jordan. As if from nowhere, Elijah abruptly appears in the narrative to announce to Ahab: “As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word” (1 Kings 17:1). As suddenly as Elijah appeared before Israel’s monarch, so abruptly did he vanish. The pen of Inspiration says this about Elijah’s faith: “It was only by the exercise of strong faith in the unfailing power of God’s word that Elijah delivered his message. Had he not possessed implicit confidence in the One whom he served, he would never have appeared before Ahab.”¹

PICTURE THE SCENE:

The church and state in Israel stand opposed to this man. He is the mortal enemy to Jezebel and to the prophets of Baal and Asherah sustained at her court. Elijah is now declared the greatest public enemy; all his civil rights are suspended, and he is hunted like a wild beast. As we have seen earlier, Jezebel had already bloodied her hands by killing the prophets of God. The search and arrest warrants are sent to every corner of Israel and even to the neighboring countries. The words of Ahab’s governor, Obadiah, when Elijah appeared to him, convey the intensity and the scope

of the search: “And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not” (1 Kings 18:9, 10).

THE FEARLESS PROPHET

The purpose of this article is not to recount in detail all the mighty deeds which the prophet Elijah carried out at God’s direction. The basic outline of this history is known to most Bible students from their childhood years. We will only remind the readers that no rain or dew descended on the land of Israel until Elijah was summoned by God to show himself to King Ahab “after many days” (1 Kings 18:1). This was to serve as a powerful reminder that it was only at the word of Jehovah’s servant that the fertilizing rains would return to the promised land. Rain and dew are Jehovah’s gift, not Baal’s, though Baal was presumptuously praised as “Rider of the Clouds.” During this long period of several years (as recounted in 1 Kings 17), God first hid His messenger on the banks of the brook Cherith (probably on the eastern side of the Jordan River in some recess of the Gilead uplands). While there, Elijah drank water from the brook and got his food from ravens that God directed to feed His servant.

When the brook dried up in the summer months due to drought, God instructed Elijah to go to the home of a widow in Zarephath, a small Phoenician town under the jurisdiction of Zidon (Sidon). It is remarkable that Elijah was sent to Sidon, the homeland of Queen Jezebel and her god Baal Melqart. This land had likewise been affected by drought and by the food shortages. The paradox of this story is that the life-sustaining blessings are bestowed on Elijah in Baal’s own land, while these blessings are withheld from Israel. The lesson is obvious: God’s blessings will be

suspended there where His word is no longer heeded and where Baal is worshipped. The Phoenician widow shared in the blessings because she took the word of Jehovah seriously enough to share her last morsel with His prophet. Even greater blessings are in store for this widow showing hospitality and faith: Elijah intercedes for her dead son and God restores the life to the child!

SHOWDOWN AT MOUNT CARMEL

Ultimately, God is prepared to end the long season of drought—but not before a dramatic showdown on Mount Carmel. Elijah issues a challenge to the gods of Ahab and Jezebel and to all the prophets of Baal and Asherah. On Mount Carmel Elijah proposes to test their power and the power of their gods in the presence of “all Israel” (1 Kings 18:19). This mount, known for its luxuriant growth, was thought to be a place where the power of Baal was especially potent. Two altars will be set up with animal sacrifices placed on them and presented as burnt offerings, but no fire will be kindled by human hands. The fire which will consume the sacrifice must come directly from heaven by the true God, whichever he is—whether Baal or Jehovah. Therefore, both the prophets of Baal and Elijah will pray to their respective gods asking of him to send the fire from heaven.

We know the outcome of this trial on Mount Carmel. The prophets of Baal and Asherah were utterly humiliated and defeated and the God of Elijah, the covenant God of Israel and His servant Elijah, won a major victory. Jehovah is the God who controls the heaven and sky, He can bring fire from heaven as much as He can shut up the heavens and deprive the entire land of rain by the word of His prophet. At the order of Elijah, all the prophets of Baal and Asherah are immediately seized and put to death.

A very important detail at the trial on Mount Carmel should be noted. Elijah asked that all Israel be assembled to witness this major event. Then he challenged the people



to choose whom they would serve: “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men” (1 Kings 18:21, 22). God cannot accept half-hearted service and religious “sitting on the fence.” When God appeared in the flesh, He declared the same truth: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matthew 6:24). The remnant church of God is sternly rebuked for the same lack of commitment: “I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because

thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth” (Revelation 3:15, 16).

THE PRELUDE TO ELIJAH’S CRISIS

When God responded to Elijah’s prayer by sending fire to fully consume the sacrifice—including all the water around the altar, and even the altar stones—the people answered unanimously and in awe: “And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God” (1 Kings 18:39). Such collective professions of faith by the people who witness a supernatural event or who are brought to a strait place, should be taken with some reservation. The great multitude assembled at Mount Carmel consisted of individuals with a variety of religious beliefs.

Some of them were unconverted Canaanites and unapologetic Baal worshipers; the majority of them were worshipers of Jehovah only in name but in truth were worshipers of pagan deities. A relatively small number of Israelites in the assembled throng worshiped Jehovah in spirit and in truth.

From the events to follow, it appears that Elijah did not make a proper assessment of the spiritual standing of his countrymen. He rather cherished some unrealistic expectations of mass repentance and conversion. "Elijah had expected much from the miracle wrought on Carmel. He had hoped that after this display of God's power, Jezebel would no longer have influence over the mind of Ahab, and that there would be a speedy reform throughout Israel."² Fairly soon he was met with bitter disappointment. Serious illness, famine, horrors of war and personal tragedies subdue human pride and make sufferers feel vulnerable and dependent on help from outside, including divine intervention. Soon after the distressing events are behind them, however, most people tend to forget their indebtedness to God and their need of Him. Elijah was soon to realize that he had hoped for too much too soon.

"I AM NOT BETTER THAN MY FATHERS"

When God instructed Elijah to show himself unto Ahab, He also promised, "... and I will send rain upon the earth" (1 Kings 18:1 last part). Elijah went to the top of Mount Carmel to pray for the promised rain. Seven times the servant went to look toward the sea for a sign of the coming rain. Seven times, Elijah's trust in God's promise was severely tested. Six times, the servant returned and reported no sign of rain. But the seventh time, a small cloud appeared in the distant sky. For Elijah this was sufficient evidence that God was about to fulfill His promise. He immediately sent the servant to advise King Ahab to prepare his chariot because an abundance of rain was on the way. As the strong

winds and heavy rain significantly reduced the visibility, Elijah was supernaturally enabled to guide the king's chariot by running all the way from Mt. Carmel to the gates of Jezreel. By this act Elijah showed humility and respect for his king.

The last event brings us to the opening scene in this writing. Upon returning to his residence, King Ahab related to his wife with much excitement the amazing events of the day. But Jezebel did not receive well the news from Mount Carmel; rather, she became enraged. Filled with bloodthirsty vengeance, the furious queen threatened Elijah with imminent death. Her message to the prophet of Jehovah was confirmed by a typical Near Eastern oath: "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time" (1 Kings 19:2 last part).

Awakened from sleep on a rainy night, Elijah is in shock and disbelief. Fearing for his life, he immediately sets out on a long journey. Elijah will travel on foot through the night and then for several days the distance of about 100 miles until he reaches Beersheba, the southernmost settlement in the kingdom of Judah. There Elijah leaves his servant and journeys for a day until he arrives in the wilderness of Negev. Physically exhausted and greatly disappointed by the reaction of the nation's leaders and their subjects, Elijah has no desire to live and to carry the duties of Israel's prophet. He simply wishes to die. "It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers" (1 Kings 19:4 last part).

The inspired pen provides us with a fascinating insight into the cause of Elijah's temporary defeat:

"A reaction such as frequently follows high faith and glorious success was pressing upon Elijah. He feared that the reformation begun on Carmel might not be lasting; and depression seized him. He had been exalted to Pisgah's top; now he was in the valley. While under the inspiration of the Almighty, he had stood the severest trial of faith; but in this time of discouragement, with Jezebel's

threat sounding in his ears, and Satan still apparently prevailing through the plotting of this wicked woman, he lost his hold on God. He had been exalted above measure, and the reaction was tremendous. Forgetting God, Elijah fled on and on, until he found himself in a dreary waste, alone."³

The prophet laid down under a juniper tree and fell asleep. Did God still care about Elijah at this dark hour? Again, let us consider from the pen of Inspiration: "Did God forsake Elijah in his hour of trial? Oh, no! He loved His servant no less when Elijah felt himself forsaken of God and man than when, in answer to his prayer, fire flashed from heaven and illuminated the mountaintop."⁴ A gentle touch and a soft voice awakened him. When Elijah looked up, he did not see the face of an enemy but rather a compassionate face of an angel of God. The angel brought him bread and water and urged him to eat. As Elijah ate and fell asleep again, the angel came the second time and urged the prophet to eat again because he was soon to embark on a great journey. Indeed, Elijah was to travel for forty days and forty nights without any food until coming to Horeb, the mount of God (Mount Sinai).

"I, EVEN I, ONLY"

While he was sheltered in a cave, a voice came to the discouraged fugitive, asking the question: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:9). Between the lines, this question implied another, more probing question: "Who sent you, Elijah, from Jezreel all the way to the wilderness of Negev? Why did you not stand by your post but fled before Jezebel? Did you forget what I have done through you for my people and how I have preserved your life in the most trying circumstances?" Elijah's answer tells us much about the thoughts there were on his mind: "And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine



altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away" (1 Kings 19:10).

On a closer reading, Elijah's response reveals that he indeed had lost sight of something—who God is, what God has done, and what God could do. **The pronoun "I" appears too many times in Elijah's response, both in respect of his relation to God, and the people's relation to God and to himself.** We could paraphrase Elijah's words this way: "I have been a faithful and mighty warrior for the Covenant God, but the people have been unfaithful; they have killed your prophets to the point that I am

the only one left alive, yet now they want to kill me. There is no hope for Israel and there is no purpose to my ministry and to my life."

God's reply to Elijah is truly amazing. God does not speak immediately; He rather wishes to teach Elijah an important object lesson about His own character. Further, God intends to reveal to His servant the secret place where lies human strength and victory. Elijah is invited to step out of the cave and to stand before the Lord on the mount. As he stood there, a tempestuous wind rent the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces, but God was not in the wind. The wind was followed by a might earthquake and then by fire. Yet God was not in them, either. Then Elijah heard a still small voice. Upon hearing that voice, Elijah wrapped his face in his mantle and went out at the opening of the cave. That voice asked again the same question: "What doest thou here, Elijah?" (1 Kings 19:11–13). Elijah gave the same answer; only this time he addresses God directly rather than indirectly.

With the still small voice, God shouted to Elijah—as well as to all of us—something important about His character: Yes, "our God is consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:29), but He is also more than that: "For God is love" (1 John 4:8). Further, Elijah who carried out the most formidable work of reformation in biblical history, learned another lesson: "Not in mighty manifestations of divine power, but by 'a still small voice,' did God choose to reveal Himself to His servant. He desired to teach Elijah that it is not always the work that makes the greatest demonstration that is most successful in accomplishing His purpose."⁵ The prophet Isaiah expresses the same thought: "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel; In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not" (Isaiah 30:15).

What were the effects of the still small voice upon Elijah? Here is the answer: "His petulance was

silenced, his spirit softened and subdued. He now knew that a quiet trust, a firm reliance on God, would ever find for him a present help in time of need. . . . Not by eloquence or logic are men's hearts reached, but by the sweet influences of the Holy Spirit, which operate quietly yet surely in transforming and developing character. It is the still, small voice of the Spirit of God that has power to change the heart."⁶

ELIJAH RETURNS TO WORK WITH AN ASSURANCE THAT HE IS NOT ALONE

God did not directly respond to Elijah's defense, nor did he argue with him. He simply sent him back to his place of work and provided him with several assignments: To anoint Hazael to be king over Syria, Jehu to be king over Israel, and Elisha to be the prophet to succeed Elijah. (1 Kings 19:15–17.) Elijah's divine Master even revealed to him which tasks would be performed by the individuals that Elijah would anoint: They were to execute divine judgment upon the rebellious royal family in Israel and upon their supporters. God knew perfectly well what His servant needed in the hour of crisis: "For the disheartened there is a sure remedy—faith, prayer, work. Faith and activity will impart assurance and satisfaction that will increase day by day."⁷

Yet in respect of one point, God responded to Elijah's defense: Elijah was not the only true worshiper of Jehovah in Israel. "Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him" (1 Kings 19:18). This declaration is highly significant for God's remnant people living today in an age of such rampant apostasy: When we do not see any faithful servants of God around us, let us remember that they still exist, and that God knows each one of them. We are not alone.

"ELIJAH WAS A MAN SUBJECT TO LIKE PASSIONS AS WE ARE"

“Had [Elijah] remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation.”

The story of Elijah’s temporary defeat was written in the Holy Scriptures for our learning and for our encouragement. This prophet of God is portrayed as any other human being, with both his strengths and weaknesses. Elijah was a man of faith and a master of effective prayers that move the hand of God: “Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not on the earth by the space of three years and six months” (James 5:17).

At the same time, Elijah was not above the frailties of humanity: “But he who had been blessed with so many evidences of God’s loving care was not above the frailties of mankind, and in this dark hour his faith and courage forsook him.”⁸ In a rare moment of weakness, he was intimidated, showed a lack of faith, and deserted his post of duty, which prevented God from accomplishing more for His people:

“Elijah should not have fled from his post of duty. He should have met the threat of Jezebel with an appeal for protection to the One who had commissioned him to vindicate the honor of Jehovah. . . . Had he remained where he was, had he made God his refuge and strength, standing steadfast for the truth, he would have been shielded from harm. The Lord would have given him another signal victory by sending His judgments on Jezebel; and the impression made on the king and the people would have wrought a great reformation.”⁹

If we read the biblical account of Elijah’s moment of crisis with due spiritual discernment, we will learn some precious lessons for our individual lives. “Into the experience of all there come times

of keen disappointment and utter discouragement—days when sorrow is the portion, and it is hard to believe that God is still the kind benefactor of His earthborn children; days when troubles harass the soul, till death seems preferable to life. It is then that many lose their hold on God and are brought into the slavery of doubt, the bondage of unbelief. Could we at such times discern with spiritual insight the meaning of God’s providences we should see angels seeking to save us from ourselves, striving to plant our feet upon a foundation more firm than the everlasting hills, and new faith, new life, would spring into being.”¹⁰

God is still asking each one of us, as He asked Elijah, “What doest thou here?” Are you true to your post of duty? Are you there where you should be, where your influence is most effective for the benefit of the souls who need to be warned of the coming judgment and gathered in the fold? “Of families, as of individuals, the question is asked, ‘What doest thou here?’ In many churches there are families well instructed in the truths of God’s word, who might widen the sphere of their influence by moving to places in need of the ministry they are capable of giving.”¹¹

Elijah was the man who did not see death, but was translated to heaven alive. Only one other man in the entire history of the Bible was granted that honor (Enoch). Elijah is further a type of the great reformers who were to prepare the way for the first and for the second coming of the Messiah, respectively. John the Baptist fulfilled that role at the first coming of Christ. The saints who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus and who live in the end-time, will prepare the way

for Christ’s second coming. They are represented by Elijah in Malachi 4:4, 5: “Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.”

The work of the end-time Elijah will be to call God’s people to obedience to the law of God as it was given to Israel through Moses. The life and ministry of Elijah show some amazing parallels with the lives of Moses and John the Baptist. It was Moses and Elijah who appeared on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mount Tabor) with the glorified Jesus and conversed with Him in the sight of Christ’s three disciples. (Matthew 17:1–9; Mark 9:2–9; Luke 9:28–37.) Moses and Elijah were the most qualified humans to prepare their Messiah for the hour of crisis. Should not their experiences, their defeats, and their victories serve as a lesson book to us? “Now all these things happened unto them for ensamples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come” (1 Corinthians 10:11). It is the sincere wish and prayer of the author of this article that God may grant that every reader of this magazine would become a part of the remnant community that prepares the way for the Messiah’s second coming! *R*

References:

- ¹ *Prophets and Kings*, p. 121.
- ² *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ³ *Ibid.*, pp. 161, 162.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 166.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 168.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 169.
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.
- ⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 160.
- ¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 162.
- ¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 172.



The Greatest Among Mortals

By Radu Ionita

“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake” (Philippians 1:29).

Wonderful privileges are for every true believer to enjoy! To be the children of the Most High, to have our names written on the palms of His hands, to be redeemed and pardoned by the blood of the Creator, to be predestinated to a life which is measured by the life of God—what more can one desire? Indeed, we are the most privileged citizens of the universe! You, my dear reader, you are the object of the dearest care and sympathy of your Heavenly Father, as though you were the only human on this Earth, because “the soul that has given himself to Christ is more precious in His sight than the whole world. The Saviour would have passed through the agony of Calvary that one might be saved in His kingdom. He will never abandon one for whom He has died.”¹ And that you are!

For you and for me are all the promises the Lord has made! He never sleeps, He never tires; day after day He is working in behalf of His dear children. Nothing can harm them without His permission! “A thousand shall fall at thy side, and ten thousand at thy right hand; but it shall not come nigh thee. Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked. Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most High, thy

habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Psalm 91:7–10).

We have to agree that we like this part of God’s promises and dealings for/with us! I assume that we all have some favorite passages in the Holy Word of God. Those that tell of events such as when the angel of God destroyed in a single night an entire army of 185,000 soldiers—to keep His promise to His beloved people (2 Kings 19); or the ironic way by which the Lord saved Elisha from Dothan and mocked the blinded Syrian armies until they were trapped in Samaria. (2 Kings 6.) Experiences such as these give us the peace and assurance of belonging to the royal family above! Yes, we love to have such an Almighty God, and to know how near to us He is at every moment!

THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST

But a question arises: Do the Lord’s promises imply that the faithful child of God shall never be called to suffer? We read, that “no evil [shall] befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling” (Psalm 91:10). Does this mean we are called for a sweet, pleasant journey to heaven, avoiding any trial, any difficulty, any challenge? Shall we never pass through terrible hours of despair? Is this what the Lord teaches us in His Word?

You may agree that the answer is . . . NO, not at all!

Let us consider a little bit the life of one of the most prominent servants of the Lord: John the Baptist, who was called for a special, solemn mission. Even before his birth, he had been under the special care of God. In His providence the Lord chose a God-fearing couple—Zacharias, a priest, and his wife, Elisabeth, to be the parents of this forerunner of the Messiah. Loyal to God and living a holy life, the aged parents of John received the news of having a long-awaited son. The first of the heavenly angels, “Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God” (Luke 1:19) had been sent to announce to Zacharias the glad tidings of the

coming child. And from his very first days on earth, the Lord accompanied him in such a blessed way! His faithful parents taught him in the ways of obedience.

“And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel” (Luke 1:80).

Instead of attending the rabbinical schools of his time, to be taught by men how to interpret the Scriptures and thus unfit himself for his holy mission, John rather chose “to forgo the enjoyments and luxuries of life for the stern discipline of the wilderness. Here his surroundings were favorable to habits of simplicity and self-denial. Uninterrupted by the clamor of the world, he could here study the lessons of nature, of revelation, and of Providence. The words of the angel to Zacharias had been often repeated to John by his God-fearing parents. From childhood his mission had been kept before him, and he had accepted the holy trust.”²

“But the life of John was not spent in idleness, in ascetic gloom, or in selfish isolation. From time to time he went forth to mingle with men; and he was ever an interested observer of what was passing in the world. From his quiet retreat he watched the unfolding of events. With vision illuminated by the divine Spirit he studied the characters of men, that he might understand how to reach their hearts with the message of heaven. The burden of his mission was upon him. In solitude, by meditation and prayer, he sought to gird up his soul for the lifework before him.”³

And when the time came, a voice was heard in the wilderness. With a heart filled with love for sinners, earnestly John called his listeners to a genuine change. “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matthew 3:2). Under the influence of the Holy Spirit which was accompanying him, the crowds were deeply impressed and desired instruction. Faithfully, John the Baptist explained that true repentance is followed by the fruits of conversion. His years of solitude with God in the wilderness gave him a

true sense of his inability to fulfill God’s requirements on his own. He was stern in his work, arduously desiring the salvation of his people. When the Pharisees and priests were opportunistically trying to be baptized without an understanding of their real stage and without a desire for a holy life, the Baptist sharply rebuked them: “O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father” (Luke 3:7, 8).

“Thus the Baptist declared God’s message to Israel. Many gave heed to his instruction. Many sacrificed all in order to obey. Multitudes followed this new teacher from place to place, and not a few cherished the hope that he might be the Messiah. But as John saw the people turning to him, he sought every opportunity of directing their faith to Him who was to come.”⁴

SELFLESSNESS

The success and popularity of John the Baptist did not harm his precious soul. He truly knew God, therefore found he no place for vain-glory of himself. When asked about himself, he was ever pointing to the only One, to the Saviour to come, whose shoes he was not worthy to bear. When Jesus came to him to be baptized, he recognized in Him the purity and holiness of Messiah, and faithfully declared: “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:36)! He lived for God. His only goal in life was that Israel might be saved, and “that [Christ] should be made manifest to Israel” (John 1:31)!

Perhaps the most brilliant trait of John’s character has been his self-abnegation, proving his genuine connection with the Almighty. He was lost from his own sight, as the beauty of His Master was continuously reveling in his heart. When tempted to jealousy by his own disciples, he simply explained: “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). The same altruistic spirit that moves all heaven, was inspiring this noble child of God. He did not

“Alone in the dungeon, seeing whither his path, like his Master’s, tended, John accepted the trust–fellowship with Christ in sacrifice. . . . The intelligences of the Universe, fallen and unfallen, witnessed his vindication of unselfish service.”

consider himself to be anything but a voice. “He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias” (John 1:23).

Without considering the potential consequences against himself, John’s heart and voice stood firmly against sin, guiding sinners to the throne of grace for repentance and reformation. To the adulterous king of the nation he addressed faithful messages of reproof and fervent calls to repentance—and the king knew that the prophet was right. In spite of his unwavering loyalty to God and his courageous, unspotted ministry, John the Baptist was cast into prison.

What can we say about such a loyal steward of the Lord? Was he not under the protection of the Most High? What power could harm or even touch him when the hand of the Infinite One was resting upon him? As the apostle Paul was saying, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31). Indeed, “the name of the Lord is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe” (Proverbs 18:10).

But we see that the faithful servant of the Lord was not, like David, freed from the hand of a wicked king, nor was he, like Daniel, delivered from a den of lions. In the dark, damp prison in which John the Baptist was cast, no angel was sent for liberation, as later happened in Peter’s case. The Lord did not appear to rescue His devoted worker as He did for the three young men in the Babylonian oven!

Naturally, there are some questions that may arise: Why not? Are not the servants of the Lord always protected? Or may they be called to suffer similarly with those who are unfaithful?

LEARNING FROM HIS SUFFERING

By the remarkable experience of John the Baptist, the Lord teaches us that His disciples are not spared from sufferings. It is true that the Lord finds no pleasure in allowing His children to suffer! And He does not permit any drop of suffering to be poured out more than He can use in His infinite wisdom for their benefit and for His plans to be fulfilled.

Terrible were the long days of imprisonment for John the Baptist. “The life of John had been one of active labor, and the gloom and inaction of his prison life weighed heavily upon him. As week after week passed, bringing no change, despondency and doubt crept over him.”⁵

Even a man of faith like John the Baptist, whom Jesus ranked as the greatest born of woman (Luke 7:28), reached a point in his experience when doubt and despondency crept over him. What about us? Obviously, there will come times in which we will have to pass through similar disappointing experiences. Therefore John’s trial becomes a precious lesson and encouragement for us.

Do our faithful friends help us under such circumstances, or it may happen that sometimes they make the trial even harder? “[John’s] disciples did not forsake him. They were allowed access to the prison, and they brought him tidings of the works of Jesus, and told how the people were flocking to Him. But they questioned why, if this new teacher was the Messiah, He did nothing to effect John’s release. How could He permit His faithful herald to be deprived of liberty and perhaps of life?”⁶

It is important for us to consider the influence that our friends may exert over our heart when under pressure. Inspiration explains: “These questions were not without effect. **Doubts which otherwise would never have arisen were suggested to John.** Satan rejoiced to hear the words of these disciples, and to see how they bruised the soul of the Lord’s messenger. Oh, how often those who think themselves the friends of a good man, and who are eager to show their fidelity to him, prove to be his most dangerous enemies! How often, instead of strengthening his faith, their words depress and dishearten!”⁷

“To the desert prophet all this seemed a mystery beyond his fathoming.”⁸ May the Lord help us to pay special attention to these inspired words about the unseen war happening around a child of God: “There were hours when **the whisperings of demons tortured his spirit, and the shadow of a terrible fear crept over him.** Could it be that the long-hoped-for Deliverer had not yet appeared? Then what meant the message that he himself had been impelled to bear? John had been bitterly disappointed in the result of his mission. . . . Had it been in vain?”⁹ It is important for us to understand this part of the psychological warfare between good and evil, to distinguish the “whispering of demons” while torturing our spirit. All children of God are called to pass, in one way or another, through such an experience. Our enemy has studied the human mind for thousands of years, and has managed to know it well.¹⁰ Disappointment, doubt, unfulfilled expectations are our lot, and the enemy knows how to bring them against us in the most efficient way. Soon, in the last days of probation,



the discouragement, the depression, the fear of not having all our sins forgiven will make burdens almost unbearable. We thank God for John the Baptist, an example and an encouragement for us, that through faith in the Redeemer, knowing and having Him, we may be victorious as he was!

FINDING HOPE

What is a disciple of Christ, a child of God supposed to do under such trial? Where to go? Whom to ask? How to discern truth from deception? We are thankful to our heavenly Father for the brilliant example of John the Baptist! He did the wisest thing possible! He turned himself to Jesus for answers! He did not ask Caiaphas or the Sadducees if Jesus was the Messiah. Based on his previous experiences with God, reviewing all the evidences the Lord had given him about Jesus' messiahship, he chose the side of faith! "John would not discuss his doubts and anxieties with his companions. He determined to send a message of inquiry to Jesus."¹¹ "And John calling unto him two of his disciples sent them to Jesus, saying, Art thou he that should come? or look we for another" (Luke 7:19)? Graciously came the answer. "The blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached" (Luke 7:22).

That answer was more than sufficient for the prophet. The same Spirit of God that was revealed in Jesus' works and teachings was impressing John's mind. In the report brought by his disciples he

recognized the divine signature, and was satisfied. His fears were silenced. "Alone in the dungeon, seeing whither his path, like his Master's, tended, John accepted the trust—fellowship with Christ in sacrifice. . . . The intelligences of the Universe, fallen and unfallen, witnessed his vindication of unselfish service."¹² "Understanding more clearly now the nature of Christ's mission, he yielded himself to God for life or for death, as should best serve the interests of the cause he loved."¹³

In the Providence of God, it was decided that John the Baptist's death would serve better the interests of the heavenly Kingdom. John's loyalty, his sincerity, his integrity, his unwavering service were "paid" in a cruel and altogether unjust way: the sword of Herod's soldier cut off his head. It is not easy to understand such providence. We know by faith that "all things work together for good to them that love God" (Romans 8:28), and in John's experience it has been the same.

"Satan was permitted to cut short the earthly life of God's messenger; but that life which 'is hid with Christ in God,' the destroyer could not reach. Colossians 3:3. Death itself only placed him forever beyond the power of temptation."¹⁴ In this warfare, the resting days in the prison, prior to his execution, John "had always the companionship of heavenly angels, who opened to him the prophecies concerning Christ, and the precious promises of Scripture. These were his stay, as they were to be the stay of God's people through the coming ages."¹⁵

A COMFORT FOR OTHERS

Yes, there are some of God's dear children with whom He could deal in this strange, unpleasant manner without losing them amid the trial! And these experiences turned to be showers of blessings for other generations of martyrs which were called to suffer for their Master. "And in all the generations that have passed since then, suffering souls have been sustained by the testimony of John's life. In the dungeon, on the scaffold, in the flames, men and women through centuries of darkness have been strengthened by the memory of him of whom Christ declared, 'Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater.' Matthew 11:11."¹⁶

"In the hour of greatest need, when discouragement would overwhelm the soul, it is then that the watchful eye of Jesus sees that we need His help. The hour of man's necessity is the hour of God's opportunity. When all human support fails, then Jesus comes to our aid, and His presence scatters the darkness and lifts the cloud of gloom."¹⁷ Thus we all will be helped to victoriously pass the trial! In death, like John the Baptist, or in life like Daniel in the lions' den, we will have Jesus. And that is sufficient for us. This is a part in the divine purifying process through which the Lord passes all His beloved disciples. At the end, we will reflect more brilliantly the glory of His face!

The Lord knows how important this process is for the transformation He wants to write in our experience, as well as in helping and encouraging others,



Prior to his execution, John “had always the companionship of heavenly angels, who opened to him the prophecies concerning Christ, and the precious promises of Scripture. These were his stay, as they were to be the stay of God's people through the coming ages.”

by our example. Therefore, this process is not reserved for only some of God's children, but for all. “All who follow Christ will wear the crown of sacrifice. They will surely be misunderstood by selfish men, and will be made a mark for the fierce assaults of Satan. It is this principle of self-sacrifice that his kingdom is established to destroy, and he will war against it wherever manifested.”¹⁸

In preparing the way for the Lord's first coming, John the Baptist is a symbol for those who are called to prepare the way for His second coming—it involves us today. What was the secret of John's resistance, of his success? How could he pass through the darkness of doubt, of fear, of depression and even to face death? He was continuously turning to the fountain of strength and light. “Under the guiding of the di-

vine Spirit, he studied the scrolls of the prophets. By day and by night, Christ was his study, his meditation, until mind and heart and soul were filled with the glorious vision. He looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was lost sight of.”¹⁹

This man of faith showed to the world the strength that true religion brings to human beings. The way he knew God became the foundation of his victory against self, with all its weaknesses, and against the powers of darkness. The sufferings and death of the Baptist shed a wonderful light over his life, his love, and his devotion. And this will happen with all children of God who today know and love God in the same way!

Again and again, the power of God's love will prove infinitely much stronger than the power of Satan's malice, hatred and persecution. As our Master has been called to suffer, His beloved disciples will be called to so suffer, too! This is the highest honor to which the Lord can call us. “And of all the gifts that Heaven can bestow upon men, **fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor.**”²⁰

Therefore, let us rejoice, because “blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you” (Matthew 5:11, 12).

And one day, when the redeemed shall see His face, when all trials and sufferings will have passed, they will realize that that

path has been the best for their feet. “God **never leads His children otherwise than they would choose** to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning, and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as coworkers with Him. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon.”²¹ They will see the glory of God's purposes and plans. They will see the wisdom and the love behind any tear that has been shed and any distress the heart underwent. And they will praise the name of the Lamb for the beauty of His glory.

Among them, my dear reader, you have your spot. Grasp the hand of the Almighty, and walk trustfully in His fellowship. Soon the night of trials will be over, and He Himself will crown you in His royal family! *R*

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- ¹ *The Signs of the Times*, January 13, 1909.
- ² *The Desire of Ages*, p. 101.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 102.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 108.
- ⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 214.
- ⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 214, 215. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 215. [Emphasis added.]
- ⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 216.
- ⁹ *Ibid.* [Emphasis added.]
- ¹⁰ (See *Medical Ministry*, p. 111.)
- ¹¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 216.
- ¹² *Education*, p. 157.
- ¹³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 218.
- ¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 224.
- ¹⁵ *Ibid.*
- ¹⁶ *Education*, pp. 157, 158.
- ¹⁷ *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 530.
- ¹⁸ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 223.
- ¹⁹ *Conflict and Courage*, p. 272.
- ²⁰ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 225. [Emphasis added.]
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 224, 225 [Emphasis added.]



By Barbara Montrose

The Faith of a Fisher of Men

The Transformation of Peter

[Emphasis added throughout.]

A PROPHECY ABOUT SOUL-SEEKERS

“Behold, I will send for many fishers, saith the Lord, and they shall fish them; and after will I send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the holes of the rocks” (Jeremiah 16:16).

This is a wonderful prophecy and promise that can be applied in the last days of Earth’s history. The God of Heaven calls spiritual fishermen to share the gospel message, casting the net into the depths of a dark ocean—a sea of confused people. He’s calling for those who will diligently seek them as Job searched out those in need so that he could help them. (Job 29:16.)

BEHOLDING THE CREATOR’S POWER

When Jesus Christ was on earth as the Son of man, He had an interesting encounter with a fisherman named Simon Peter.

“And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, [Jesus] stood by the lake of Gennesaret, and saw two

“We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. Though He sorrowfully reproveth our unbelief and self-confidence, He never fails to give us the help we need.”

ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship. Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught. And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net. And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken: and so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, **Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.** And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him” (Luke 5:1–11).

Have you ever tried your best to do something that you were normally skilled at doing—only to find that it didn't work this time? That's how Peter felt. He was an experienced fisherman, but this time, much to his disappointment, that night he had not been successful. Then at a moment when it did not make sense to drop the

fishing net into the water again, he obeyed the command of Jesus to do exactly that.

His obedience to the word of the Lord was abundantly rewarded. The unusually huge number of fishes broke the net—and with the tremendous added weight, the ship became so heavy that it began to sink.

This amazing moment deeply touched the heart of Peter. He suddenly realized he was face-to-face with the awesome power of the Creator of heaven, earth, the sea, and fountains of waters.

When that happens to a person, the realization then comes: “How unworthy I am to appear before the living God! How many of my own blemishes, flaws, sins, and iniquities are suddenly glaring before my eyes!”

Peter was not the only one struck by this. His coworkers were, too. Jesus, in His great compassion, then gave the tender reassurance, “Fear not.” But then a wonderful opportunity was promised—that from then on, they would catch men—in other words, win precious souls for the kingdom of Heaven.

Matthew records it as “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men” (Matthew 4:19).

Mark writes, “Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men” (Mark 1:17).

In other words, the same divine power that had directed the huge bounty of fishes to enter the net would be a creative force in these disciples to draw souls to the Master of earth, sea, and sky, the Saviour of the world.

Further evidence of the power of Christ:

POWER OVER SICKNESS AND STORM

On a later occasion, “when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them” (Matthew 8:14, 15).

Another time, one stormy night when the disciples were fishing, “the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. And he said, Come. And **when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus**” (Matthew 14:24–29).

Here Peter was literally doing the impossible. Most of us are familiar with the next part of the story when, through human pride, Peter started to sink. He then cried out to Jesus, who immediately reached out to rescue him. What do we learn from this?

“When the tempests of temptation gather, and the fierce lightnings flash, and the waves sweep over us, we battle with the storm alone, forgetting that there is One who can help us. We trust to our own strength till our hope is lost, and we are ready to perish. Then we remember Jesus, and if we call upon Him to save us, we shall not cry in vain. **Though He sorrowfully reproveth our unbelief and self-confi-**



dence, He never fails to give us the help we need. Whether on the land or on the sea, if we have the Saviour in our hearts, there is no need of fear. Living faith in the Redeemer will smooth the sea of life, and will deliver us from danger in the way that He knows to be best.”¹

While totally focused on beholding Jesus, Peter was able to do something utterly beyond mere human capabilities. Do we really comprehend the fullness of what that means? What is this telling us? “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God” (Luke 18:27).

CONTROL OVER NATURE

“When [Christ and His disciples] were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him,

Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee” (Matthew 17:24–27).

Here was an awkward situation of apparent conflict between showing respect for the temple by paying the required tax *vs.* acknowledging Christ as a prophet sent from God. Peter hastily offered that Jesus would pay the tax to show Himself to be cooperative with the established system, although priests and prophets were exempt from that taxation.

The LORD used this opportunity to teach Peter a deeper lesson. Due to His relationship to God, Jesus was not really obligated to pay the temple tax. But that He might comply with the hasty pledge His impetuous disciple had just made, Jesus miraculously produced a coin in the mouth of a fish in the sea and directed that fish to be caught by Peter’s hook. Thus, He revealed Himself to be even more than a

prophet. Here demonstrated was His omniscient, omnipotent power over creation—another proof of His divinity as the Son of God.

THE TRANSFIGURATION

Another remarkable scene that Peter experienced was the transfiguration of Jesus. “And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into a high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them. And his raiment became shining, exceeding white as snow; so as no fuller on earth can white them. And there appeared unto them Elias with Moses: and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter answered and said to Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias. For he wist not what to say; for they were sore afraid. And there was a cloud that overshadowed them: and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my beloved Son: hear him. And suddenly, when they had looked round about, they saw no

“When trouble comes upon us, how often we are like Peter! We look upon the waves, instead of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Saviour. Our footsteps slide, and the proud waters go over our souls. Jesus did not bid Peter come to Him that he should perish; He does not call us to follow Him, and then forsake us.”

man any more, save Jesus only with themselves” (Mark 9:2–8). What an honor it was to be among the three to have this precious glimpse of Christ in His glory! A uniquely memorable event.

A PLEDGE WITHOUT PRAYER

Peter deeply loved his Lord and boldly expressed his willingness to die for Jesus.

“Then saith Jesus unto [the disciples], All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Matthew 26:31–35).

Yet the outcome was tragic. That very night, the spiritual strength of Peter collapsed—hence the customary phrase, “petered out.”

Why did this happen?

“Then cometh Jesus with [the disciples] unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder. And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from

me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt. And **he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:** the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:36–41).

Peter, along with the sons of Zebedee, neglected to watch and pray at a critical time when Jesus bade them to do so. He knew what was ahead—as well as their frailty.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT?

When a group of armed men came to arrest Jesus that night, Peter, who had been too sleepy to pray, was courageously ready to fight for his Lord. He quickly drew his sword in the Master’s defense and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest. Yet the response of Jesus to this action may have come as a surprise as the Lord declared:

“Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels” (Matthew 26:52, 53)?

Here Jesus makes clear the invisible source of His protection—a precious blessing available also to His followers. Do we really comprehend as we should the deep significance of the words, “All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword”? That is not a statement to be taken lightly. It is quite solemn. Our Master explains, “My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight” (John 18:36).

To all who would be citizens of a kingdom based on God’s will be-

ing done on earth as it is in heaven, Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same” (Matthew 5:43–46)?

“Love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil” (Luke 6:35).

Then there was the tragic denial. He who had been bold as to draw a sword to defend his Master crumbled at the taunting voice of a mere maid. At Pilate’s judgment hall, “when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall, and were set down together, Peter sat down among them. But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire, and earnestly looked upon him, and said, This man was also with him [Jesus]. And he denied him, saying, **Woman, I know him not**” (Luke 22:55–57).

LEARNING THE LESSON

Peter had eagerly listened to the teachings of his Lord. He enthusiastically drank in all of Christ’s words. But when the crucial hour came, did he remember them? When such an hour comes to us, do we remember them?

To forget is to succumb to disappointing—even disastrous—results, especially in times of crisis. Later in life, Peter was to illustrate the process of sanctification in the Christian walk: “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. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. **But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins**” (2 Peter 1:5–9). Whenever we forget that we have been forgiven and cleansed from our past sins by the justifying power of our merciful Saviour, we will end up lacking the fruit of the Holy Spirit—and will indeed fall off Peter’s ladder, the process of sanctification. The disciple was able to explain this so effectively because he himself had seen his own frailty without Christ—yet he had wholeheartedly repented of his sins. (Luke 22:61, 62; John 21:15–17.)

AFTER CHRIST’S RESURRECTION

“There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples. Simon Peter saith unto them, I go a fishing. They say unto him, We also go with thee. They went forth, and entered into a ship immediately; and that night they caught nothing. But when the morning was now come, Jesus stood on the shore: but the disciples knew not that it was Jesus. Then Jesus saith unto them, Children, have ye any meat? They answered him, No. And he said unto them, Cast the net on the right side of the ship, and ye shall find. They cast therefore, and now they were not able to draw it for the multitude of fishes. Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter, It is the Lord. Now when Simon Peter heard that it was

the Lord, he girt his fisher’s coat unto him, (for he was naked,) and did cast himself into the sea” (John 21:2–7).

How much did Peter love his Lord? We see the answer here. Jesus provided for Peter’s needs in abundance and the disciple joyfully jumped into the water to see Him—yet not without the reverence of covering himself more fully in the presence of the One whom He knew to be the Son of God. What a beautiful experience, a truly memorable moment.

“When Peter said he would follow his Lord to prison and to death, he meant it, every word of it; but he did not know himself. Hidden in his heart were elements of evil that circumstances would fan into life. Unless he was made conscious of his danger, these would prove his eternal ruin. The Saviour saw in him a self-love and assurance that would overbear even his love for Christ. Much of infirmity, of unmortified sin, carelessness of spirit, unsanctified temper, heedlessness in entering into temptation, had been revealed in his experience. Christ’s solemn warning was a call to heart searching. Peter needed to distrust himself, and to have a deeper faith in Christ. Had he in humility received the warning, he would have appealed to the Shepherd of the flock to keep His sheep. **When on the Sea of Galilee he was about to sink, he cried, ‘Lord, save me.’ Matthew 14:30. Then the hand of Christ was outstretched to grasp his hand. So now if he had cried to Jesus, Save me from myself, he would have been kept.**”²

WHAT ABOUT US?

Today, when the pressure comes in so many ways to violate our conscience, do we remember and appreciate God’s abundant bounties in our behalf as did the disciple Peter? The mercy of Christ toward this struggling soul extends to each one of us today. We need not err. Just as when His hand reached out in response to Peter’s cry when he started to sink, it is likewise outstretched

to everyone who wholeheartedly seeks it right now.

“When trouble comes upon us, how often we are like Peter! We look upon the waves, instead of keeping our eyes fixed upon the Saviour. Our footsteps slide, and the proud waters go over our souls. Jesus did not bid Peter come to Him that he should perish; He does not call us to follow Him, and then forsake us. ‘Fear not,’ He says; ‘for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art Mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour.’ Isaiah 43:1–3.”³

“When in the judgment hall the words of denial had been spoken; when Peter’s love and loyalty, awakened under the Saviour’s glance of pity and love and sorrow, had sent him forth to the garden where Christ had wept and prayed; when his tears of remorse dropped upon the sod that had been moistened with the blood drops of His agony—then the Saviour’s words, ‘I have prayed for thee: when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren,’ were a stay to his soul. Christ, though foreseeing his sin, had not abandoned him to despair.

“If the look that Jesus cast upon him had spoken condemnation instead of pity; if in foretelling the sin He had failed of speaking hope, how dense would have been the darkness that encompassed Peter! how reckless the despair of that tortured soul! In that hour of anguish and self-abhorrence, what could have held him back from the path trodden by Judas?

“He who could not spare His disciple the anguish, left him not alone to its bitterness. **His is a love that fails not nor forsakes.**”⁴

As the storm bursts, let us ever keep this in mind! Amen! *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 336.
² *Ibid.*, pp. 673, 674.
³ *Ibid.*, p. 382.
⁴ *Education*, pp. 89, 90.



RUN FOR YOUR LIFE!

By Liviu Tudoroiu

Civilization has increased the appetite for technological achievements. Research engineers and those with similarly computerized jobs have made science the new compass of our culture. All segments of society are affected in one way or another. As a result, the world is “migrating”—it is shifting more and more away from the old-fashioned country living style, to the conglomerate habitations of the cities. In consequence, many people flock to work on computers and office work, seeking their comfort zone and achieving the dream of prosperity. How few are those who are still in love with nature and prefer a humble lifestyle—working the

fields, enjoying gardening, watching how the plants grow and finally having the peace that comes from God.

Country living is becoming more like a myth as new technologies demand greed, personally inviting/inciting people to abandon nature and merge with the dynamics of the cities.

Progress is the immediate result, of course—but in the long run, misery is creeping in. In the last year or so, hundreds of thousands of people have left the cities, and huge numbers have moved out of San Francisco, for example. New York—once the pride of the American nation, is experiencing the same

kind of exodus. Those who feel the signs of the times, those who have a sense of awareness that something unique and unusual is coming upon the world, those who are in contact with the word of God, are actually starting to run for their lives.

ARRIVE AT THIS POINT?

Misery, pain, and death are the result of human departure from the originally established plan of creation. The quality of life is diminishing every day. So-called green laws and green technology weaken the barely-surviving world. Construction materials have skyrocketed in cost, the price of gas also, and food

is becoming an issue. Empty shelves in the grocery stores testify of the storm that is approaching.

Officially, the leaders are “prophesying” that this year we’ll see a lot of death, so where can the people go and how can we run for our lives? Advanced technology can spot you wherever you are in no time, so for oppressed people to find a peaceable hideout is almost impossible.

The world is facing the time of Job. For better understanding, let us go through chapter 6 of this special book of the Scripture and read from 11 to 13:

“What is my strength, that I should hope? and what is mine end, that I should prolong my life? Is my strength the strength of stones? or is my flesh of brass? Is not my help in me? and is wisdom driven quite from me?”

These words uttered by Job are a reflection of today’s world. Statistics in France suggest that over one million people have died of the coronavirus; 1,780,000 have died of immune-deficiency syndrome, 6,000,000 of HIV. Tobacco kills 6,000,000 people every year as well.

One question that might be addressed is why the world has not shut down the tobacco industry, knowing that officially, that plant kills over 6 million per year. Why did we not react to these facts by shutting down all tobacco stores and in fact the entire tobacco industry? Meanwhile, we shut down the entire world under the guise of saving a number much smaller than that.

Alcohol, another plague of society, has caused over 3 million people to die—and yet this industry was not shut down, either. Why does the world somehow fail to maintain consistency under the same premise of saving lives?

We cannot go continue without recognizing also the 7 million people that have died of cancer and 3.4 million of faulty diet. And at last, I want to mention that we’ve had over 1,210,000 car accidents and other traveling events, yet the world still remained open.

Such apparent inconsistencies are very hard to reconcile in the mind of individuals that are doing

proper math and can see through the issues. For most of us, it’s not easy to digest or comprehend the contradictory explanations that are given to the “herd.” Run for your life, but where?

The world ends up in misery because we have a lot of questions without answers, and for that reason we have a lot of problems without solutions.

LESSONS FROM JACOB

I am impressed to recall the attention of the reader to the time of Jacob’s flight. In a way, he was running for his life. Since he had lied to his father, he had to run away from his brother. After serving 14 years for his father-in-law who cheated him so many times, the Lord directed Jacob to return home. He took his wives and his possessions and left at an advantageous moment in the absence of Laban.

On the way, Jacob learns that a group of armed people led by Laban and his sons are furiously racing after him. Once that matter is settled, he soon receives another bit of news: his own brother is coming from the opposite direction with 400 men against him.

Even though Jacob had been running as a fugitive all his adult life, this is a specific moment in time when he cannot run for his life anymore. He cannot go back and is now out of solutions and does not know what to do. Death is in front of him, coming from the very place he missed so much. Run for your life—but where?

There is a surprising gap or discrepancy between Jacob’s expectations and God’s offer. The scenes of his betrayal are coming to view; his sin is hanging a heavy burden on his conscience and his heart.

Jacob despairs as he sees he is now running out of time. He realizes that God is his only refuge. He runs, but he is not running for his life. For the first time, he is running to the One that can lift the cross and remove the heavy burden of his soul.

This experience in the life of Jacob has prophetic application for the end of time when the people

of God will come to such a point without any solution.

All the heroes presented in this issue of our magazine show how most of the faithful ones reach the same terminus moment. Even though initially they are running for their lives, at the end they realize that running to save an earthly life is not worth the risk of sacrificing their relationship with their God.

They’ve had a human belief that because they had been faithful, the results of their work would be majestic—but when their expectation was not satisfied by God’s offer, they became disappointed. God’s offer did not satisfy their expectations.

THE TERMINUS IN CHRISTIAN LIFE

Job expected good things to happen to him. Based on his faith, he was an exemplary man, and he truly could be considered righteous. But what came upon him in those 42 chapters was way beyond his expectation.

Jeremiah had a life full of sorrow. The most antagonized prophet of the Old Testament, he reached a state of total desperation when he saw the dead bodies of his nationals on the streets of Jerusalem. The book of Lamentations proves once again that God’s offer did not meet some human expectations.

Jonah, a rebellious prophet, overreached himself to the point of arguing with God because his expectations were not met. Nineveh was not destroyed. His expectations were not satisfied by God’s offer.

Elijah was one of the most powerful reformers in the deepest, darkest moments of Hebrew history. In the time of greatest apostasy, he stood for God with faithfulness. In the end, he was disappointed that the reformation did not occur, and God’s response was not according to his expectations. He ran for his life, and at the end—tired and disappointed—he recognized himself as overwhelmed.

John the Baptist, one of the purest lives displayed in the New Testament—the man who baptized Jesus, the man who had prepared the way

We are living in the last generation in the history of this world—and we will be confronted with the same situation as Job, Jeremiah, Jonah, Elijah, and John the Baptist—and we'll react in a similar fashion as they. Initially we will try to run for our lives, but in time our journey will come to a dead end . . . until the patience of Job becomes the patience of the saints.

for His advent—became disappointed on that dark night before his death. God's offer did not satisfy his human expectations.

And the examples can continue, but what is the most important fact of this journey in Scripture is that after their great disappointment, all stop running for their lives. All finally give up their mere human expectations; all agree with God's offer and are ready not to run, but rather to submit to God's will.

We are living in the last generation in the history of this world—and we will be confronted with the same situation as they, and we'll react in a similar fashion as they. Initially we will try to run for our lives, but in time our journey will come to a dead end. Then we will be pushed into a sudden attack from the side of the forces of darkness, we'll be pushed against our will until the patience of Job becomes the patience of the saints—antagonized by the governments of the world, accused as national betrayers exactly as Jeremiah was. Why? For a message that is unpopular. In essence, Jeremiah's message was "Jerusalem is fallen." No one wanted to hear that news, but it was a reality telegram sent directly from the Majesty of Heaven.

Likewise, we, too, have a similar message at the crossroads of eternity: "Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen" (Revelation 18:2). We'll be hunted in all countries of the world, like Elijah was in the time of the 3 years of dry heat, for having the courage to pray against the rain and for the rain, standing before the rulers of this world, but on God's side uttering essentially the same words: "If the Lord be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him" (1 Kings 18:21), pointing to the real reason that leads to the world's destruction, telling the powers that be that you and your house have caused it all because you

have forsaken the commandments of God. (See 1 Kings 18:17, 18.)

Like Jonah, we'll be pushed against our will to utter the words of doomsday and be swallowed by the Great Fish in the night of Jacob's trouble. We'll be struggling in the heart of the earth, trying to save ourselves till we run out of strength, saying with our last breath: "Salvation comes from Thee, O Lord. We tried to run for our life, but we reached a dead end. If there is something to be done, you are the only One that can save us."

The people of God will condemn the sins of the modern "Herod," speaking out against the immorality of the kings and leaders of this world.

"Now, as in former ages, the presentation of a truth that reproves the sins and errors of the times, will excite opposition. 'Every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved.' John 3:20. As men see that they cannot maintain their position by the Scriptures, many determine to maintain it at all hazards, and with a malicious spirit they assail the character and motives of those who stand in defense of unpopular truth. It is the same policy which has been pursued in all ages. Elijah was declared to be a troubler of Israel, Jeremiah a traitor, Paul a polluter of the temple. From that day to this, those who would be loyal to truth have been denounced as seditious, heretical, or schismatic. Multitudes who are too unbelieving to accept the sure word of prophecy, will receive with unquestioning credulity an accusation against those who dare to reprove fashionable sins. This spirit will increase more and more. And the Bible plainly teaches that a time is approaching when the laws of the State shall so conflict with the law of God that whoever would obey all the divine

precepts must brave reproach and punishment as an evil-doer.

"And in view of this, what is the duty of the messenger of truth? Shall he conclude that the truth ought not to be presented, since often its only effect is to arouse men to evade or resist its claims? No; he has no more reason for withholding the testimony of God's Word, because it excites opposition, than had earlier reformers. The confession of faith made by saints and martyrs was recorded for the benefit of succeeding generations. Those living examples of holiness and steadfast integrity have come down to inspire courage in those who are now called to stand as witnesses for God. They received grace and truth, not for themselves alone, but that, through them, the knowledge of God might enlighten the earth. Has God given light to His servants in this generation? Then they should let it shine forth to the world."¹

THE SURPRISE

At the end—after all the big disappointments—comes God's offer that will surprise the heroes of the last generation. Initially they were unpleasantly surprised with what God offered them in the darkest moments of their life, because they thought they deserved better treatment. Yet now, after the entire chain of disappointment, God's offer will make them feel they are unworthy of what He had offered them. So, we'll have the same experience. "Heaven will be cheap enough, if we obtain it through suffering. We must deny self all along the way, die to self daily, let Jesus alone appear, and keep His glory continually in view."²

WHERE WE ARE TODAY

My dear fellows, the time has come to leave cities, to leave the

comfort of civilization, and run for our lives and for the life of our dear ones. The church should be ahead of the world. Why? Because we have the light, the word of God, in this global darkness. We have the principles of our faith reflected by the scriptures that give us the most beautiful guidelines of what we should do in the time of crisis.

Is the time at hand?

Globalism is rampant. The world is seeking a global leader; prophecy speaks about antichrist and the time of trouble. There is a void to be occupied. Professor Klaus Schwab, the founder and executive chairman of the World Economic Forum, claims that the main problem in society is not globalization. The problem is a lack of global governance. **So, what he meant is that we are to be looking for a leader to occupy this position of high responsibility.**

One of the most translated books in the world after the Holy Scripture is *The Great Controversy* by Ellen G. White. This book brilliantly confirms the fact that God is in control and is not caught by surprise in these events.

In another masterpiece by the same author, the explanation is given: "The authorities will make laws to restrict religious liberty. They will assume the right that is God's alone. They will think they can force the conscience, which God alone should control. Even now they are making a beginning; this work they will continue to carry forward till they reach a boundary over which they cannot step. God will interpose in behalf of His loyal, commandment-keeping people.

"On every occasion when persecution takes place, those who witness it make decisions either for Christ or against Him. Those who manifest sympathy for the ones wrongly condemned show their attachment for Christ. Others are offended because the principles of truth cut directly across their practice. Many stumble and fall, apostatizing from the faith they once advocated. Those who apostatize in time of trial will, to secure their own safety, bear false witness, and betray their brethren. Christ has warned us of this, that we may not be surprised at the unnatural,

cruel course of those who reject the light."³

"The season of distress and anguish before us will require a faith that can endure weariness, delay, and hunger—a faith that will not faint, though severely tried. The period of probation is granted to all to prepare for that time. Jacob prevailed because he was persevering and determined. His victory is an evidence of the power of importunate prayer. All who will lay hold of God's promises, as he did, and be as earnest and persevering as he was, will succeed as he succeeded. Those who are unwilling to deny self, to agonize before God, to pray long and earnestly for his blessing, will not obtain it. Wrestling with God—how few know what it is! How few have ever had their souls drawn out after God with intensity of desire until every power is on the stretch. When waves of despair which no language can express sweep over the suppliant, how few cling with unyielding faith to the promises of God. . . .

"We should now acquaint ourselves with God by proving his promises. Angels record every prayer that is earnest and sincere. We should rather dispense with selfish gratifications than neglect communion with God. The deepest poverty, the greatest self-denial, with his approval, is better than riches, honors, ease, and friendship without it. We must take time to pray."⁴

In the Dark Ages, the man in black—the priest—claimed to be conscience for the individual. Today, too often the man in white—the doctor—claims to be the conscience for the individual.

If there ever was a time when the people of God should be on maximum alert, watching for the events that point towards the second coming of Jesus, it is now. If there ever was a time when the church should consider temperance as a priority, that time is now. If there ever was a time when we should treat our body with more respect and very special care regarding the food, drink, and whatever we put into it, that time is now. "Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

And in dealing with the matter of Christian temperance, we see

the need of proper diet not only for the body but also for the mind. So, positive thinking and bad news do not reconcile with one another— but reading the Bible, seeking hope and faith have power to override the daily bad news. This is to be the basis of our education, our faith, our trust. We are to be "casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:5).

This different kind of priority and lifestyle will surely bring persecution from the majority who blindly ride along with the current of worldly popularity and political correctness. When we are at the terminus point and there is no human solution, Jesus nonetheless bids us, "Fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows. Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 10:28–33).

The faithful few overcome the enemy of souls "by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death" (Revelation 12:11).

Jesus explains: "Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it" (Mark 8:34, 35).

May we courageously be of this number! *R*

References:

- ¹ *The Great Controversy* [1888 edition], pp. 458, 459.
- ² *The Faith I Live By*, p. 359.
- ³ *The Desire of Ages*, p. 630.
- ⁴ *The Great Controversy* [1888 edition], pp. 621, 622.



Baptisms in East Canada

This summer our church in Eastern Canada faced a major trial, yet the fall brought much joy. Over 80 members and visitors gathered on the shores of Lake Simcoe at Innisfil, Ontario, to witness the water baptism of three young, dedicated souls.

On October 2, 2021, the brethren from our churches in Montreal and Ottawa united to celebrate the baptism of two new souls.



Three baptisms in Germany

We are overjoyed to share the blessings of the summer harvest with our brethren around the world. Three baptisms were performed in Germany from July–October 2021. We praise the Lord for His continued mercy and guidance of the work in Germany. Let us remember to pray for our new brethren around the world, that the Lord may strengthen their faith as they journey with Him!

Bolivia Union Headquarters Inauguration

On the first weekend of November 2021, the inauguration of the new Bolivian Union headquarters, an ordination, and a missionary seminar were held in Cochabamba, Bolivia. It was a weekend of praise and blessings.



Six Baptisms—Central Philippine Union Conference

Praise the Lord! From September to October of 2021, thirty-two souls completed their baptismal studies and were baptized in the CPUC. Central Philippine Union Conference (CPUC)—Glory to God in the highest! From September–October 2021, thirty-two souls completed their baptismal studies and steadfastly dedicated their lives to God through baptism—in Bacolod City, in Cabintan, Ormoc City, at the Capoocan Church, in Sangat, Bohol, and in Buntis, Bacong. Each baptism was attended by brethren from the local churches who welcomed their new brethren in Christ and rejoiced with the Heavenly Host to witness their decision.



International Youth Convention in Austria

Alps, Austria — The “Closer to God” International Youth Convention was held in the beautiful Austrian Alps from August 4–8, 2021. After being postponed for over a year due to the restrictions, the long-awaited youth convention finally took place. It was a blessed event that brought our youth closer together and, most importantly, closer to God. There were moments of praise, worship, lectures, workshops, and Q&A sessions, as well as moments of recreation. The much-anticipated event brought much joy to the hearts of all who participated. Most importantly, it brought everyone “CLOSER TO GOD” as we studied God’s word. The family-like atmosphere inspired us to keep climbing heavenward, no matter the circumstances. We praise the Lord for the opportunity to attend this event. Let us keep our young people in our prayers, and we hope to host another international youth convention soon!



Reorganization of the Chilean Union

From December 8–10, 2021, the brethren in the Chilean Union held their Reorganization Session in Linares, in the Maule Region. The theme of the event was “Under God’s Care.”



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MOVING? Please let us know.

Faith for the Fearful

When bad things are going on, it's natural for a person or animal to want to run away. Today, it seems there are so many bad things everywhere, that nearly everyone is scared.

But we can't go around feeling scared all the time! Yes, we need to be careful against all the bad things that happen, but we should not live every day as if we were a frightened cat.

In Proverbs 22:13, we read: "The slothful man saith, There is a lion without, I shall be slain in the streets." In other words, a lazy man who doesn't feel like working makes up an excuse that there is a lion outside, so he needs to stay in. But we need to be stronger and braver than that!

Yes, there are many bad people out there, but God gives us a promise if we will trust in Him and be faithful to His Word: "Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the Lord thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee" (Deuteronomy 31:6).

God is more powerful than anyone or anything else in the whole universe! If we have Jesus in our hearts, we are told, "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4). How can we claim this promise? By trusting God and obeying His Word. "I will hear what God the Lord will speak: for he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not turn again to folly" (Psalm 85:8). Do we want God to speak peace toward us? For sure! His mighty arm will protect us and His great power will give us strength for whatever we need to do.



But what does it mean to turn again to folly? That means going back to doing wrong things that we may have done in the past. If we want God's blessing, we need to stay close to Him by prayer and study of His Word. Even if we have gotten into trouble by doing something bad, the LORD is willing to forgive us, cleanse us and make us new. But He doesn't want us to go back to doing bad things. He's willing to give us strength to obey if we just ask Him!

"Only the sense of God's presence can banish the fear that, for the timid child, would make life a burden. Let him fix in his memory the promise, 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear Him, and delivereth them.' Psalm 34:7. Let him read that wonderful story of Elisha in the mountain city, and, between him and the hosts of armed foemen, a mighty encircling band of heavenly angels. Let him read how to Peter, in prison and condemned to death, God's angel appeared; how, past the armed

guards, the massive doors and great iron gateway with their bolts and bars, the angel led God's servant forth in safety. Let him read of that scene on the sea, when the tempest-tossed soldiers and seamen, worn with labor and watching and long fasting, Paul the prisoner, on his way to trial and execution, spoke those grand words of courage and hope: 'Be of good cheer: for there shall be no loss of any man's life among you. . . . For there stood by me this night the angel of God, whose I am, and whom I serve, saying, Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar: and, lo, God hath given thee all them that sail with thee.' " *Education*, pp. 255, 256.

"What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me" (Psalm 56:3, 4). "The very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows" (Matthew 10:30, 31).—*BHM*.