

SABBATH SCHOOL LESSONS

For the Fourth Quarter 2014

Experiences of Faith

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INTRODUCTION

When interested souls receive Bible studies but the teaching is seen as nice information and theory, without effect on the mind and lifestyle of the student, what conclusion can one draw? If time is given for reflection but there is still no spiritual interest and no experiences of faith are made, what should one think? If the students remain spectators who enjoy hearing nice music and then go away and forget everything that was presented, will they receive any benefit? Is a tree that produces no fruit of any value? What has to happen in a seed before it can produce fruit? What is the spiritual power that makes it possible for someone to have wonderful spiritual experiences with God and man?

The Holy Scriptures refer to faith—living faith—and state that “faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” Hebrews 11:1. In our spiritual life, “without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.” Hebrews 11:6.

“Sincere faith in Christ is that alone which can secure for us an entrance into the city of God. Faith in Christ, expressed in the life and character, revealed in love for God and for our brethren, makes the human agent a power in the world and in the church. I am made sad to see that many have not this faith and love; for these are the signs of our Christianity, the witness that we are the children of God. True faith in Christ will recover the backslider from the entanglements of the world, and engage him from day to day in service, that will keep his brethren from backsliding. This is the work that God requires of every soul.” —*Lake Union Herald*, November 17, 1909.

But as precious as it is in the eyes of the Lord, true faith is becoming increasingly rare as the end of this world approaches. Jesus knew this would happen, and one day He asked, “When the Son of man cometh, shall He find faith on the earth?” Luke 18:8. This means that the more time passes, the less faith there is, for people go astray without it. 1 Timothy 6:10, 21; 4:1. Therefore, let us not forget that faith is more precious than gold that perishes (1 Peter 1:7) and that what we need more than anything else is genuine faith—“faith which worketh by love.” Galatians 5:6. “When faith takes hold of the blessing, there comes rich spiritual good.... We need an enlarged conception in order to comprehend its value.” —*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 284.

Just hearing the message without it being transformed into a living experience has little meaning. The Lord invites us to make His divine message effective in our lives by faith. He said: "Whosoever cometh to Me, and heareth My sayings, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: He is like a man which built an house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that without a foundation built an house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great." Luke 6:47-49.

The lessons for this quarter have to do with precious faith—first, as trust in the Lord and His promises, and, second, as a living experience. As we study each lesson, we will see that men and women living in different times, having different educations and cultures, have their lives completely changed to health, salvation, and victory. Men and women just like us, with similar weaknesses and needs, despite various backgrounds, all made experiences of faith—blessed experiences that impacted their lives forever.

"Genuine faith is the faith that works by love, and purifies the soul. A living faith will be a working faith. Should we go into the garden and find that there was no sap in the plants, no freshness in the leaves, no bursting buds or blooming flowers, no signs of life in stalk or branches, we would say, 'The plants are dead. Uproot them from the garden; for they are a deformity to the beds.' So it is with those who profess Christianity, and have no spirituality. If there are no signs of religious vigor, if there is no doing of the commandments of the Lord, it is evident that there is no abiding in Christ, the living vine." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 71.

"It is essential to have faith in Jesus, and to believe you are saved through Him.... Faith and works go together, believing and doing are blended." —*Selected Messages*, book 1, p. 373.

"When faith lays hold upon Christ, the truth will bring delight to the soul.... Daily you will have a rich experience as you practice the Christianity you profess." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 437.

When faith is living, fruits appear and grow! "Religion consists in doing the words of Christ; not doing to earn God's favor, but because, all undeserving, we have received the gift of His love. Christ places the salvation of man, not upon profession merely, but upon faith that is made manifest in works of righteousness. Doing, not saying merely, is expected of the followers of Christ. It is through action that character is built. 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God,

they are the sons of God.’ Romans 8:14. Not those whose hearts are touched by the Spirit, not those who now and then yield to its power, but they that are led by the Spirit, are the sons of God.” —*Thoughts from the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 149, 150.

May the Lord bless us to see the importance of faith—living faith. May our faith grow through love and lead us to trust more and more in Him so that, as those individuals who are presented as examples, we will learn to put our lives completely in the hands of the Lord and make experiences as did they.

—*The brethren of the General Conference*
Ministerial Department

Trusting and Building an Ark

“God in His providence set forth Noah as a representative of what true faith would do. The Lord designed that Noah in his life and character should present before the antediluvian world a marked example of the results of believing the word of God. He did not walk in sparks of his own kindling. He obtained all his discernment, all his power, all his strength, from the source of all light; for he held communion with God. It was because he had faith in God, because he was a man of prayer, that he was a man of power. He kindled his taper at the divine altar, that he might be a light to the world. He had a message intrusted to him from God.” —*Signs of the Times*, April 18, 1895.

CONDITIONS IN THE ANTEDILUVIAN WORLD

1. **What was the moral and spiritual condition of mankind at the time of Noah? What resolution did the Lord come to in response to the widespread violence, depravity, and rebellion?**

GENESIS 6:3, 5, 11 *And the Lord said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years....⁵ And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually....¹¹ The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.*

MATTHEW 24:37, 38 *But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.³⁸ For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark.*

“The world was in its infancy; yet iniquity had become so deep and widespread that God could no longer bear with it; and He said, ‘I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth.’ He declared that His Spirit should not always strive with the guilty race. If they did not cease to pollute with their sins the world and its rich treasures, He would blot them from His creation, and would destroy the things with which He had delighted to bless them; He would sweep away the beasts of the field, and the vegetation which furnished such an abundant supply of food, and would transform the fair earth into one vast scene of desolation and ruin.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 92.

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS

2. **Unlike the society around him, what is reported about Noah? Being receptive to the influence of the Holy Spirit, how was he seen by the Lord?**

GENESIS 6:8, 9 *But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord. ⁹ These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.*

“Noah had faith in God. His position was a trying one; he had to fight the good fight of faith at every step. One hundred and twenty years of probation was granted to the inhabitants of the world, and Noah was to live through that generation. Everything around him was in confusion. On all sides was sin and wickedness, disregard of God and his holy law; but he was to live among men, and not be a partaker of their wicked works, but to be an example of righteousness, and faith, and entire obedience to God. Amid worldwide contempt of God, he was a faithful preacher of righteousness, exemplifying to the world what a man’s life could be by reposing confidence in the sure word of God, by rendering obedience to all His commandments. Nearly the whole world was against Noah; yet there were many who had not had light in regard to the redemption that had been promised to our first parents.” —*Signs of the Times*, April 18, 1895.

3. What message did the Lord give to Noah regarding the earth and its inhabitants? What special task was he given to protect his family and himself?

GENESIS 6:13, 14, FIRST PART, 17, 18 *And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth. ¹⁴ Make thee an ark of gopher wood;... ¹⁷ And, behold, I, even I, do bring a flood of waters upon the earth, to destroy all flesh, wherein is the breath of life, from under heaven; and every thing that is in the earth shall die. ¹⁸ But with thee will I establish my covenant; and thou shalt come into the ark, thou, and thy sons, and thy wife, and thy sons’ wives with thee.*

“The inhabitants of the antediluvian world had the warning given them prior to their overthrow; but the warning was not heeded. They refused to listen to the words of Noah; they mocked at his message. Righteous men lived in that generation. Before the destruction of the antediluvian world, Enoch bore his testimony unflinchingly. And in prophetic vision he saw the condition of the world at the present time. He said: ‘Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.’” —*Review and Herald*, August 2, 1898.

A MAN OF FAITH AND ACTION

4. Did Noah firmly believe what the Lord told him? Did he waver in the face of the enormous undertaking that required all of his time, energy, and means?

GENESIS 6:22; 7:1, 2 *Thus did Noah; according to all that God commanded him, so did he.... ^{7:1} And the Lord said unto Noah, Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for thee have I seen righteous before me in this*

generation. ² *Of every clean beast thou shalt take to thee by sevens, the male and his female; and of beasts that are not clean by two, the male and his female.*

“By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.’ Hebrews 11:7. While Noah was giving his warning message to the world, his works testified of his sincerity. It was thus that his faith was perfected and made evident. He gave the world an example of believing just what God says. All that he possessed, he invested in the ark. As he began to construct that immense boat on dry ground, multitudes came from every direction to see the strange sight and to hear the earnest, fervent words of the singular preacher. Every blow struck upon the ark was a witness to the people.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 95.

5. Since for decades there was no sign of a flood, did he waste time, or did he devote his full energy to completing the life-saving ark? In addition to the construction work, what other mission did he pursue?

HEBREWS 11:7 *By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.*

2 PETER 2:5 *And spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the ungodly.*

“He [the Lord] caused Noah to know His purpose, and instructed him to warn the people while building an ark in which the obedient could find shelter until God’s indignation was overpast. For one hundred and twenty years Noah proclaimed the message of warning to the antediluvian world; but only a few repented. Some of the carpenters he employed in building the ark, believed the message, but died before the flood; others of Noah’s converts backslid. The righteous on the earth were but few, and only eight lived to enter the ark. These were Noah and his family.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 504.

“The wickedness of men was very great, yet there was hope for them if they would turn from their wickedness, and the Lord made Noah His messenger to proclaim to the inhabitants of the Old World their sins, and to set before them wherein they had provoked the wrath of God. He told them what God proposed to do in the world.” —*Signs of the Times*, April 18, 1895.

ACTIVE EVEN IN ADVANCED AGE

6. How old was Noah when he began building the ark? Did his advanced age keep him from fulfilling the Lord’s will?

GENESIS 7:4-7 *For yet seven days, and I will cause it to rain upon the earth forty days and forty nights; and every living substance that I have*

made will I destroy from off the face of the earth. ⁵ And Noah did according unto all that the Lord commanded him. ⁶ And Noah was six hundred years old when the flood of waters was upon the earth. ⁷ And Noah went in, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him, into the ark, because of the waters of the flood.

“But Noah stood like a rock amid the tempest. He was surrounded by every species of wickedness and moral corruption; but amid popular contempt and ridicule, amid universal wickedness and disobedience, he distinguished himself by His holy integrity and unwavering faithfulness. While the world around him were disregarding God, and were indulging in all manner of extravagant dissipation which led to violence and crimes of every kind, the faithful preacher of righteousness declared to that generation that a flood of water was to deluge the world because of the unsurpassed wickedness of its inhabitants. He warned them to repent and believe, and find refuge in the ark.” —*Reflecting Christ*, p. 322.

SALVATION AND GRATITUDE

7. When the flood was over and Noah's family was graciously preserved, how did this servant of God express his gratitude?

GENESIS 8:18, 20, 21 *And Noah went forth, and his sons, and his wife, and his sons' wives with him:... ²⁰ And Noah builded an altar unto the Lord; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. ²¹ And the Lord smelled a sweet savour; and the Lord said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.*

“Noah did not forget God who had so graciously preserved them, but immediately [on coming out of the ark] erected an altar and ... offered burnt offerings on the altar, showing his faith in Christ the great sacrifice, and manifesting his gratitude to God for their wonderful preservation. The offering of Noah came up before God like a sweet savor. He accepted the offering, and blessed Noah and his family....” —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 132.

8. What precious lessons can we learn from this event?

MATTHEW 24:38, 39, 42, 44 *For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, ³⁹ And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.... ⁴² Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.... ⁴⁴ Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*

“The warning message is to be given to the world in these last days, and because iniquity shall abound, the love of many waxeth cold. The question is asked, When the Lord cometh, will He find faith on the earth? The warning is given, ‘Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your

Lord doth come. But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh....' Matthew 24:42-44." –*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 19, p. 388.

"As the time of Christ's second appearing draws near, the Lord sends His servants with a warning to the world to prepare for that great event. Multitudes have been living in transgression of God's law, and now He in mercy calls them to obey its sacred precepts. All who will put away their sins by repentance toward God and faith in Christ are offered pardon." –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 102.

FOR REFLECTION

- If you had lived in the time of Noah, do you think you would have been as trusting and obedient to all that the Lord commanded as he was?
- Since our days are similar to those of Noah, what should we firmly believe?
- How should we act to escape what is coming and to offer salvation to others as he did?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Matthew 24:44-51.

"This is the day of the Lord's preparation. He says: 'Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame.' The great work from which the mind should not be diverted, is the consideration of our safety in the sight of God. The storm is coming, relentless in its fury. Are we prepared to meet it? Are our feet on the Rock of Ages? Are we one with Christ, as He is one with the Father?" –*Review and Herald*, December 27, 1898.

* * *

A Man of Faith and Patience

“When depression settles upon the soul, it is no evidence that God has changed. He is ‘the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever.’ Hebrews 13:8. You are sure of the favor of God when you are sensible of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness; but if the clouds sweep over your soul, you must not feel that you are forsaken. Your faith must pierce the gloom.... The riches of the grace of Christ must be kept before the mind. Treasure up the lessons that His love provides. Let your faith be like Job’s, that you may declare, ‘Though He slay me, yet will I trust in Him.’ Job 13:15. Lay hold on the promises of your heavenly Father and remember His former dealing with you and with His servants, for ‘all things work together for good to them that love God.’ Romans 8:28.” —*That I May Know Him*, p. 257.

MEETING THE PATRIARCH

1. Who lived in the land of Uz in the time of the patriarchs? What wonderful testimony is given of him in the Holy Scriptures?

JOB 1:1, 4, 5, 8 *There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil....⁴ And his sons went and feasted in their houses, every one his day; and sent and called for their three sisters to eat and to drink with them.⁵ And it was so, when the days of their feasting were gone about, that Job sent and sanctified them, and rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, It may be that my sons have sinned, and cursed God in their hearts. Thus did Job continually....⁸ And the Lord said unto Satan, Hast thou considered my servant Job, that there is none like him in the earth, a perfect and an upright man, one that feareth God, and escheweth evil?*

“I was a father to the poor; and the cause which I knew not I searched out.’ This was an evidence that Job had the righteousness that was after Christ’s order.... Faith works by love and purifies the soul. Faith buds and blossoms and bears a harvest of precious fruit.” —*General Conference Daily Bulletin*, March 18, 1897.

TESTS AND TRIALS

2. What is told about his economic wellbeing? How did he accept the misfortunes and adversities that suddenly swept away his wealth and his family?

JOB 1:2, 3, 20-22 *And there were born unto him seven sons and three daughters. ³ His substance also was seven thousand sheep, and three thousand camels, and five hundred yoke of oxen, and five hundred she asses, and a very great household; so that this man was the greatest of all the men of the east.... ²⁰ Then Job arose, and rent his mantle, and shaved his head, and fell down upon the ground, and worshipped, ²¹ And said, Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord. ²² In all this Job sinned not, nor charged God foolishly.*

"Frequently the very best evidence that we can have that we are in the right way is that the least advance costs us effort and that darkness shrouds our pathway. It has been my experience that the loftiest heights of faith we can only reach through darkness and clouds....

"It is not safe for us to cherish doubts and fears, for these grow by looking upon and talking them. I feel to reach up my hand and grasp the hand of Christ as did the sinking disciple on the stormy sea. I want to do my work with fidelity that when I shall stand before the great white throne and am called to answer for the things done in the body, which are all written in the book, that I may see souls standing there to testify I warned them, I entreated them to behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world." —*This Day with God*, p. 212.

3. In addition to his previous losses, what did Job suffer bodily from head to foot? What did even his wife say, which made his life all the more difficult?

JOB 2:7-9 *So went Satan forth from the presence of the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown. ⁸ And he took him a potsherd to scrape himself withal; and he sat down among the ashes. ⁹ Then said his wife unto him, Dost thou still retain thine integrity? curse God, and die.*

"Learn the lessons of meekness and lowliness in the school of Christ. Realize how much He bore for us, and then count it not a mark of God's anger that you have some trials to bear for Jesus. If you trust God, the trials will always prove a blessing, and your faith will come forth the brighter, the stronger, the purer. Satan is always trying to press the soul into distrust of God, and therefore we must educate the mind to trust Him. Talk faith and hope when Satan says, as did the wife of Job, 'Curse God, and die.' If you trust God, you will see more reason to trust Him. As you talk of His goodness, you will see more of His love to talk about. Thus the mind may be trained to live in the brightness of the Sun of righteousness, and not in the shadow which Satan casts athwart our path. Hope in God, who is the health of our countenance, and our God." —*Review and Herald*, September 1, 1891.

HE LOOKED BEYOND BY FAITH

4. How did Job respond to all these adversities and the temptation to doubt of God's kindness and love?

JOB 2:10 *But he said unto her, Thou speakest as one of the foolish women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil? In all this did not Job sin with his lips.*

“The hindrances that hold us back from perfecting Christian characters are in ourselves. Jesus can remove them. The cross He requires us to bear will create strength in us more than it consumes, and remove our heaviest burdens to take the burden of Christ, which is light. Conflicts and trials we must meet in the discharge of duty. Christ has called us to glory and to virtue. The life He has through His own suffering and death prepared for us to lead, would never have cost us a pain or grief if we had never left it. Every self-denial and every sacrifice we make in following Christ are so many steps of the lost sheep returning to the fold.” —*This Day with God*, p. 212.

5. How firm was the faith of this famous patriarch? Did he see the tests and physical suffering as insurmountable obstacles or as instruments in God’s hand?

JOB 13:15; 23:10 *Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine own ways before him....^{23:10} But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.*

“It is said of Abraham that he believed God, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. At the call of God, he left his country and people, and went out, ‘not knowing whither he went.’ ‘He looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.’ Hebrews 11:8. Moses, also, through faith, esteemed the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he had respect unto the recompense of reward. Job, in the midst of his great loss and bodily suffering, could say, ‘For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.’...

“We may say with Job: ‘He knoweth the way that I take; when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.’ Job 23:10. ‘For thou, O God, hast proved us; Thou hast tried us, as silver is tried.’ Psalm 66:10.” — *Signs of the Times*, August 20, 1896.

6. Despite the terrible adversity and his physical suffering, what was the certainty that gave Job strength to endure?

JOB 19:25-27 *For I know that my redeemer liveth, and that he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth:²⁶ And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God:²⁷ Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me.*

“Let us honor God by showing firm faith and unswerving trust. Let us remember that He is not glorified by the manifestation of a fretful, unhappy spirit. The Lord cares for the flowers. He gives them beauty and fragrance. Will He not much more give us the fragrance of a cheerful disposition? Will He not restore in us the divine image? Then let us have faith in Him. Let us now, just now, place ourselves where He can give us His Holy Spirit. Then we can give to the world a revelation of

what true religion does for men and women. The joy of a Saviour filling our hearts gives us that peace and confidence which enables us to say, 'I know that my Redeemer liveth.' Job 19:25." –*Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 72.

THE LORD'S ANSWER

7. After Job's serious tests, what great blessings did the Lord give him? What additional blessings did he expect in the future?

JOB 42:10-12 *And the Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends: also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before. ¹¹ Then came there unto him all his brethren, and all his sisters, and all they that had been of his acquaintance before, and did eat bread with him in his house: and they bemoaned him, and comforted him over all the evil that the Lord had brought upon him: every man also gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold. ¹² So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning: for he had fourteen thousand sheep, and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses.*

"According to his faith, so was it unto Job. 'When He hath tried me,' he said, 'I shall come forth as gold.' Job 23:10. So it came to pass. By his patient endurance he vindicated his own character, and thus the character of Him whose representative he was. And 'the Lord turned the captivity of Job:... also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before.... So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more than his beginning.' Job 42:10-12." –*Education*, p. 156.

"Whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another.' Job 19:27. And the dying words of the apostle Paul were: 'I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.' 2 Timothy 4:7, 8." –*The Youth's Instructor*, July 8, 1897.

JOB IS AN EXAMPLE

8. Among what noble men did the prophet Ezekiel present Job? What does the New Testament say about him, his endurance, and his faith?

EZEKIEL 14:20 *Though Noah, Daniel, and Job, were in it, as I live, saith the Lord God, they shall deliver neither son nor daughter; they shall but deliver their own souls by their righteousness.*

JAMES 5:11 *Behold, we count them happy which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.*

"My faith cannot save you, nor your faith avail for my salvation. Though Noah, Daniel, and Job were in the land, they could deliver nei-

ther son nor daughter by their righteousness; they could only deliver their own souls. We should seek God now for His pardoning grace. Now is the time to obtain genuine religious experience for the trying scenes that are just before us. God wants us to be in earnest, He wants us to be happy. When He gave Christ to the world, He gave all Heaven in that one priceless gift. He opened up to us all the treasures of His power and grace. By living faith we may grasp the hand of Infinite Power. We may be so connected with the God of heaven that His grace may be found sufficient in every emergency of life. Says the prophet, 'Five of you shall chase an hundred, and an hundred of you shall put ten thousand to flight.' Leviticus 26:8."—*Signs of the Times*, June 10, 1889.

FOR REFLECTION

- Can a Christian's hope be based on the sandy foundation of feeling and circumstances?
- Will the true believer focus his view on the clouds and darkness, or will he look beyond what he can see?
- Like the patriarch Job, what opportunities will trials and adversities give him?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

"The long years amid desert solitudes were not lost. Not only was Moses gaining a preparation for the great work before him, but during this time, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he wrote the book of Genesis and also the book of Job, which would be read with the deepest interest by the people of God until the close of time."—(*Signs of the Times*, February 19, 1880) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 3, p. 1140.

"The Lord in His providence had brought this trial upon Abraham to teach him lessons of submission, patience, and faith—lessons that were to be placed on record for the benefit of all who should afterward be called to endure affliction. God leads His children by a way that they know not, but He does not forget or cast off those who put their trust in Him. He permitted affliction to come upon Job, but He did not forsake him. He allowed the beloved John to be exiled to lonely Patmos, but the Son of God met him there, and his vision was filled with scenes of immortal glory. God permits trials to assail His people, that by their constancy and obedience they themselves may be spiritually enriched, and that their example may be a source of strength to others. 'I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil.' Jeremiah 29:11. The very trials that task our faith most severely and make it seem that God has forsaken us, are to lead us closer to Christ, that we may lay all our burdens at His feet and experience the peace which He will give us in exchange."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 129.

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Condemned to Death, but Saved

“Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose life-blood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character. It was Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, who, strong in faith, was ‘not afraid of the king’s commandment’ (Hebrews 11:23), of whom was born Moses, the deliverer of Israel.” *—Ministry of Healing*, p. 372.

SUSPICIONS AND DEADLY MEASURES

1. What suspicion arose in the mind of the new Egyptian pharaoh when he saw how the Israelites were growing in numbers?

EXODUS 1:8-10 *Now there arose up a new king over Egypt, which knew not Joseph. ⁹ And he said unto his people, Behold, the people of the children of Israel are more and mightier than we: ¹⁰ Come on, let us deal wisely with them; lest they multiply, and it come to pass, that, when there falleth out any war, they join also unto our enemies, and fight against us, and so get them up out of the land.*

“Under Joseph’s fostering care, and the favor of the king who was then ruling, they had spread rapidly over the land. But they had kept themselves a distinct race, having nothing in common with the Egyptians in customs or religion; and their increasing numbers now excited the fears of the king and his people, lest in case of war they should join themselves with the enemies of Egypt. Yet policy forbade their banishment from the country. Many of them were able and understanding workmen, and they added greatly to the wealth of the nation; the king needed such laborers for the erection of his magnificent palaces and temples. Accordingly he ranked them with the Egyptians who had sold themselves with their possessions to the kingdom. Soon taskmasters were set over them, and their slavery became complete. ‘And the Egyptians made the children of Israel to serve with rigor: and they made their lives bitter with hard bondage, in mortar, and in brick, and in all manner of service in the field: all their service, wherein they made them serve, was with rigor.’ Exodus 1:13, 14.” *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 242.

2. What terrible decree did the pharaoh issue, when other measures failed to accomplish his goal to weaken the Hebrew people?

EXODUS 1:15, 16 *And the king of Egypt spake to the Hebrew midwives, of which the name of the one was Shiprah, and the name of the other Puah: ¹⁶ And he said, When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew*

women, and see them upon the stools; if it be a son, then ye shall kill him: but if it be a daughter, then she shall live.

“The king and his counselors had hoped to subdue the Israelites with hard labor, and thus decrease their numbers and crush out their independent spirit. Failing to accomplish their purpose, they proceeded to more cruel measures. Orders were issued to the women whose employment gave them opportunity for executing the command, to destroy the Hebrew male children at their birth. Satan was the mover in this matter. He knew that a deliverer was to be raised up among the Israelites; and by leading the king to destroy their children he hoped to defeat the divine purpose. But the women feared God, and dared not execute the cruel mandate. The Lord approved their course, and prospered them.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 242.

3. At last, what cruel order was issued to reduce the people's numbers?

EXODUS 1:22 *And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.*

“The king, angry at the failure of his design, made the command more urgent and extensive. The whole nation was called upon to hunt out and slaughter his helpless victims. ‘And Pharaoh charged all his people, saying, Every son that is born ye shall cast into the river, and every daughter ye shall save alive.’ Exodus 1:22.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 242.

BORN IN A VERY DIFFICULT TIME

4. Who was born in this very terrible time? What is said about the baby?

EXODUS 2:1, 2, FIRST PART *And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi. ² And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child,...*

“While this decree was in full force a son was born to Amram and Jochebed, devout Israelites of the tribe of Levi. The babe was ‘a goodly child;’ and the parents, believing that the time of Israel’s release was drawing near, and that God would raise up a deliverer for His people, determined that their little one should not be sacrificed.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 242, 243.

FAITH AND ACTION

5. In what serious situation did the parents find themselves? Despite the risk, what strengthened their resolve and prompted them to hide their son?

EXODUS 2:2, LAST PART ... *She hid him three months.*

HEBREWS 11:23 *By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.*

“When this cruel decree was in full force, Moses was born. His mother hid him as long as she could with any safety....” —(*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 162) *Daughters of God*, p. 31.

“Faith in God strengthened their hearts, ‘and they were not afraid of the king’s commandment.’ Hebrews 11:23.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 243.

TESTED BUT NOT ABANDONED

6. With tears and deep heartache, what did the parents decide to do when they knew that they could no longer hide their baby?

EXODUS 2:3 *And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and daubed it with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the river’s brink.*

“The mother succeeded in concealing the child for three months. Then, finding that she could no longer keep him safely, she prepared a little ark of rushes, making it watertight by means of slime and pitch; and laying the babe therein, she placed it among the flags at the river’s brink. She dared not remain to guard it, lest the child’s life and her own should be forfeited; but his sister, Miriam, lingered near, apparently indifferent, but anxiously watching to see what would become of her little brother.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 243.

7. While there seemed to be no hope for the baby, how did the Lord work in a wonderful way to save his life?

EXODUS 2:4-9 *And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him. ⁵ And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river’s side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it. ⁶ And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews’ children. ⁷ Then said his sister to Pharaoh’s daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee? ⁸ And Pharaoh’s daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child’s mother. ⁹ And Pharaoh’s daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.*

“And there were other watchers. The mother’s earnest prayers had committed her child to the care of God; and angels, unseen, hovered above his lowly resting place. The mother’s earnest prayers had committed her child to the care of God; and angels, unseen, hovered above his lowly resting place. Angels directed Pharaoh’s daughter thither. Her curiosity was excited by the little basket, and as she looked upon the beautiful child within, she read the story at a glance. The tears of the babe awakened her compassion, and her sympathies went out to the unknown mother who had resorted to this means to preserve the life of her precious little one. She determined that he should be saved; she would adopt him as her own....

“God had heard the mother’s prayers; her faith had been rewarded. It was with deep gratitude that she entered upon her now safe and happy task. She faithfully improved her opportunity to educate her child for God. She felt confident that he had been preserved for some great work, and she knew that he must soon be given up to his royal mother, to be surrounded with influences that would tend to lead him away from God. All this rendered her more diligent and careful in his instruction than in that of her other children. She endeavored to imbue his mind with the fear of God and the love of truth and justice....” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 243.

LEADING TOWARD FREEDOM

8. To what mission did the Lord call the one who had been rescued from death in his infancy?

EXODUS 3:1, 2, 4, 7, 10 *Now Moses kept the flock of Jethro his father in law, the priest of Midian: and he led the flock to the backside of the desert, and came to the mountain of God, even to Horeb. ² And the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed.... ⁴ And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called unto him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I.... ⁷ And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows;... ¹⁰ Come now therefore, and I will send thee unto Pharaoh, that thou mayest bring forth my people the children of Israel out of Egypt.*

“The time had fully come when God would have Moses exchange the shepherd’s staff for the rod of God, which He would make powerful in accomplishing signs and wonders, in delivering His people from oppression, and in preserving them when pursued by their enemies.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 169.

FOR REFLECTION

- Could Moses’ parents have ever imagined that their son would be saved by the same family that had issued the death decree against all the boy babies?
- Did they have any idea of how Moses would be used by the Lord in behalf of their people?
- In making decisions concerning his life, whose hand did Moses see in his life being spared from drowning?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

“Jochebed was a woman and a slave. Her lot in life was humble, her burden heavy. But through no other woman, save Mary of Nazareth, has the world received greater blessing. Knowing that her child must soon pass beyond her care, to the guardianship of those who knew not God, she the more earnestly endeavored to link his soul with Heaven. She sought to implant in his heart love and loyalty to God. And faithfully was the work ac-

complished. Those principles of truth that were the burden of his mother's teaching and the lesson of her life, no after influence could induce Moses to renounce." —*Education*, p. 61.

"A man will gain power and efficiency as he accepts the responsibilities that God places upon him, and with his whole soul seeks to qualify himself to bear them aright. However humble his position or limited his ability, that man will attain true greatness who, trusting to divine strength, seeks to perform his work with fidelity...." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 255.

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Please read the Missionary Report from Belize on page 26

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Sabbath, October 25, 2014

Trusting God and Crossing the Red Sea

"Putting our trust in God, we are to move steadily forward, doing His work with unselfishness, in humble dependence upon Him, committing to His providence ourselves and all that concerns our present and future, holding the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end, remembering that we receive the blessings of heaven, not because of our worthiness, but because of Christ's worthiness and our acceptance, through faith in Him, of God's abounding grace." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 38.

ISRAEL IN TERRIBLE DANGER

1. What terror gripped the Israelites when they saw the Egyptian chariots closing in on them?

EXODUS 14:10-12 *And when Pharaoh drew nigh, the children of Israel lifted up their eyes, and, behold, the Egyptians marched after them; and they were sore afraid: and the children of Israel cried out unto the Lord.*

¹¹ *And they said unto Moses, Because there were no graves in Egypt, hast thou taken us away to die in the wilderness? wherefore hast thou dealt thus with us, to carry us forth out of Egypt? ¹² Is not this the word that we did tell thee in Egypt, saying, Let us alone, that we may serve the Egyptians? For it had been better for us to serve the Egyptians, than that we should die in the wilderness.*

"When the Israelites beheld the Egyptian host in pursuit, some upon horses and some in chariots, and equipped for war, their hearts failed

them. The Red Sea was before, the Egyptian host behind. They could see no way of escape. A shout of triumph burst from the Egyptians to find Israel completely in their power. The Israelites were greatly terrified.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 265.

“True, they were in a place from which there was no possibility of release unless God Himself interposed to save them; but they were brought into this strait by obeying the divine commands....

“It was not an easy thing to hold the hosts of Israel in waiting before the Lord. They were excited and full of terror. They lacked discipline and self-control. Impressed by the horrors of their situation, they became violent and unreasonable. They expected speedily to fall into the hands of their oppressors, and their wailings and recriminations were loud and deep.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 23.

ANSWERS TO THE CRY FOR HELP

2. What inspiring message did Moses give them from the Lord? How did Heaven answer their desperate cry in the moment of greatest need?

EXODUS 14:13-16 *And Moses said unto the people, Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which he will show to you to day: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen to day, ye shall see them again no more for ever. ¹⁴ The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace. ¹⁵ And the Lord said unto Moses, Wherefore criest thou unto me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward: ¹⁶ But lift thou up thy rod, and stretch out thine hand over the sea, and divide it: and the children of Israel shall go on dry ground through the midst of the sea.*

“True, there was no possibility of deliverance unless God Himself should interpose for their release; but having been brought into this position in obedience to the divine direction, Moses felt no fear of the consequences. His calm and assuring reply to the people was, ‘Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will show to you today: for the Egyptians whom ye have seen today, ye shall see them again no more forever. The Lord shall fight for you, and ye shall hold your peace.’ Exodus 14:13, 14.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, 284.

“He encouraged them to trust in God, and withhold their expressions of unbelief, and they should see what the Lord would do for them. Moses earnestly cried to the Lord to deliver His chosen people.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 207.

“The psalmist, describing the passage of the sea by Israel, sang, ‘Thy way was in the sea, and Thy paths in the great waters, and Thy footsteps were not known. Thou leddest Thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron.’ Psalm 77:19, 20, R.V.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 287.

THE LORD’S INTERVENTION FOR HIS PEOPLE

3. How did the Lord prevent the Egyptians from getting close to the Israelites and force them to return to slavery? What order did the Lord give Moses to provide a way of escape?

EXODUS 14:19, 20 *And the angel of God, which went before the camp of Israel, removed and went behind them; and the pillar of the cloud went from before their face, and stood behind them:*²⁰ *And it came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel; and it was a cloud and darkness to them, but it gave light by night to these: so that the one came not near the other all the night.*

“The Egyptians could not see the Hebrews; for the cloud of thick darkness was before them, which cloud was all light to the Israelites. Thus did God display His power to prove His people, whether they would trust in Him after giving them such tokens of His care and love for them, and to rebuke their unbelief and murmuring.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, p. 208.

“Jesus stood at the head of that vast army. The cloudy column by day and the pillar of fire by night represented their divine Leader.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 22.

“Shrouded in the pillar of cloud, the world’s Redeemer held communion with Israel. Let us not say, then, that they had not Christ. When the people thirsted in the wilderness, and gave themselves up to murmuring and complaint, Christ was to them what He is to us—a Saviour full of tender compassion, the Mediator between them and God. After we have done our part to cleanse the soul temple from the defilement of sin, Christ’s blood avails for us, as it did for ancient Israel.” —(*The Youth’s Instructor*, July 18, 1901) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1061.

4. What great miracle took place before their wondering eyes? What were God’s people able to do in this most singular experience in the history of the world?

EXODUS 14:21, 22 *And Moses stretched out his hand over the sea; and the Lord caused the sea to go back by a strong east wind all that night, and made the sea dry land, and the waters were divided.*²² *And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground: and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.*

“Go Forward. ‘Go forward’ was the word given by God to give to the children of Israel as they stood before the Red Sea, hedged in by inaccessible mountains and pursued by Pharaoh. In obedience to the command they moved forward. Then the Lord worked for them. The waters of the sea parted and stood on one side of them like a mighty wall, leaving before them an open path. ‘And the children of Israel went into the midst of the sea upon the dry ground,’ and were safe. Exodus 14:22.” —*Manuscript Releases*, vol. 18, p. 146.

“The waters rose up and stood, like congealed walls on either side, while Israel walked in the midst of the sea on dry ground.” —*Spirit of Prophecy*, vol. 1, pp. 208, 209.

A PATH OF FAITH AND FREEDOM

5. What was absolutely necessary for the people to venture forward on such a path? How would you feel if you were called to walk between high masses of water on your left and right? In whom did the people trust as they walked into the sea?

HEBREWS 11:29 *By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.*

PSALM 106:8-10 *Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. ⁹ He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. ¹⁰ And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.*

“God in His providence brought the Hebrews into the mountain fastnesses before the sea, that He might manifest His power in their deliverance and signally humble the pride of their oppressors. He might have saved them in any other way, but He chose this method in order to test their faith and strengthen their trust in Him. The people were weary and terrified, yet if they had held back when Moses bade them advance, God would never have opened the path for them. It was ‘by faith’ that ‘they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land.’ Hebrews 11:29. In marching down to the very water, they showed that they believed the word of God as spoken by Moses. They did all that was in their power to do, and then the Mighty One of Israel divided the sea to make a path for their feet.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

BY FAITH RECEIVED THE BAPTISM

6. As what do the Scriptures represent this special experience of faith that Israel made together on that day?

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1, 2 *Moreover, brethren, I would not that ye should be ignorant, how that all our fathers were under the cloud, and all passed through the sea; ² And were all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea.*

“... Their baptism in the sea was after their coming out of Egypt, and at their first entrance on their journey to Canaan’s land, as our baptism is, or should be, after a person is brought out of worse than Egyptian bondage and darkness, and has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, and at the beginning of his profession of Him, and entrance on his Christian race. The descent of the Israelites into the sea, when they seemed as buried in the waters, and their ascent out of it again on the shore, has a very great agreement with baptism, as administered by immersion, in which the person baptized goes down into the water, is buried with Christ therein, and comes up out of it as out of a grave, or as the children of Israel out of the Red Sea; and as they, when they came out of it, could rejoice and sing in the view of their salvation and safety, and of the destruction of all their enemies, so the believer can, and does rejoice in this ordinance, in the view of his salvation by Christ, and safety in Him, and of all his sins being buried and drowned in the sea of His blood...” —*John Gill’s Bible Commentary*, comments on 1 Corinthians 10:1, 2.

RECORDS FOR OUR BENEFIT

7. What is registered in Biblical history for our benefit and for all who believe in God? The Lord gave them a way of escape through the sea, so what can we expect when we call on Him in difficult times?

EXODUS 14:29-31 *But the children of Israel walked upon dry land in the midst of the sea; and the waters were a wall unto them on their right hand, and on their left.³⁰ Thus the Lord saved Israel that day out of the hand of the Egyptians; and Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea shore.³¹ And Israel saw that great work which the Lord did upon the Egyptians: and the people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord, and his servant Moses.*

ISAIAH 51:10, 11 *Art thou not it which hath dried the sea, the waters of the great deep; that hath made the depths of the sea a way for the ransomed to pass over?¹¹ Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away.*

“The great lesson here taught is for all time. Often the Christian life is beset by dangers, and duty seems hard to perform. The imagination pictures impending ruin before and bondage or death behind. Yet the voice of God speaks clearly, ‘Go forward.’ We should obey this command, even though our eyes cannot penetrate the darkness, and we feel the cold waves about our feet. The obstacles that hinder our progress will never disappear before a halting, doubting spirit. Those who defer obedience till every shadow of uncertainty disappears and there remains no risk of failure or defeat, will never obey at all. Unbelief whispers, ‘Let us wait till the obstructions are removed, and we can see our way clearly;’ but faith courageously urges an advance, hoping all things, believing all things.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 290.

FOR REFLECTION

- If we see no solution to a difficulty, do we believe that the Lord can accomplish what seems impossible to us?
- After the people suffered so many years of slavery, why did the Lord have them face such a tremendous test at the Red Sea?
- When you are tested, do you recall the amazing miracle of Israel’s passing through the Red Sea between walls of water?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Psalm 66:6; 78:13; 136:11-14; Isaiah 41:9, 10, 13, 14; 63:12; 51:12, 15.

“Those who think it impossible for them to yield to the will of God and have faith in His promises until all is made clear and plain before them, will never yield at all. Faith is not certainty of knowledge; it ‘is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.’ Hebrews 11:1. To obey the commandments of God is the only way to obtain His favor. ‘Go forward’ should be the Christian’s watchword.” —*God’s Amazing Grace*, p. 38; *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 27.

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MISSIONARY REPORT

FROM BELIZE

To be read on Sabbath, October 25, 2014

***The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, November 1, 2014***

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations...” Matthew 28:19.

The country of Belize with its capital Belmopan is located in the extreme northeast corner of Central America, but below and bordered on the north by Mexico and on the west and south by Guatemala. Colonization, slavery, and immigration have played important roles in making Belize a country with numerous cultures, languages, and ethnic groups. The official language is English, but large portions of the population, which numbered 356,600 in 2012, speak Spanish and an English Creole.

The reason English is the official language is that Belize is the only mainland country in Central America that was colonized by the British, a history which it shares with some Caribbean islands. In 1821, it became a territory of the legally sovereign state of the United Provinces of Central America. In 1836, the British claimed the right to administer the region, which was valued for mahogany forests. In 1862, Britain formally declared the territory to be a British Crown Colony and named it British Honduras. A difficult history followed, including the Great Depression in 1930, a devastating hurricane in 1931, and post-World War II economic pressures. In 1964, Britain granted British Honduras self-government, and the country was renamed Belize in 1973. However, there were still difficulties with Guatemala's claim to sovereignty over the territory. While Britain gave Belize independence on September 21, 1981, it took until 1992 for Guatemala's president to formally recognize the country's independence.

Political and ethnic tensions among the population make it difficult to preach the gospel. According to the 2012 statistics, 40 percent of Belizeans are Catholic; 31.7 percent, Protestant (Pentecostal, 8.5 percent; Seventh-day Adventist, 5.5 percent; Anglican, 4.6 percent; Mennonite, 3.8 percent; Baptist, 3.6 percent; Methodist, 2.9 percent; and Nazarene, 2.8 percent); 1.7 percent, Jehovah's Witnesses; 10.2 percent, other religions (Maya, Garifuna, Obeah, Myalism, and minorities of Mormons, Hindus, Buddhists, Muslims, Baha'is, Rastafarians, and others), while 15.6 percent do not claim any religious affiliation.

The International Missionary Society entered Belize in 1987, with the visit of Brother Uldarico Alejos, a brother from Peru who was sent

by the General Conference. In late 1990, the administration of the mission was taken over by the Central American Union, under the leadership of Pastor Pedro Ruiz Reyes, who periodically sent workers from Honduras and Guatemala to visit members and interested souls. These visits had good results, and the work was established in the small city of Punta Gorda, as well as in the Cayo and Belmopan regions; but financial problems forced the Central American Union to seek help from the General Conference, which sponsored a bilingual worker to work in Belize under the Foreign Missions Program but supervised by the Union.

Later the Union sent other workers from Guatemala to serve the country, but few knew any English. Therefore, the Union requested that the General Conference supply an English-speaking worker for the country. The request was granted, and Pastor Hildon Boguela, from Tanzania, worked in the field for about four years. During this time, the Union was responsible for paying for expenses, such as house rental assistance. However, in 2010, the Union was dissolved by vote of the delegates, and Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador each became separate fields under the General Conference, with the small field of Belize being under the supervision of the Guatemalan Field ever since.

Currently the church has two pieces of land, one in Punta Gorda and the other in Belmopan, where the current leader, Elder Rivera of Guatemala, lives with his wife and two children. We thank God for the work of this brother. One soul was baptized in 2013, and others followed; but we have no church buildings in Belize, so the plan is to construct a headquarters building that includes a chapel and parsonage. This will help greatly to meet the government's guidelines, which require non-profits to either develop the land granted them or lose it. With scarce economic resources, four properties were lost over time, because we were unable to build anything on them; this has caused souls to become discouraged. But we thank God that He has opened doors and we were given other land under the condition that we build a primary school. The project has begun, but the high cost of living has hindered a rapid construction of the building, and now we fear that the government will cancel our permit and we will lose this property also.

With this explanation we appeal to our brothers and sisters around the world to help us with their prayers and offerings so we can complete the construction of the church, parsonage, and school. May God bless the family that is working in Belize and all the believers who give generously to support the work around the world and in Belize.

*—Danilo Lopez Valdemar Monterroso
President, Guatemalan Field*

Special Sabbath School Offering for BELIZE

May a spirit of joy and sacrifice accompany your offering!

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Sabbath, November 1, 2014

Escaping Death by Faith

“The children of Israel were to occupy all the territory which God appointed them. Those nations that rejected the worship and service of the true God were to be dispossessed. But it was God’s purpose that by the revelation of His character through Israel men should be drawn unto Him. To all the world the gospel invitation was to be given. Through the teaching of the sacrificial service, Christ was to be uplifted before the nations, and all who would look unto Him should live. All who, like Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders until their kingdom should embrace the world.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 19.

HOSPITALITY GIVEN AT GREAT RISK

- 1. Who provided hospitality for the Israelites who were sent to spy out the land of Canaan? What risk was there in aiding the two men who were considered enemies?**

JOSHUA 2:1 *And Joshua the son of Nun sent out of Shittim two men to spy secretly, saying, Go view the land, even Jericho. And they went, and came into an harlot’s house, named Rahab, and lodged there.*

“A few miles beyond the [Jordan] river, just opposite the place where the Israelites were encamped, was the large and strongly fortified city of Jericho. This city was virtually the key to the whole country, and it would present a formidable obstacle to the success of Israel. Joshua therefore sent two young men as spies to visit this city and ascertain something as to its population, its resources, and the strength of its fortifications. The inhabitants of the city, terrified and suspicious, were constantly on the alert, and the messengers were in great danger.

“They were, however, preserved by Rahab, a woman of Jericho, at the peril of her own life.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 482, 483.

- 2. To whom was the news quickly reported that two Israelites had come to Jericho? What order was sent to Rahab by the king?**

JOSHUA 2:2, 3 *And it was told the king of Jericho, saying, Behold, there came men in hither to night of the children of Israel to search out the country. ³ And the king of Jericho sent unto Rahab, saying, Bring forth the men that are come to thee, which are entered into thine house: for they be come to search out all the country.*

3. What was her answer to the king's messengers? What special efforts did she put forth to protect the two spies?

JOSHUA 2:4-6 *And the woman took the two men, and hid them, and said thus, There came men unto me, but I wist not whence they were: ⁵ And it came to pass about the time of shutting of the gate, when it was dark, that the men went out: whither the men went I wot not: pursue after them quickly; for ye shall overtake them. ⁶ But she had brought them up to the roof of the house, and hid them with the stalks of flax, which she had laid in order upon the roof.*

In providing hospitality to people who were considered enemies, Rahab put herself in a dangerous situation, because she risked being seen as a collaborator with the spies. Nevertheless, knowing that the Lord was with them, she not only provided hospitality but also hid them to save their lives.

However, this does not mean that she had full light and was converted. The lie she told under pressure was a sin she committed before conversion. It revealed her need of the truth and in no case should be cited to excuse lying.

"God's people will remember that 'The remnant of Israel shall not do iniquity, nor speak lies; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth: for they shall feed and lie down, and none shall make them afraid.' Zephaniah. 3:13. Truthfulness and integrity are attributes of God, and he who possesses these qualities possesses a power that is invincible." —*My Life Today*, p. 331.

RAHAB'S FAITH

4. Despite being a heathen, what strong faith did this woman have? What did she and her people know?

JOSHUA 2:8-11 *And before they were laid down, she came up unto them upon the roof; ⁹ And she said unto the men, I know that the Lord hath given you the land, and that your terror is fallen upon us, and that all the inhabitants of the land faint because of you. ¹⁰ For we have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red sea for you, when ye came out of Egypt; and what ye did unto the two kings of the Amorites, that were on the other side Jordan, Sihon and Og, whom ye utterly destroyed. ¹¹ And as soon as we had heard these things, our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any man, because of you: for the Lord your God, he is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.*

"In the deliverance of Israel from Egypt a knowledge of the power of God spread far and wide. The warlike people of the stronghold of Jericho trembled. 'As soon as we had heard these things,' said Rahab, 'our hearts did melt, neither did there remain any more courage in any

man, because of you: for Jehovah your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.' Joshua 2:11. Centuries after the exodus the priests of the Philistines reminded their people of the plagues of Egypt, and warned them against resisting the God of Israel." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 369.

"The advancing hosts of Israel found that a knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone before them, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God. In wicked Jericho the testimony of a heathen woman was, 'The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.' Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation." —*Review and Herald*, June 17, 1915.

AGREEMENT BETWEEN RAHAB AND THE SPIES

5. What earnest request did the woman make? What did the spies promise her for protecting them?

JOSHUA 2:12-14 *Now therefore, I pray you, swear unto me by the Lord, since I have showed you kindness, that ye will also show kindness unto my father's house, and give me a true token: ¹³ And that ye will save alive my father, and my mother, and my brethren, and my sisters, and all that they have, and deliver our lives from death. ¹⁴ And the men answered her, Our life for yours, if ye utter not this our business. And it shall be, when the Lord hath given us the land, that we will deal kindly and truly with thee.*

"They were, however, preserved by Rahab, a woman of Jericho, at the peril of her own life. In return for her kindness they gave her a promise of protection when the city should be taken." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 482.

6. What other agreement did the spies make with Rahab before departing?

JOSHUA 2:15-21 *Then she let them down by a cord through the window: for her house was upon the town wall, and she dwelt upon the wall. ¹⁶ And she said unto them, Get you to the mountain, lest the pursuers meet you; and hide yourselves there three days, until the pursuers be returned: and afterward may ye go your way. ¹⁷ And the men said unto her, We will be blameless of this thine oath which thou hast made us swear. ¹⁸ Behold, when we come into the land, thou shalt bind this line of scarlet thread in the window which thou didst let us down by: and thou shalt bring thy father, and thy mother, and thy brethren, and all thy father's household, home unto thee. ¹⁹ And it shall be, that whosoever shall go out of the doors of thy house into the street, his blood shall be upon his head, and we will be guiltless: and whosoever shall be with thee in the house, his blood shall be on our head, if any hand be upon him. ²⁰ And if thou utter this our business, then we will be quit of thine oath which thou hast made us to swear. ²¹ And she said, According unto your words, so be it. And she sent them away, and they departed: and she bound the scarlet line in the window.*

“God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed, and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. They should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord.” – *Review and Herald*, September 16, 1873.

SALVATION ACCOMPLISHED

7. In according with this agreement, what happened to Rahab and her family when the walls of Jericho fell and the city was occupied by Israel?

JOSHUA 6:17, 22, 23, 25 *And the city shall be accursed, even it, and all that are therein, to the Lord: only Rahab the harlot shall live, she and all that are with her in the house, because she hid the messengers that we sent....* ²² *But Joshua had said unto the two men that had spied out the country, Go into the harlot's house, and bring out thence the woman, and all that she hath, as ye sware unto her.* ²³ *And the young men that were spies went in, and brought out Rahab, and her father, and her mother, and her brethren, and all that she had; and they brought out all her kindred, and left them without the camp of Israel....* ²⁵ *And Joshua saved Rahab the harlot alive, and her father's household, and all that she had; and she dwelleth in Israel even unto this day; because she hid the messengers, which Joshua sent to spy out Jericho.*

“Jericho was a city devoted to the most extravagant idolatry. The inhabitants were very wealthy. All the riches that God had given them they accredited to the gifts of their gods. Gold and silver were in abundance. Like the people before the Flood, they were corrupt and blasphemous. They insulted and provoked the God of heaven by their wicked works. God's judgments awakened against Jericho. It was a stronghold. But the Captain of the Lord's host came Himself from heaven to lead the armies of heaven in the attack upon the city. Angels of God laid hold of the massive walls and brought them to the ground. God had said that the city of Jericho should be accursed, and that all should perish except Rahab and her household. They should be saved because of the favor that Rahab showed the messengers of the Lord.” – *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 264.

8. According to the New Testament, what compelled Rahab to protect the two Israelites? By the grace of the Lord, what prominent place did she have in the royal, messianic line?

HEBREWS 11:31 *By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.*

JAMES 2:25 *Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way?*

MATTHEW 1:1, 5 *The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham....* ⁵ *And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse.*

“The advancing hosts of Israel found that knowledge of the mighty workings of the God of the Hebrews had gone before them, and that some among the heathen were learning that He alone was the true God. In wicked Jericho the testimony of a heathen woman was, ‘The Lord your God, He is God in heaven above, and in earth beneath.’ Joshua 2:11. The knowledge of Jehovah that had thus come to her, proved her salvation. By faith ‘Rahab perished not with them that believed not.’ Hebrews 11:31. And her conversion was not an isolated case of God’s mercy toward idolaters who acknowledged His divine authority.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 369.

FOR REFLECTION

- If you were to find yourself in a situation similar to that of Rahab, would you be willing to risk your life for someone you had met for the first time?
- Considering her heathen background, how can the great faith that resulted in her salvation be explained?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Ezekiel 18:20-23; 33:11-16, 19.

“All who, like Rahab the Canaanite and Ruth the Moabitess, turned from idolatry to the worship of the true God, were to unite themselves with His chosen people. As the numbers of Israel increased, they were to enlarge their borders, until their kingdom should embrace the world.” —*Review and Herald*, January 25, 1906.

* * *

Received by Faith and Dedicated to God

“There are opportunities of inestimable worth, interests infinitely precious, committed to every mother. The humble round of duties which women have come to regard as a wearisome task should be looked upon as a grand and noble work. It is the mother’s privilege to bless the world by her influence, and in doing this she will bring joy to her own heart. She may make straight paths for the feet of her children, through sunshine and shadow, to the glorious heights above. But it is only when she seeks, in her own life, to follow the teachings of Christ that the mother can hope to form the character of her children after the divine pattern.... Let every mother go often to her Saviour with the prayer, ‘Teach us, how shall we order the child, and what shall we do unto him?’ Let her heed the instruction which God has given in His word, and wisdom will be given her as she shall have need.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 572, 573.

A MARRIAGE WITHOUT PROGENY

1. Why was Hannah grieved, although she was married and her husband loved her tenderly? How can we understand her problem?

1 SAMUEL 1:2, 4-6 *And he had two wives; the name of the one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah: and Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children....* ⁴ *And when the time was that Elkanah offered, he gave to Peninnah his wife, and to all her sons and her daughters, portions:* ⁵ *But unto Hannah he gave a worthy portion; for he loved Hannah; but the Lord had shut up her womb.* ⁶ *And her adversary also provoked her sore, for to make her fret, because the Lord had shut up her womb*

“Elkanah, a Levite of Mount Ephraim, was a man of wealth and influence, and one who loved and feared the Lord. His wife, Hannah, was a woman of fervent piety. Gentle and unassuming, her character was marked with deep earnestness and a lofty faith.

“The blessing so earnestly sought by every Hebrew was denied this godly pair; their home was not gladdened by the voice of childhood; and the desire to perpetuate his name led the husband—as it had led many others—to contract a second marriage. But this step, prompted by a lack of faith in God, did not bring happiness. Sons and daughters were added to the household; but the joy and beauty of God’s sacred institution had been marred and the peace of the family was broken. Peninnah, the new wife, was jealous and narrow-minded, and she bore herself with pride

and insolence. To Hannah, hope seemed crushed and life a weary burden; yet she met the trial with uncomplaining meekness.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 569.

SADNESS AND PAIN

2. What happened every year when Elkanah, the husband, and his family went to the house of the Lord? Instead of being an occasion of joy and gratitude, what did the visits to the house of prayer become?

1 SAMUEL 1:3, 7, 8 *And this man went up out of his city yearly to worship and to sacrifice unto the Lord of hosts in Shiloh. And the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phinehas, the priests of the Lord, were there....* ⁷ *And as he did so year by year, when she went up to the house of the Lord, so she provoked her; therefore she wept, and did not eat.* ⁸ *Then said Elkanah her husband to her, Hannah, why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved? am not I better to thee than ten sons?*

“Even amid the sacred festivities connected with the service of God the evil spirit that had cursed his home intruded. After presenting the thank offerings, all the family, according to the established custom, united in a solemn yet joyous feast. Upon these occasions Elkanah gave the mother of his children a portion for herself and for each of her sons and daughters; and in token of regard for Hannah, he gave her a double portion, signifying that his affection for her was the same as if she had had a son. Then the second wife, fired with jealousy, claimed the precedence as one highly favored of God, and taunted Hannah with her childless state as evidence of the Lord’s displeasure. This was repeated from year to year, until Hannah could endure it no longer. Unable to hide her grief, she wept without restraint, and withdrew from the feast. Her husband vainly sought to comfort her. ‘Why weepest thou? and why eatest thou not? and why is thy heart grieved?’ he said; ‘am I not better to thee than ten sons?’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 569, 570.

THE PRAYER OF FAITH

3. In deep anguish of soul, crying her heart out, what prayer did Hannah pour out to the Lord? With all her heart, what did she vow?

1 SAMUEL 1:9-11 *So Hannah rose up after they had eaten in Shiloh, and after they had drunk. Now Eli the priest sat upon a seat by a post of the temple of the Lord.* ¹⁰ *And she was in bitterness of soul, and prayed unto the Lord, and wept sore.* ¹¹ *And she vowed a vow, and said, O Lord of hosts, if thou wilt indeed look on the affliction of thine handmaid, and remember me, and not forget thine handmaid, but wilt give unto thine handmaid a man child, then I will give him unto the Lord all the days of his life, and there shall no razor come upon his head.*

“Hannah uttered no reproach. The burden which she could share with no earthly friend she cast upon God. Earnestly she pleaded that

He would take away her reproach and grant her the precious gift of a son to nurture and train for Him. And she made a solemn vow that if her request were granted, she would dedicate her child to God, even from its birth. Hannah had drawn near to the entrance of the tabernacle, and in the anguish of her spirit she ‘prayed,... and wept sore.’ Yet she communed with God in silence, uttering no sound.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 570.

4. Did Eli the high priest, who was officiating at that time, understand that she was opening her heart to the Lord? What blessing did he pronounce when he became aware of her ardent prayer?

1 SAMUEL 1:12-17 *And it came to pass, as she continued praying before the Lord, that Eli marked her mouth. ¹³ Now Hannah, she spake in her heart; only her lips moved, but her voice was not heard: therefore Eli thought she had been drunken. ¹⁴ And Eli said unto her, How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee. ¹⁵ And Hannah answered and said, No, my lord, I am a woman of a sorrowful spirit: I have drunk neither wine nor strong drink, but have poured out my soul before the Lord. ¹⁶ Count not thine handmaid for a daughter of Belial: for out of the abundance of my complaint and grief have I spoken hitherto. ¹⁷ Then Eli answered and said, Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of him.*

“In those evil times such scenes of worship were rarely witnessed. Irreverent feasting and even drunkenness were not uncommon, even at the religious festivals; and Eli the high priest, observing Hannah, supposed that she was overcome with wine. Thinking to administer a deserved rebuke, he said sternly, ‘How long wilt thou be drunken? put away thy wine from thee.’

“Pained and startled, Hannah answered gently.... The high priest was deeply moved, for he was a man of God; and in place of rebuke he uttered a blessing: ‘Go in peace: and the God of Israel grant thee thy petition that thou hast asked of Him.’ 1 Samuel 1:17.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 570.

THE LORD’S ANSWER TO HER PRAYER

5. What promise supports prayers of faith? Was this promise fulfilled in the case of Hannah’s earnest prayer?

MARK 11:24 *Therefore I say unto you, What things soever ye desire, when ye pray, believe that ye receive them, and ye shall have them.*

1 SAMUEL 1:18-20 *And she said, Let thine handmaid find grace in thy sight. So the woman went her way, and did eat, and her countenance was no more sad. ¹⁹ And they rose up in the morning early, and worshipped before the Lord, and returned, and came to their house to Ramah: and Elkanah knew Hannah his wife; and the Lord remembered her. ²⁰ Wherefore it came to pass, when the time was come about after Hannah had conceived, that she bare a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, Because I have asked him of the Lord.*

“Hannah’s prayer was granted; she received the gift for which she had so earnestly entreated. As she looked upon the child, she called him Samuel—‘asked of God.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p.570.

“Especially does responsibility rest upon the mother. She, by whose lifeblood the child is nourished and its physical frame built up, imparts to it also mental and spiritual influences that tend to the shaping of mind and character. It was Jochebed, the Hebrew mother, who, strong in faith, was ‘not afraid of the king’s commandment’ (Hebrews 11:23), of whom was born Moses, the deliverer of Israel. It was Hannah, the woman of prayer and self-sacrifice and heavenly inspiration, who gave birth to Samuel, the heaven-instructed child, the incorruptible judge, the founder of Israel’s sacred schools. It was Elizabeth the kinswoman and kindred spirit of Mary of Nazareth, who was the mother of the Saviour’s herald.” —*Ministry of Healing*, p. 372.

RECEIVED AND CONSECRATED TO THE LORD

6. After the child was born, did Hannah forget or remember the vow she had made? While the child was still small, where did his parents take Samuel?

1 SAMUEL 1:24-26 *And when she had weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord in Shiloh: and the child was young. ²⁵ And they slew a bullock, and brought the child to Eli. ²⁶ And she said, Oh my lord, as thy soul liveth, my lord, I am the woman that stood by thee here, praying unto the Lord.*

“In your work for your children take hold of the mighty power of God. Commit your children to the Lord in prayer. Work earnestly and untiringly for them. God will hear your prayers and will draw them to Himself. Then, at the last great day, you can bring them to God, saying, ‘Here am I, and the children whom Thou hast given me.’

“When Samuel shall receive the crown of glory, he will wave it in honor before the throne and gladly acknowledge that the faithful lessons of his mother, through the merits of Christ, have crowned him with immortal glory.

“The work of wise parents will never be appreciated by the world, but when the judgment shall sit and the books shall be opened, their work will appear as God views it and will be rewarded before men and angels. It will be seen that one child who has been brought up in a faithful way has been a light in the world. It cost tears and anxiety and sleepless nights to oversee the character building of this child, but the work was done wisely, and the parents hear the ‘Well done’ of the Master.” —*The Adventist Home*. p. 536.

7. How thankful was Hannah for the grace she had received? To whom did she and her husband dedicate the child who had been received by grace? Where did Samuel begin to serve when he was very young?

1 SAMUEL 1:27, 28; 2:11 *For this child I prayed; and the Lord hath given me my petition which I asked of him: ²⁸ Therefore also I have lent him to the Lord; as long as he liveth he shall be lent to the Lord. And he worshipped the Lord there.... ^{2:11} And Elkanah went to Ramah to his house. And the child did minister unto the Lord before Eli the priest.*

“As soon as the little one was old enough to be separated from his mother, she fulfilled her vow. She loved her child with all the devotion of a mother’s heart; day by day, as she watched his expanding powers and listened to his childish prattle, her affections entwined about him more closely. He was her only son, the special gift of Heaven; but she had received him as a treasure consecrated to God, and she would not withhold from the Giver His own....

“From Shiloh, Hannah quietly returned to her home at Ramah, leaving the child Samuel to be trained for service in the house of God, under the instruction of the high priest. From the earliest dawn of intellect she had taught her son to love and reverence God and to regard himself as the Lord’s. By every familiar object surrounding him she had sought to lead his thoughts up to the Creator. When separated from her child, the faithful mother’s solicitude did not cease. Every day he was the subject of her prayers.... She did not ask for her son worldly greatness, but she earnestly pleaded that he might attain that greatness which Heaven values—that he might honor God and bless his fellow men.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 570-572.

8. Why are such experiences with the Lord recorded in the Scriptures? When you receive children from the Lord, do you wish to consecrate them to Him, as did Hannah and Elkanah?

1 CORINTHIANS 10:6, FIRST PART, 11 *Now these things were our examples,... ¹¹ 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.*

ROMANS 15:4 *For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope.*

“Each morning consecrate yourselves and your children to God for that day.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 44.

“Those who obtain a knowledge of God’s will, and practice the teaching of His word, will be found faithful in whatever position of trust they may be placed. Consider this, parents, and place your children where they will be educated in the principles of truth, where every effort will be made to help them to maintain their consecration, if converted, or if unconverted, to influence them to become the children of God, and thus fit them to go forth to win others to the truth.” —(Extracts from an article in the *Bible Echo*, September 1, 1892) *Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 205.

FOR REFLECTION

- How many of God's people have the great desire to dedicate their children to the Lord, as did Hannah?
- Do we have the faith and spirituality to help our children in their mission for God?
- What consistent atmosphere in the family will help prepare our children for the Lord's service?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Exodus 13:2; Isaiah 8:18.

"Samuel ... was kind, generous, obedient, and respectful.... Samuel was helpful and affectionate, and no father ever loved his child more tenderly than did Eli this youth. It was a singular thing that between the chief magistrate of the nation and the simple child so warm an affection should exist. As the infirmities of age came upon Eli, ... he turned to Samuel for comfort." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 573.

"Let the youth and the little children be taught to choose for themselves that royal robe woven in heaven's loom, the 'fine linen, clean and white' which all the holy ones of earth will wear. This robe, Christ's own spotless character, is freely offered to every human being. But all who receive it will receive and wear it here.

"Let the children be taught that as they open their minds to pure, loving thoughts and do loving and helpful deeds, they are clothing themselves with His beautiful garment of character. This apparel will make them beautiful and beloved here and will hereafter be their title of admission to the palace of the King. His promise is: 'They shall walk with Me in white: for they are worthy.' Revelation 3:4." —*Education*, p. 249.

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Sabbath, November 15, 2014

Widowed, Poor, and Helpful

"This woman [the widow of Zarephath] was not an Israelite. She had never had the privileges and blessings that the chosen people of God had enjoyed, but she was a believer in the true God and had walked in all the light that was shining on her pathway. And now, when there was no safety for Elijah in the land of Israel, God sent him to this woman to find an asylum in her home." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 129.

A MESSAGE THAT ALSO AFFECTS THE MESSENGER

1. What stern message did Elijah give from the Lord to Ahab, the apostate king of Israel? How was it possible for the prophet to state that it would rain again only at his word?

1 KINGS 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto 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.*

“Elijah’s faithful soul was grieved. His indignation was aroused, and he was jealous for the glory of God. He saw that Israel was plunged into fearful apostasy. And when he called to mind the great things that God had wrought for them, he was overwhelmed with grief and amazement. But all this was forgotten by the majority of the people. He went before the Lord, and, with his soul wrung with anguish, pleaded for Him to save His people if it must be by judgments. He pleaded with God to withhold from His ungrateful people dew and rain, the treasures of heaven, that apostate Israel might look in vain to their gods, their idols of gold, wood, and stone, the sun, moon, and stars, to water and enrich the earth, and cause it to bring forth plentifully. The Lord told Elijah that He had heard his prayer and would withhold dew and rain from His people until they should turn unto Him with repentance.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 263.

ISOLATION AND PROTECTION

2. Since the prophet would be in danger after making this declaration, what instruction did the Lord give him? How long did Elijah remain by the brook Cherith, trusting fully in God?

1 KINGS 17:2-6 *And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, ³ Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. ⁴ And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. ⁵ So he went and did according unto the word of the Lord: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. ⁶ And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook.*

“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.... He fully believed that God would humble apostate Israel, and that through judgments they would be brought to repentance. The fiat of Heaven had gone forth; God’s word could not fail; and at the peril of his life Elijah fearlessly fulfilled his commission. Like a thunderbolt from a clear sky, the message of impending judgment fell upon the ears of the wicked king; but before Ahab could recover from his astonishment, or frame a reply, Elijah disappeared as abruptly as he had come, without waiting to witness the effect of his message. And the Lord went before him, making plain the way. ‘Turn thee eastward,’ the prophet was bidden, ‘and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee.’...

“For a time Elijah remained hidden in the mountains by the brook Cherith. There for many months he was miraculously provided with food.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 121-123, 129.

3. When drought stopped the flow of water, where was Elijah sent? Who was bidden to provide for the prophet in that difficult time?

1 KINGS 17:7-9 *And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. ⁸ And the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, ⁹ Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.*

“The Lord knew that there was no safety for His servant among the children of Israel. He would not trust him with apostate Israel, but sent him to find an asylum among a heathen nation. He directed him to a woman who was a widow and who was in such poverty that she could barely sustain life with the most meager fare. A heathen woman living up to the best light she had was in a more acceptable state with God than the widows of Israel, who had been blessed with special privileges and great light, and yet did not live according to the light which God had given them. As the Hebrews had rejected light, they were left in darkness, and God would not trust His servant among His people, who had provoked His divine anger.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 274.

4. How limited was the widow’s food supply? What desperate situation did her answer to Elijah reveal?

1 KINGS 17:10-12 *So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. ¹¹ And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. ¹² And she said, As the Lord thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.*

“In this poverty-stricken home the famine pressed sore, and the pitifully meager fare seemed about to fail. The coming of Elijah on the very day when the widow feared that she must give up the struggle to sustain life tested to the utmost her faith in the power of the living God to provide for her necessities.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 130.

HEATHEN, BUT WILLING TO BELIEVE AND OBEY

5. Was the widow of Zarephath willing to provide food and water for the Lord’s servant? When Elijah repeated his request and simultaneously gave her God’s promise, how did she receive the divine message?

1 KINGS 17:13, 14 *And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. ¹⁴ For thus saith the Lord God*

of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the Lord sendeth rain upon the earth.

“But even in her dire extremity she bore witness to her faith by a compliance with the request of the stranger who was asking her to share her last morsel with him.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 130.

THE LORD’S IMMEDIATE RESPONSE

6. When she believed and obeyed God’s word by faith, what miracle occurred every day for a long time? If this happened for a heathen woman, what will God do for every believer?

1 KINGS 17:15 *And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.*

While some Bible versions translate the expression in this verse as “for days” or “for many days,” other versions render the last phrase of 1 Kings 17:15 as “for an entire year,” indicating that the widow and her household had food for an extended time.

“No greater test of faith than this could have been required. The widow had hitherto treated all strangers with kindness and liberality. Now, regardless of the suffering that might result to herself and child, and trusting in the God of Israel to supply her every need, she met this supreme test of hospitality by doing ‘according to the saying of Elijah.’ 1 Kings 17:15.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 130, 131.

“That God who cared for Elijah in the time of famine will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He who has numbered the hairs of their head, will care for them, and in days of famine they will be satisfied. While the wicked are perishing all around them for want of bread, their bread and water will be sure. Those who still cling to their earthly treasure, and will not make a right disposition of that which is lent them of God, will lose their treasure in heaven, lose everlasting life.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 173, 174.

7. Despite the extra burden of the prophet’s presence, that increased the number of people in the home, what happened with the widow’s food reserves? According to Jesus’ words, why was Elijah sent to a widow in a heathen country?

1 KINGS 17:16 *And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which he spake by Elijah.*

LUKE 4:23-26 *And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country. ²⁴ And he said, Verily, I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country. ²⁵ But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land; ²⁶ But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.*

“Wonderful was the hospitality shown to God’s prophet by this Phoenician woman, and wonderfully were her faith and generosity rewarded. ‘She, and he, and her house, did eat many days. And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the Lord, which He spake by Elijah.’ 1 Kings 17:14.” *—Prophets and Kings*, p. 131.

8. What wonderful lesson may we learn from this woman’s faith? Do you wish to apply the principle taught by the Saviour?

LUKE 6:38 *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

MATTHEW 10:41 *He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man’s reward.*

“The widow of Zarephath shared her morsel with Elijah, and in return her life and that of her son were preserved. And to all who, in time of trial and want, give sympathy and assistance to others more needy, God has promised great blessing. He has not changed. His power is no less now than in the days of Elijah. No less sure now than when spoken by our Saviour is the promise, ‘He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet’s reward.’ Matthew 10:41.” *—Prophets and Kings*, pp. 131, 132.

FOR REFLECTION

- What can be seen in God’s providence for Elijah at the first, without interaction with people?
- Was the Lord testing only King Ahab and the Israelites, or His servant as well?
- While the widow was poor in material things, in what sense was she rich?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Proverbs 19:17; Luke 6:38

“Here is the reward for those who sacrifice for God. They receive an hundred-fold in this life, and shall inherit everlasting life. But many, I saw, that are first, shall be last, and the last shall be first. I was shown those who receive the truth, but do not live it. They cling to their possessions, and are not willing to distribute of their substance to advance the cause of God. They have no faith to venture and trust God. Their love of this world swallows up their faith. God has called for a portion of their substance, but they heed it not. They reason thus, that they have labored hard to obtain what they have, and they cannot lend it to the Lord, for they may come to want. ‘O, ye of little faith!’ That God who cared for Elijah in the time of famine, will not pass by one of His self-sacrificing children. He that has numbered the hairs of their heads, will care for them, and in the days of famine they will be satisfied. While the wicked are perishing all around them for want of

bread, their bread and water will be sure. Those who will still cling to their earthly treasure, and will not make a right disposition of that which is lent them of God, will lose their treasure in heaven, lose everlasting life.” —*Spiritual Gifts*, book 2, pp. 243, 244.

“Like Moses in the wilderness of Sinai, like David among the hills of Judea, or Elijah by the brook Cherith, the disciples needed to come apart from the scenes of their busy activity, to commune with Christ, with nature, and with their own hearts.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 360.

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8

Sabbath, November 22, 2014

“I Hear the Sound of Rain”

“Important lessons are presented to us in the experience of Elijah. When upon Mt. Carmel he offered the prayer for rain, his faith was tested, but he persevered in making known his request unto God.... Had he given up in discouragement at the sixth time, his prayer would not have been answered, but he persevered till the answer came. We have a God whose ear is not closed to our petitions; and if we prove His word, He will honor our faith. He wants us to have all our interests interwoven with His interests, and then He can safely bless us; for we shall not then take glory to self when the blessing is ours, but shall render all the praise to God.” —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 206.

THE LORD’S MESSAGE FOR THE KING

1. What had the prophet Elijah declared to the apostate King Ahab when no other means had brought about his and Israel’s repentance and conversion to God?

1 KINGS 17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto 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.*

“For stricken Israel there was but one remedy—a turning away from the sins that had brought upon them the chastening hand of the Almighty, and a turning to the Lord with full purpose of heart. To them had been given the assurance, ‘If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among My people; if My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land.’ 2 Chronicles 7:13, 14. It was to bring to pass this blessed result that God continued to withhold from them the dew and the rain until a decided reformation should take place.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 128.

2. Without rainfall anywhere in the land for three years, how difficult had it become to find grass for the cattle?

1 KINGS 17:7; 18:3, 5 *And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land....^{18:3} And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the Lord greatly:...⁵ And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts.*

“Through the long years of drought and famine, Elijah prayed earnestly that the hearts of Israel might be turned from idolatry to allegiance to God. Patiently the prophet waited, while the hand of the Lord rested heavily on the stricken land. As he saw evidences of suffering and want multiplying on every side, his heart was wrung with sorrow, and he longed for power to bring about a reformation quickly. But God Himself was working out His plan, and all that His servant could do was to pray on in faith and await the time for decided action.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 133.

“Israel had had abundant occasion for rejoicing. The land to which the Lord had brought them was a land flowing with milk and honey. During the wilderness wandering, God had assured them that He was guiding them to a country where they need never suffer for lack of rain. ‘The land, whither thou goest in to possess it,’ He had told them,... ‘is a land of hills and valleys, and drinketh water of the rain of heaven....’ Deuteronomy 11:11.

“The promise of abundance of rain had been given on condition of obedience.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 135, 136.

ELIJAH SEARCHED FOR EVERYWHERE

3. Where had Elijah been looked for without result? Finally, what commission did Elijah receive from the Lord? What hopeful message was included in the announcement made to Ahab?

1 KINGS 18:10, 1 *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 And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the Lord came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, show thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth.*

“The prediction of Elijah was meeting with terrible fulfillment. For three years the messenger of woe was sought for in city after city and nation after nation.... Yet the search was continued, for Jezebel and the prophets of Baal hated Elijah with a deadly hatred, and they spared no effort to bring him within reach of their power. And still there was no rain.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 137.

"In obedience to the command, 'Elijah went to show himself unto Ahab.' About the time that the prophet set forth on his journey to Samaria, Ahab had proposed to Obadiah, the governor of his household, that they make thorough search for springs and brooks of water, in the hope of finding pasture for their starving flocks and herds. Even in the royal court the effect of the long-continued drought was keenly felt. The king, deeply concerned over the outlook for his household, decided to unite personally with his servant in a search for some favored spots where pasture might be had." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 137, 138.

APPEAL TO THE APOSTATE PEOPLE

4. Whom did Elijah first meet, and what was he told to do? How powerful was the message that the prophet gave the king and people assembled on Mount Carmel?

1 KINGS 18:15, 16, 19-21 *And Elijah said, As the Lord of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself unto him to day.* ¹⁶ *So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah....* ¹⁹ *Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table.* ²⁰ *So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel.* ²¹ *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.*

"In astonishment mingled with terror the king listened to the message from the man whom he feared and hated, and for whom he had sought so untiringly.... Could it be possible that the prophet was about to utter another woe against Israel?... And so, accompanied by a body-guard of soldiers, the trembling monarch went to meet the prophet.

"The king and the prophet stand face to face.... In his first faltering words, 'Art thou he that troubleth Israel?' (1 Kings 18:17) he unconsciously reveals the inmost feelings of his heart. Ahab knew that it was by the word of God that the heavens had become as brass, yet he sought to cast upon the prophet the blame for the heavy judgments resting on the land....

"It is natural for the wrongdoer to hold the messengers of God responsible for the calamities that come as the sure result of a departure from the way of righteousness. Those who place themselves in Satan's power are unable to see things as God sees them." —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 139, 140.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF IMMINENT RAIN

5. Trusting completely in God's message following the victory on Mt. Carmel, what did Elijah tell the king? What earnest prayer did the prophet send to the Lord for rain?

1 KINGS 18:41, 42 *And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain.* ⁴² *So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees.*

“Elijah humbled himself until he was in a condition where he would not take the glory to himself. This is the condition upon which the Lord hears prayer, for then we shall give the praise to Him.... God alone is worthy to be glorified.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 133.

“It was not because of any outward evidence that the showers were about to fall, that Elijah could so confidently bid Ahab prepare for rain. The prophet saw no clouds in the heavens; he heard no thunder. He simply spoke the word that the Spirit of the Lord had moved him to speak in response to his own strong faith.... Having done all that was in his power to do, he knew that Heaven would freely bestow the blessings foretold. The same God who had sent the drought had promised an abundance of rain as the reward of rightdoing; and now Elijah waited for the promised outpouring. In an attitude of humility, ‘his face between his knees,’ he interceded with God in behalf of penitent Israel.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 155, 156.

TRUST IN GOD’S ANSWER

6. Being sure that the Lord’s message would be fulfilled, what did Elijah tell his servant when there was still no sign of rain? What happened then in fulfillment of God’s word?

1 KINGS 18:43-45 *And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. ⁴⁴ And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. ⁴⁵ And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain.*

“Six times the servant returned with the word that there was no sign of rain in the brassy heavens. Undaunted, Elijah sent him forth once more; and this time the servant returned with the word, ‘Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man’s hand.’ 1 Kings 18:44.

“This was enough. Elijah did not wait for the heavens to gather blackness. In that small cloud he beheld by faith an abundance of rain; and he acted in harmony with his faith.... As he prayed, his faith reached out and grasped the promises of Heaven, and he persevered in prayer until his petitions were answered. He did not wait for the full evidence that God had heard him, but was willing to venture all on the slightest token of divine favor. And yet what he was enabled to do under God, all may do in their sphere of activity in God’s service....” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 156, 157.

AN UNFORGETTABLE EXPERIENCE

7. How well known is this event? What does it teach concerning faith and prayer?

JAMES 5:17, 18 *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. ¹⁸ And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit.*

“Faith such as this is needed in the world today—faith that will lay hold on the promises of God’s word and refuse to let go until Heaven hears. Faith such as this connects us closely with Heaven, and brings us strength for coping with the powers of darkness. Through faith God’s children have ‘subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,...’ Hebrews 11:33, 34. And through faith we today are to reach the heights of God’s purpose for us. ‘If thou canst believe, all things are possible to him that believeth.’ Mark 9:23.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 157.

FOR REFLECTION

- What is essential for victory to be obtained when one faces the most difficult opposition?
- Is it possible for God to help even by using nature when apostasy must be confronted?
- What great promise is made to those who ask according to God’s will and for His honor?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Education, p. 151; *Prophets and Kings*, pp. 157, 158.

“The Lord abhors indifference and disloyalty in a time of crisis in His work. The whole universe is watching with inexpressible interest the closing scenes of the great controversy between good and evil. The people of God are nearing the borders of the eternal world; what can be of more importance to them than that they be loyal to the God of heaven? All through the ages, God has had moral heroes, and He has them now—those who, like Joseph and Elijah and Daniel, are not ashamed to acknowledge themselves His peculiar people. His special blessing accompanies the labors of men of action, men who will not be swerved from the straight line of duty, but who with divine energy will inquire, ‘Who is on the Lord’s side?’ (Exodus 32:26), men who will not stop merely with the inquiry, but who will demand that those who choose to identify themselves with the people of God shall step forward and reveal unmistakably their allegiance to the King of kings and Lord of lords. Such men make their wills and plans subordinate to the law of God. For love of Him they count not their lives dear unto themselves. Their work is to catch the light from the Word and let it shine forth to the world in clear, steady rays. Fidelity to God is their motto.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 148.

* * *

Healing an Incurable Disease

“Naaman the Syrian consulted the prophet of God as to how he could be cured of a loathsome disease, the leprosy. He was bidden to go and bathe in Jordan seven times. Why did he not immediately follow the directions of Elisha, the prophet of God? Why did he refuse to do as the prophet commanded? He went to his servants, murmuring. In his mortification and disappointment he became passionate, and in a rage refused to follow the humble course marked out by the prophet of God.... Yes, this great man considered it beneath his dignity to go to the humble river Jordan, and wash.... But it was following the specified directions of the prophet which would humble his proud and lofty spirit. Willing obedience would bring the desired result. He washed, and was made whole.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, pp. 309, 310.

CAPTAIN, BUT SICK

1. Who was Naaman, and how was he regarded for his service in his country? From what did he suffer?

2 KINGS 5:1 *Now Naaman, captain of the host of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master, and honourable, because by him the Lord had given deliverance unto Syria: he was also a mighty man in valour, but he was a leper.*

“Of all diseases known in the East the leprosy was most dreaded. Its incurable and contagious character, and its horrible effect upon its victims, filled the bravest with fear. Among the Jews it was regarded as a judgment on account of sin, and hence was called ‘the stroke,’ ‘the finger of God.’ Deep-rooted, ineradicable, deadly, it was looked upon as a symbol of sin. By the ritual law, the leper was pronounced unclean. Like one already dead, he was shut out from the habitations of men. Whatever he touched was unclean. The air was polluted by his breath. One who was suspected of having the disease must present himself to the priests, who were to examine and decide his case. If pronounced a leper, he was isolated from his family, cut off from the congregation of Israel, and was doomed to associate with those only who were similarly afflicted. The law was inflexible in its requirement. Even kings and rulers were not exempt. A monarch who was attacked by this terrible disease must yield up the scepter, and flee from society.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 262.

THE PRECIOUS TESTIMONY OF A LITTLE GIRL

2. Was there any hope for him to be healed in Syria? What did a little captive girl who served Naaman’s wife say to her?

2 KINGS 5:2, 3 *And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a little maid; and she waited on Naaman's wife. ³ And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.*

"Ben-hadad, king of Syria, had defeated the armies of Israel,... and in one of their raids they had carried away a little maid who, in the land of her captivity, 'waited on Naaman's wife.' A slave, far from her home, this little maid was nevertheless one of God's witnesses, unconsciously fulfilling the purpose for which God had chosen Israel as His people. As she ministered in that heathen home, her sympathies were aroused in behalf of her master; and, remembering the wonderful miracles of healing wrought through Elisha, she said to her mistress, 'Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! for he would recover him of his leprosy.'...

"The conduct of the captive maid, the way that she bore herself in that heathen home, is a strong witness to the power of early home training. There is no higher trust than that committed to fathers and mothers in the care and training of their children. Parents have to do with the very foundations of habit and character. By their example and teaching the future of their children is largely decided."—*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 244, 245.

IN SEARCH OF HEALING

3. What hope was kindled in the captain's heart when he heard about this? What did the Syrian king tell him to do when he was informed about the matter?

2 KINGS 5:4-6 *And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel. ⁵ And the king of Syria said, Go to, go, and I will send a letter unto the king of Israel. And he departed, and took with him ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment. ⁶ And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, Now when this letter is come unto thee, behold, I have therewith sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.*

"Naaman heard of the words that the maid had spoken to her mistress; and, obtaining permission from the king, he went forth to seek healing, taking with him 'ten talents of silver, and six thousand pieces of gold, and ten changes of raiment.' He also carried a letter from the king of Syria to the king of Israel, in which was written the message, 'Behold, I have ... sent Naaman my servant to thee, that thou mayest recover him of his leprosy.' 2 Kings 5:5, 6."—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 246.

4. Did the king of Israel know that there was hope of being healed from the terrible disease in his country? What message did Elisha the prophet send him?

2 KINGS 5:7, 8 *And it came to pass, when the king of Israel had read the letter, that he rent his clothes, and said, Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man doth send unto me to recover a man of his leprosy? wherefore consider, I pray you, and see how he seeketh a quarrel against*

me. ⁸ And it was so, when Elisha the man of God had heard that the king of Israel had rent his clothes, that he sent to the king, saying, Wherefore hast thou rent thy clothes? let him come now to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.

WANTING TO BE HEALED ACCORDING TO HIS IDEA

5. To whom was the Syrian captain therefore directed? When Naaman arrived at Elisha's house with his horses and chariots, what instruction did the prophet's servant give him?

2 KINGS 5:9-12 *So Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot, and stood at the door of the house of Elisha. ¹⁰ And Elisha sent a messenger unto him, saying, Go and wash in Jordan seven times, and thy flesh shall come again to thee, and thou shalt be clean. ¹¹ But Naaman was wroth, and went away, and said, Behold, I thought, He will surely come out to me, and stand, and call on the name of the Lord his God, and strike his hand over the place, and recover the leper. ¹² Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? may I not wash in them, and be clean? So he turned and went away in a rage.*

“Naaman had expected to see some wonderful manifestation of power from heaven....

“The proud spirit of Naaman rebelled against following the course outlined by Elisha. The rivers mentioned by the Syrian captain were beautified by surrounding groves, and many flocked to the banks of these pleasant streams to worship their idol gods. It would have cost Naaman no great humiliation of soul to descend into one of those streams. But it was only through following the specific directions of the prophet that he could find healing. Willing obedience alone would bring the desired result.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 249.

CLEANSED BY FAITH

6. What was the wonderful result when by faith he accepted the prophet's direction to wash seven times in the Jordan River? Do you believe he was cleansed by the water or by his faith in the God of Israel?

2 KINGS 5:13, 14 *And his servants came near, and spake unto him, and said, My father, if the prophet had bid thee do some great thing, wouldest thou not have done it? how much rather then, when he saith to thee, Wash, and be clean? ¹⁴ Then went he down, and dipped himself seven times in Jordan, according to the saying of the man of God: and his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.*

“The faith of Naaman was being tested, while pride struggled for the mastery. But faith conquered, and the haughty Syrian yielded his pride of heart and bowed in submission to the revealed will of Jehovah. Seven times he dipped himself in Jordan, ‘according to the saying of the man of God.’ And his faith was honored; ‘his flesh came again like unto the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.’ 2 Kings 5:14.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 249.

7. After he was miraculously healed, what did Naaman humbly confess before the prophet of God? How did he express his great thankfulness for the grace he had received?

2 KINGS 5:15 *And he returned to the man of God, he and all his company, and came, and stood before him: and he said, Behold, now I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel: now therefore, I pray thee, take a blessing of thy servant.*

“... Naaman ... had been faithful to his convictions of right, and had felt his great need of help. He was in a condition to receive the gifts of God’s grace. He was not only cleansed from his leprosy, but blessed with a knowledge of the true God.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 239.

“Today in every land there are those who are honest in heart, and upon these the light of heaven is shining. If they continue faithful in following that which they understand to be duty, they will be given increased light, until, like Naaman of old, they will be constrained to acknowledge that ‘there is no God in all the earth’ (2 Kings 5:15), save the living God, the Creator.” –*Prophets and Kings*, p. 253.

8. Did the prophet accept the gifts? What did Jesus say centuries later when He referred to Naaman’s being healed of leprosy?

2 KINGS 5:16 *But he said, As the Lord liveth, before whom I stand, I will receive none. And he urged him to take it; but he refused.*

LUKE 4:27 *And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.*

“In accordance with the custom of the times, Naaman now asked Elisha to accept a costly present. But the prophet refused. It was not for him to take payment for a blessing that God had in mercy bestowed....

“Centuries after Naaman returned to his Syrian home, healed in body and converted in spirit, his wonderful faith was referred to and commended by the Saviour as an object lesson for all who claim to serve God.... God passed over the many lepers in Israel because their unbelief closed the door of good to them. A heathen nobleman who had been true to his convictions of right, and who felt his need of help, was in the sight of God more worthy of His blessing than were the afflicted in Israel, who had slighted and despised their God-given privileges. God works for those who appreciate His favors and respond to the light given them from heaven.” –*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 250, 252, 253.

FOR REFLECTION

- How would we feel if we were taken captive and made a servant, as was the little girl in this story?
- Are we like Naaman, more inclined to follow our own way than God’s way?
- What do we learn from this story, since we all are affected by and suffer from the deadly leprosy of sin?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

“Your case is similar in some respects to Naaman’s. You do not consider that in order to perfect a Christian character you must condescend to be faithful in the littles. Although the things you are called to do may be of small account in your eyes, yet they are duties which you will have to do just as long as you live. A neglect of these things will make a great deficiency in your character. You, my dear boy, should educate yourself to faithfulness in small things. You cannot please God unless you do this. You cannot gain love and affection unless you do just as you are bidden, with willingness and pleasure. If you wish those with whom you live to love you, you must show love and respect for them.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 2, p. 310.

“The widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian had lived up to all the light they had; hence they were accounted more righteous than God’s chosen people who had backslidden from Him and had sacrificed principle to convenience and worldly honor.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 416.

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10

Sabbath, December 6, 2014

Not Afraid of Lions

“Daniel, the Hebrew captive, the prime minister of a royal realm, encountered great obstacles to a life of fidelity to God. But at the very beginning of his career, he determined that whatever might oppose, he would make the law of God his rule of action. As he maintained his steadfastness amid the lesser trials which he daily met in the court of a heathen king, his faith, courage, and firmness grew stronger; and when the royal decree went forth forbidding him to offer supplication to his God, he was able, with the den of lions open before him, to stand true to principle and to God.” —*Sketches from the Life of Paul*, pp. 297, 298.

DANIEL IN A LEADING POSITION

- 1. What high leadership position did Daniel occupy in the kingdom of Medo-Persia under Darius? Where did Daniel’s great talent and ability come from?**

DANIEL 6:1-3; 1:17 *It pleased Darius to set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes, which should be over the whole kingdom;² And over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage.³ Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm....^{1:17} As for these four children, God gave them knowledge*

and skill in all learning and wisdom: and Daniel had understanding in all visions and dreams.

“When Darius the Median took the throne formerly occupied by the Babylonian rulers, he at once proceeded to reorganize the government. He ‘set over the kingdom an hundred and twenty princes;... and over these three presidents; of whom Daniel was first: that the princes might give accounts unto them, and the king should have no damage. Then this Daniel was preferred above the presidents and princes, because an excellent spirit was in him; and the king thought to set him over the whole realm.’ Daniel 6:1-3.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 539.

JEALOUSY AND CUNNING

2. Were the other presidents and governors pleased to have Daniel over them? What trap did they devise to make him lose his life?

DANIEL 6:4-9 *Then the presidents and princes sought to find occasion against Daniel concerning the kingdom; but they could find none occasion nor fault; forasmuch as he was faithful, neither was there any error or fault found in him. ⁵ Then said these men, We shall not find any occasion against this Daniel, except we find it against him concerning the law of his God. ⁶ Then these presidents and princes assembled together to the king, and said thus unto him, King Darius, live for ever. ⁷ All the presidents of the kingdom, the governors, and the princes, the counsellors, and the captains, have consulted together to establish a royal statute, and to make a firm decree, that whosoever shall ask a petition of any God or man for thirty days, save of thee, O king, he shall be cast into the den of lions. ⁸ Now, O king, establish the decree, and sign the writing, that it be not changed, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ⁹ Wherefore king Darius signed the writing and the decree.*

“What a lesson is here presented for all Christians. The keen eyes of jealousy were fixed upon Daniel day after day; their watchings were sharpened by hatred; yet not a word or act of his life could they make appear wrong. And still he made no claim to sanctification, but he did that which was infinitely better—he lived a life of faithfulness and consecration.

“The more blameless the conduct of Daniel, the greater was the hatred excited against him by his enemies. They were filled with madness, because they could find nothing in his moral character or in the discharge of his duties upon which to base a complaint against him.... Three times a day Daniel prayed to the God of heaven. This was the only accusation that could be brought against him.” —*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 42, 43.

3. Did Daniel bring an objection to the king on account of this unjust decree? Did he change his belief or cease praying to the Lord, or did he continue as before?

DANIEL 6:10 *Now when Daniel knew that the writing was signed, he went into his house; and his windows being open in his chamber toward*

Jerusalem, he kneeled upon his knees three times a day, and prayed, and gave thanks before his God, as he did aforetime.

“He quickly read their malignant purpose in framing the decree, but he did not change his course in a single particular. Why should he cease to pray now, when he most needed to pray? Rather would he relinquish life itself, than his hope of help in God. With calmness he performed his duties as chief of the princes; and at the hour of prayer he went to his chamber, and with his windows open toward Jerusalem, in accordance with his usual custom, he offered his petition to the God of heaven. He did not try to conceal his act. Although he knew full well the consequences of his fidelity to God, his spirit faltered not.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 540-542.

THE ENEMIES’ ACCUSATIONS

4. To whom did Daniel’s enemies present their accusation right after Daniel prayed to God, as he always had?

DANIEL 6:11-14 *Then these men assembled, and found Daniel praying and making supplication before his God. ¹² Then they came near, and spake before the king concerning the king’s decree; Hast thou not signed a decree, that every man that shall ask a petition of any God or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions? The king answered and said, The thing is true, according to the law of the Medes and Persians, which altereth not. ¹³ Then answered they and said before the king, That Daniel, which is of the children of the captivity of Judah, regardeth not thee, O king, nor the decree that thou hast signed, but maketh his petition three times a day. ¹⁴ Then the king, when he heard these words, was sore displeased with himself, and set his heart on Daniel to deliver him: and he laboured till the going down of the sun to deliver him.*

“For an entire day the princes watched Daniel. Three times they saw him go to his chamber, and three times they heard his voice lifted in earnest intercession to God. The next morning they laid their complaint before the king. Daniel, his most honored and faithful statesman, had set the royal decree at defiance. ‘Hast thou not signed a decree,’ they reminded him, ‘that every man that shall ask a petition of any god or man within thirty days, save of thee, O king, shall be cast into the den of lions?’ Daniel 6:12.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 542.

DANIEL’S FAITH DESPITE IMPENDING DEATH

5. Although facing death, what faith and steadfastness did Daniel maintain? Knowing the prophet’s integrity and faithfulness, what conviction did the king express?

DANIEL 6:15-17 *Then these men assembled unto the king, and said unto the king, Know, O king, that the law of the Medes and Persians is, That no decree nor statute which the king establisheth may be changed. ¹⁶ Then the king commanded, and they brought Daniel, and cast him into the den of lions. Now the king spake and said unto Daniel, Thy God*

whom thou servest continually, he will deliver thee. ¹⁷ *And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords; that the purpose might not be changed concerning Daniel.*

“Have not we as great need to call upon God as had Daniel? I address those who believe that we are living in the very last period of this earth’s history.... That God who heard Daniel’s prayer will hear ours when we come to Him in contrition. Our necessities are as urgent, our difficulties are as great, and we need to have the same intensity of purpose, and in faith roll our burden upon the great Burden-bearer. There is need for hearts to be as deeply moved in our time as in the time when Daniel prayed.” —(*Review and Herald*, February 9, 1897) *Conflict and Courage*, p. 256.

“Would that the faith, integrity, and devotion of the prophet Daniel might live in the hearts of God’s people of today. Never were these noble qualities more needed in the world than now....” —*Our High Calling*, p. 249.

6. How strong was Daniel’s faith when he was cast into the den of lions? How did the living God in whom Daniel trusted save His servant from the wild beasts?

DANIEL 6:18-22 *Then the king went to his palace, and passed the night fasting: neither were instruments of music brought before him: and his sleep went from him.* ¹⁹ *Then the king arose very early in the morning, and went in haste unto the den of lions.* ²⁰ *And when he came to the den, he cried with a lamentable voice unto Daniel: and the king spake and said to Daniel, O Daniel, servant of the living God, is thy God, whom thou servest continually, able to deliver thee from the lions?* ²¹ *Then said Daniel unto the king, O king, live for ever.* ²² *My God hath sent his angel, and hath shut the lions’ mouths, that they have not hurt me: forasmuch as before him innocency was found in me; and also before thee, O king, have I done no hurt.*

“From the story of Daniel’s deliverance we may learn that in seasons of trial and gloom God’s children should be just what they were when their prospects were bright with hope and their surroundings all that they could desire. Daniel in the lions’ den was the same Daniel who stood before the king as chief among the ministers of state and as a prophet of the Most High. A man whose heart is stayed upon God will be the same in the hour of his greatest trial as he is in prosperity, when the light and favor of God and of man beam upon him. Faith reaches to the unseen, and grasps eternal realities.” —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 545.

VICTORY AND PROSPERITY

7. Thanks to complete trust in God, what was Daniel spared? What great effect did this test have on the king, on the name of the true God, and also on Daniel?

DANIEL 6:23, 25-28 *Then was the king exceeding glad for him, and commanded that they should take Daniel up out of the den. So Daniel was*

taken up out of the den, and no manner of hurt was found upon him, because he believed in his God....²⁵ Then king Darius wrote unto all people, nations, and languages, that dwell in all the earth; Peace be multiplied unto you.²⁶ I make a decree, That in every dominion of my kingdom men tremble and fear before the God of Daniel: for he is the living God, and stedfast for ever, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed, and his dominion shall be even unto the end.²⁷ He delivereth and rescueth, and he worketh signs and wonders in heaven and in earth, who hath delivered Daniel from the power of the lions.²⁸ So this Daniel prospered in the reign of Darius, and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.

“Daniel was a faithful statesman in the courts of Babylon; for he feared, loved, and trusted God; and in time of temptation and peril he was preserved by the power of God. We read that God gave Daniel wisdom, and endowed him with understanding.” —*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, p. 204.

“Study the history of Joseph and of Daniel. The Lord did not prevent the plottings of men who sought to do them harm; but He caused all these devices to work for good to His servants who amidst trial and conflict preserved their faith and loyalty.” —*Ministry of Healing*, p. 487.

FOR REFLECTION

- The Lord was glorified through Daniel’s experience; is this true for your experiences as well?
- Is there any difference between Daniel’s faith and character and ours?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Education, p. 254.

“We cannot always be on our knees in prayer, but the way to the mercy seat is always open. While engaged in active labor, we may ask for help; and we are promised by One who will not deceive us, ‘Ye shall receive.’ The Christian can and will find time to pray. Daniel was a statesman; heavy responsibilities rested upon him; yet three times a day he sought God, and the Lord gave him the Holy Spirit. So today men may resort to the sacred pavilion of the Most High and feel the assurance of His promise, ‘My people shall dwell in a peaceable habitation, and in sure dwellings, and in quiet resting places.’ Isaiah 32:18. All who really desire it can find a place for communion with God, where no ear can hear but the one open to the cries of the helpless, distressed, and needy—the One who notices even the fall of the little sparrow. He says, ‘Ye are of more value than many sparrows.’ Matthew 10:31.” —*Counsels on Health*, pp. 423, 424.

* * *

Quiet, Growing Faith

“After the Lord’s ascension, when the disciples were scattered by persecution, Nicodemus came boldly to the front. He employed his wealth in sustaining the infant church that the Jews had expected to be blotted out at the death of Christ. In the time of peril he who had been so cautious and questioning was firm as a rock, encouraging the faith of the disciples, and furnishing means to carry forward the work of the gospel. He was scorned and persecuted by those who had paid him reverence in other days. He became poor in this world’s goods; yet he faltered not in the faith which had its beginning in that night conference with Jesus.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 177.

A RULER MEETS JESUS

1. Under what circumstances did Nicodemus meet with Jesus? What was his conviction regarding the Messiah?

JOHN 3:1, 2 *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: 2 The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.*

“Christ’s exercise of authority in the cleansing of the temple had roused the determined hatred of the priests and rulers. They feared the power of this stranger. Such boldness on the part of an obscure Galilean was not to be tolerated. They were bent on putting an end to His work. But not all were agreed in this purpose. There were some that feared to oppose One who was so evidently moved upon by the Spirit of God. They remembered how prophets had been slain for rebuking the sins of the leaders in Israel. They knew that the bondage of the Jews to a heathen nation was the result of their stubbornness in rejecting reproofs from God. They feared that in plotting against Jesus the priests and rulers were following in the steps of their fathers, and would bring fresh calamities upon the nation. Nicodemus shared these feelings.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 167.

THE NEW BIRTH

2. To what basic principle did Jesus draw Nicodemus’ attention?

JOHN 3:3, 4 *Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. 4 Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother’s womb, and be born?*

“Instead of recognizing this salutation, Jesus bent His eyes upon the speaker, as if reading his very soul. In His infinite wisdom He saw be-

fore Him a seeker after truth. He knew the object of this visit, and with a desire to deepen the conviction already resting upon His listener's mind, He came directly to the point, saying solemnly, yet kindly, 'Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3, margin....

"Nicodemus had come to the Lord thinking to enter into a discussion with Him, but Jesus laid bare the foundation principles of truth. He said to Nicodemus, It is not theoretical knowledge you need so much as spiritual regeneration. You need not to have your curiosity satisfied, but to have a new heart. You must receive a new life from above before you can appreciate heavenly things. Until this change takes place, making all things new, it will result in no saving good for you to discuss with Me My authority or My mission."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 168, 171.

REBIRTH BY WATER AND SPIRIT

3. Through whom must one be reborn to be able to enter the door of God's kingdom?

JOHN 3:5-7 *Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. ⁶ That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. ⁷ Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

"Jesus continued: 'That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.' By nature the heart is evil, and 'who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one.' Job 14:4. No human invention can find a remedy for the sinning soul. 'The carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.' 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.' Romans 8:7; Matthew 15:19. The fountain of the heart must be purified before the streams can become pure. He who is trying to reach heaven by his own works in keeping the law is attempting an impossibility. There is no safety for one who has merely a legal religion, a form of godliness. The Christian's life is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 172.

4. Is it possible to explain how the Holy Spirit works to make a person a new being? Was this clear to Nicodemus?

JOHN 3:8, 9 *The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. ⁹ Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?*

"Christ is constantly working upon the heart. Little by little, perhaps unconsciously to the receiver, impressions are made that tend to draw the soul to Christ. These may be received through meditating upon Him, through reading the Scriptures, or through hearing the word from the living preacher. Suddenly, as the Spirit comes with more direct appeal,

the soul gladly surrenders itself to Jesus. By many this is called sudden conversion; but it is the result of long wooing by the Spirit of God....

“When the Spirit of God takes possession of the heart, it transforms the life. Sinful thoughts are put away, evil deeds are renounced; love, humility, and peace take the place of anger, envy, and strife. Joy takes the place of sadness, and the countenance reflects the light of heaven. No one sees the hand that lifts the burden, or beholds the light descend from the courts above. The blessing comes when by faith the soul surrenders itself to God. Then that power which no human eye can see creates a new being in the image of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 172, 173.

JESUS LIFTED UP

5. To what example from the past did Jesus refer to help Nicodemus understand how eternal life is obtained?

JOHN 3:14, 15 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: ¹⁵ That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.*

“Nicodemus was being drawn to Christ. As the Saviour explained to him concerning the new birth, he longed to have this change wrought in himself. By what means could it be accomplished? Jesus answered the unspoken question: ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life.’ John 3:14, 15....

“It was a symbol of Christ. As the image made in the likeness of the destroying serpents was lifted up for their healing, so One made ‘in the likeness of sinful flesh’ was to be their Redeemer. Romans 8:3....

“Not through controversy and discussion is the soul enlightened. We must look and live. Nicodemus received the lesson, and carried it with him. He searched the Scriptures in a new way, not for the discussion of a theory, but in order to receive life for the soul. He began to see the kingdom of heaven as he submitted himself to the leading of the Holy Spirit.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 174, 175.

GROWING FAITH

6. What happened to the seed that Jesus planted in Nicodemus’ heart? What evidence showed that the Holy Spirit continued to work in him?

JOHN 7:50-52 *Nicodemus saith unto them, (he that came to Jesus by night, being one of them,) ⁵¹ Doth our law judge any man, before it hear him, and know what he doeth? ⁵² They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.*

“At this time of peril Nicodemus came forward in fearless avowal of his faith in the crucified Saviour. Nicodemus was a member of the Sanhedrin and with others had been stirred by the teaching of Jesus. As he had witnessed Christ’s wonderful works, the conviction had fastened itself upon his mind that this was the Sent of God. Too proud openly to acknowledge himself in sympathy with the Galilean Teacher,

he had sought a secret interview. In this interview Jesus had unfolded to him the plan of salvation and His mission to the world, yet still Nicodemus had hesitated. He hid the truth in his heart, and for three years there was little apparent fruit. But while Nicodemus had not publicly acknowledged Christ, he had in the Sanhedrin council repeatedly thwarted the schemes of the priests to destroy Him. When at last Christ had been lifted up on the cross, Nicodemus remembered the words that He had spoken to him in the night interview on the Mount of Olives, 'As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up' (John 3:14); and he saw in Jesus the world's Redeemer."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 104.

7. At a time when the disciples were afflicted and discouraged, what showed the sincere faith of this ruler of the Jews?

JOHN 19:39 *And there came also Nicodemus, which at the first came to Jesus by night, and brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about an hundred pound weight.*

"On that Sabbath, when Christ lay in the grave, Nicodemus had opportunity for reflection. A clearer light now illuminated his mind, and the words which Jesus had spoken to him were no longer mysterious. He felt that he had lost much by not connecting himself with the Saviour during His life. Now he recalled the events of Calvary. The prayer of Christ for His murderers and His answer to the petition of the dying thief spoke to the heart of the learned councilor. Again he looked upon the Saviour in His agony; again he heard that last cry, 'It is finished,' spoken like the words of a conqueror. Again he beheld the reeling earth, the darkened heavens, the rent veil, the shivered rocks, and his faith was forever established. The very event that destroyed the hopes of the disciples convinced Joseph and Nicodemus of the divinity of Jesus. Their fears were overcome by the courage of a firm and unwavering faith."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 775, 776.

FOR REFLECTION

- Although he was a well-educated Pharisee and ruler, Nicodemus did not have a clear understanding of man's natural condition and the need of the new birth. Are we conscious of our condition and need?
- Are we convinced that the new birth by the Holy Spirit is an absolute necessity?
- How does one receive the new birth and thereby the character of the heavenly Father?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

"Now, when the Jews were trying to destroy the infant church, Nicodemus came forward in its defense. No longer cautious and questioning, he encouraged the faith of the disciples and used his wealth in helping to sustain the church at Jerusalem and in advancing the work of the gospel. Those who in other days had paid him reverence, now scorned and persecuted him, and he became poor in this world's goods; yet he faltered not in the defense of his faith."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 105.

* * *

“Speak the Word Only”

“Faith and works go hand in hand; they act harmoniously in the work of overcoming. Works without faith are dead, and faith without works is dead. Works will never save us; it is the merit of Christ that will avail in our behalf. Through faith in Him, Christ will make all our imperfect efforts acceptable to God. The faith we are required to have is not a do-nothing faith; saving faith is that which works by love and purifies the soul.” –*Faith and Works*, pp. 48, 49.

A CARING CENTURION

1. What prominent man requested Jesus to heal his servant? How serious was the man’s illness?

LUKE 7:1, 2 *Now when he had ended all his sayings in the audience of the people, he entered into Capernaum. ² And a certain centurion’s servant, who was dear unto him, was sick, and ready to die.*

“The centurion’s servant had been stricken with palsy, and lay at the point of death. Among the Romans the servants were slaves, bought and sold in the market places, and treated with abuse and cruelty; but the centurion was tenderly attached to his servant, and greatly desired his recovery.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 315.

REQUEST FOR HEALING IN FAITH

2. Having heard about the Saviour, why did the centurion from Capernaum send a deputation to Jesus? If he had not had faith in Jesus’ power to heal, would the man have sent such people with the request for help?

LUKE 7:3, 4 *And when he heard of Jesus, he sent unto him the elders of the Jews, beseeching him that he would come and heal his servant. ⁴ And when they came to Jesus, they besought him instantly, saying, That he was worthy for whom he should do this.*

“He believed that Jesus could heal him. He had not seen the Saviour, but the reports he heard had inspired him with faith. Notwithstanding the formalism of the Jews, this Roman was convinced that their religion was superior to his own. Already he had broken through the barriers of national prejudice and hatred that separated the conquerors from the conquered people. He had manifested respect for the service of God, and had shown kindness to the Jews as His worshipers. In the teaching of Christ, as it had been reported to him, he found that which met the need of the soul. All that was spiritual within him responded to the Saviour’s words.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 315.

3. What second message did the man send to the Master just before He arrived at his house? What strong faith was expressed in this message?

LUKE 7:6, 7 *Then Jesus went with them. And when he was now not far from the house, the centurion sent friends to him, saying unto him, Lord, trouble not thyself: for I am not worthy that thou shouldest enter under my roof: Wherefore neither thought I myself worthy to come unto thee: but say in a word, and my servant shall be healed.*

“In faith we are only like little children learning to walk. As a child takes its first steps, it often totters and falls; but it gets up again, and finally learns that it can walk alone. We must learn how to believe in God. We are not to look at our feelings, but to know God by living faith. Look at the centurion who came to Christ for an example of genuine faith. He came to Christ beseeching him, and saying, ‘Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only,...’ Matthew 8:6-8.

“What kind of power did this centurion think was vested in Jesus? He knew it was the power of God.” —*Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.

A BRIEF COMMAND IS ENOUGH

4. Did the centurion believe that the healing power was only in Jesus’ presence or also in His word?

MATTHEW 8:8 *The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.*

LUKE 7:8 *For I also am a man set under authority, having under me soldiers, and I say unto one, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.*

“As I represent the power of Rome, and my soldiers recognize my authority as supreme, so dost Thou represent the power of the Infinite God, and all created things obey Thy word. Thou canst command the disease to depart, and it shall obey Thee. Thou canst summon Thy heavenly messengers, and they shall impart healing virtue. Speak but the word, and my servant shall be healed.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 316.

AN AMAZING FAITH

5. Amazed at such great faith, what did Jesus say to those around Him?

LUKE 7:9 *When Jesus heard these things, he marvelled at him, and turned him about, and said unto the people that followed him, I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.*

“... The centurion, born in heathenism, educated in the idolatry of imperial Rome, trained as a soldier, seemingly cut off from spiritual life by his education and surroundings, and still further shut out by the bigotry of the Jews, and by the contempt of his own countrymen for the people of Israel—this man perceived the truth to which the children of Abraham were blinded. He did not wait to see whether the Jews themselves would receive the One who claimed to be their Messiah. As the ‘light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world’ (John 1:9) had shone upon him, he had, though afar off, discerned the glory of the Son of God.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 317.

“The centurion saw with the eye of faith that the angels of God were all around Jesus, and that His word would commission an angel to go to the sufferer. He knew that His word would enter the chamber, and that his servant would be healed. And how Christ commended this man’s faith! He exclaimed, ‘I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.’ Luke 7:9.” —*Review and Herald*, March 11, 1890.

REQUEST AND IMMEDIATE ANSWER

6. How long did it take for the Saviour to grant the man’s request? What did the centurion and his servants find out when they returned home?

MATTHEW 8:13 *And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.*

LUKE 7:10 *And they that were sent, returning to the house, found the servant whole that had been sick.*

“The centurion who desired Christ to come and heal his servant felt unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof; his faith was so strong in the power of Christ that he entreated Him just to say the word and the work would be done.

“Here Jesus exalted faith in contrast with doubt. He showed that the children of Israel would stumble because of their unbelief, which would lead to the rejection of great light and would result in their condemnation and overthrow. Thomas declared that he would not believe unless he put his finger into the prints of the nails and thrust his hand into the side of his Lord. Christ gave him the evidence he desired and then reproved his unbelief: ‘Because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.’ John 20:29.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 233.

MEN AND WOMEN OF FAITH

7. What makes the difference to the Lord—one’s race, nationality, position, and ancestors, or one’s faith? Where will Abraham’s spiritual children—men and women of faith—sit one day?

GALATIANS 3:7 *Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.*

MATTHEW 8:11 *And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*

“The centurion who desired Christ to come and heal his servant felt unworthy to have Jesus come under his roof; but his faith was so strong that he entreated him just to say the word, and the work of healing would be done. ‘When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.’ Matthew 8:10-13.

“Jesus here exalts faith in contrast with doubt. He shows the cause of stumbling on the part of the children of Israel. Their unbelief would lead to the rejection of light and would result in their condemnation and overthrow.” —*Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1886.

FOR REFLECTION

- Would one naturally expect such faith from one who had little light and did not belong to God’s people?
- Why did so many Jews oppose and reject Jesus while a pagan like this centurion readily believed in Him?
- When we read a promise in God’s word, are we willing to believe it immediately, as this centurion believed Jesus’ word?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

“Many hold faith as an opinion. Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.

“Faith and works will keep us evenly balanced and make us successful in the work of perfecting Christian character. Jesus says, ‘Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven.’ Matthew 7:21.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 49.

“... Men who profess to be followers of Christ seem to think that they are at liberty to receive or reject the servants of the Lord at pleasure and that they will not be called to an account for so doing. Unbelief and darkness lead them to this. Their sensibilities are blunted by their unbelief. They violate their consciences and become untrue to their own convictions and weaken themselves in moral power. They view others in the same light with themselves.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, pp. 233, 234.

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***Please read the Missionary Report
from Sierra Leone on page 70***

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Sabbath, December 27, 2014

Great Is Your Faith

“In faith the woman of Phoenicia flung herself against the barriers that had been piled up between Jew and Gentile. Against discouragement, regardless of appearances that might have led her to doubt, she trusted the Saviour’s love. It is thus that Christ desires us to trust in Him. The blessings of salvation are for every soul. Nothing but his own choice can prevent any man from becoming a partaker of the promise in Christ by the gospel.”
—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 403.

A CANAANITE WOMAN’S PLEA

1. Who implored the Redeemer for help in the heathen area that today is Lebanon?

MATTHEW 15:21, 22 *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon. ²² And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.*

MARK 7:24, 25 *And from thence he arose, and went into the borders of Tyre and Sidon, and entered into an house, and would have no man know it: but he could not be hid. ²⁵ For a certain woman, whose young daughter had an unclean spirit, heard of him, and came and fell at his feet.*

“The people of this district were of the old Canaanite race.... To this class belonged the woman who now came to Jesus. She was a heathen, and was therefore excluded from the advantages which the Jews daily enjoyed. There were many Jews living among the Phoenicians, and the tidings of Christ’s work had penetrated to this region. Some of the people had listened to His words and had witnessed His wonderful works. This woman had heard of the prophet, who, it was reported, healed all manner of diseases. As she heard of His power, hope sprang up in her heart. Inspired by a mother’s love, she determined to present her daughter’s case to Him. It was her resolute purpose to bring her affliction to Jesus.... She had sought help from the heathen gods, but had obtained no relief.... But the word had come, He heals all manner of diseases, whether those who come to Him for help are rich or poor. She determined not to lose her only hope.” —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 399, 400.

- 2. How is it possible to explain such belief in Jesus by someone in a foreign country with a heathen upbringing? What is known about knowledge concerning the divine Master from the beginning of His ministry?**

MATTHEW 4:23, 24 *And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people. ²⁴ And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatic, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.*

MARK 7:26 *The woman was a Greek, a Syrophenician by nation; and she besought him that he would cast forth the devil out of her daughter.*

“Christ’s life was one of constant self-sacrifice. His work was not confined to any time or place. It was bounded only by His love and sympathy for the souls for whom He was soon to give His life. His compassion knew no limit. On so large a scale did He conduct His work of healing and teaching, that there was no building in Palestine large enough to hold the multitudes that thronged to Him. In every town and village through which He passed was to be found His hospital. On the hillsides of Galilee, in the great thoroughfares of travel, on the seashore, in the synagogues, in every place where there were hearts ready to hear His message, Jesus healed the people and pointed them to their heavenly Father. In the evening, after the hours of toil were over, He talked with those who through the day must work to earn a pittance for the support of their families.” —*The Upward Look*, p. 330.

“These words give an illustration of the way in which Jesus cultivated the soil of the heart. They point out clearly the work that we are to do, not in one place merely, but in every place.” —*Review and Herald*, March 30, 1905.

NO IMMEDIATE ANSWER

- 3. Did the Lord answer this mother’s request for her daughter immediately? Thinking that Jesus had no interest in her case, what did the disciples ask Jesus to do?**

MATTHEW 15:23 *But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.*

“Christ knew this woman’s situation. He knew that she was longing to see Him, and He placed Himself in her path. By ministering to her sorrow, He could give a living representation of the lesson He designed to teach. For this He had brought His disciples into this region. He desired them to see the ignorance existing in cities and villages close to the land of Israel. The people who had been given every opportunity to understand the truth were without a knowledge of the needs of those around them....

“Christ did not immediately reply to the woman’s request. He received this representative of a despised race as the Jews would have done. In this He designed that His disciples should be impressed with the cold and heartless manner in which the Jews would treat such a case, as evinced by His reception of the woman, and the compassionate manner in which He would have them deal with such distress, as manifested by His subsequent granting of her petition.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 400.

4. What did He first say to the woman? On what occasion had He said something similar?

MATTHEW 15:24; 10:5, 6 *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel....* ^{10:5} *These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: ⁶ But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.*

“But although Jesus did not reply, the woman did not lose faith. As He passed on, as if not hearing her, she followed Him, continuing her supplications. Annoyed by her importunities, the disciples asked Jesus to send her away. They saw that their Master treated her with indifference, and they therefore supposed that the prejudice of the Jews against the Canaanites was pleasing to Him. But it was a pitying Saviour to whom the woman made her plea, and in answer to the request of the disciples, Jesus said, ‘I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.’ Matthew 15:24. Although this answer appeared to be in accordance with the prejudice of the Jews, it was an implied rebuke to the disciples, which they afterward understood as reminding them of what He had often told them—that He came to the world to save all who would accept Him.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 400, 401.

INCREASED EARNESTNESS AND PLEADING

5. Did the mother give up when she heard this? With what heartfelt devotion did she repeat her request?

MATTHEW 15:25 *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.*

“The woman urged her case with increased earnestness, bowing at Christ’s feet, and crying, ‘Lord, help me.’ Matthew 15:25.” –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

“When you get discouraged, do not depend upon human beings for aid. Christ declares, The Comforter shall be with you. Go right to God in prayer. Bow before Him, saying, ‘Lord, help me; for I am in difficulty, and I do not know what to do. You have promised to give Your children what they ask in Your name. We ask for strength to resist the temptations of the enemy.’” –*The Gospel Herald*, March 1, 1901.

TESTING THE PETITIONER’S FAITH

6. In connection with other messages, how are we to understand Jesus’ second statement to this woman?

MATTHEW 15:26 *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and cast it to dogs.*

MARK 7:27 *But Jesus said unto her, Let the children first be filled: for it is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it unto the dogs.*

LUKE 18:1 *And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint.*

ROMANS 12:12 *Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.*

“Jesus, still apparently rejecting her entreaties, according to the unfeeling prejudice of the Jews, answered, ‘It is not meet to take the children’s bread, and to cast it to dogs.’ Matthew 15:26. This was virtually asserting that it was not just to lavish the blessings brought to the favored people of God upon strangers and aliens from Israel. This answer would have utterly discouraged a less earnest seeker. But the woman saw that her opportunity had come.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

A GREAT FAITH

7. What was behind her respectful argument and courteous perseverance?

MATTHEW 15:27 *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.*

“Beneath the apparent refusal of Jesus, she saw a compassion that He could not hide.... While the children of the household eat at the father’s table, even the dogs are not left unfed. They have a right to the crumbs that fall from the table abundantly supplied. So while there were many blessings given to Israel, was there not also a blessing for her? She was looked upon as a dog, and had she not then a dog’s claim to a crumb from His bounty?...

“Here Christ meets one of an unfortunate and despised race, that has not been favored with the light of God’s word; yet she yields at once to the divine influence of Christ, and has implicit faith in His ability to grant the favor she asks. She begs for the crumbs that fall from the Master’s table. If she may have the privilege of a dog, she is willing to be regarded as a dog. She has no national or religious prejudice or pride to influence her course, and she immediately acknowledges Jesus as the Redeemer, and as being able to do all that she asks of Him.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 401.

8. What did Jesus see in this woman’s petition? How was her strong, consistent faith rewarded by grace?

MATTHEW 15:28 *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.*

MARK 7:29, 30 *And he said unto her, For this saying go thy way; the devil is gone out of thy daughter. ³⁰ And when she was come to her house, she found the devil gone out, and her daughter laid upon the bed.*

“The Saviour is satisfied. He has tested her faith in Him. By His dealings with her, He has shown that she who has been regarded as an outcast from Israel is no longer an alien, but a child in God’s household. As a child it is her privilege to share in the Father’s gifts. Christ now grants her request, and finishes the lesson to the disciples. Turning to her with a look of pity and love, He says, ‘O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.’ From that hour her daughter became whole. The demon troubled her no more. The woman departed, acknowledging her Saviour, and happy in the granting of her prayer.” –*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 401, 402.

FOR REFLECTION

- Would you have felt rejected and ignored if you were in this woman’s place?
- How would you have acted under similar circumstances?
- Does the Lord also test our faith?
- Would you expect the same commendation for your faith as the heathen woman received?

FOR FURTHER STUDY

Prophets and Kings, p. 486; *My Life Today*, p. 119.

“There are many who, though striving to obey God’s commandments, have little peace or joy. This lack in their experience is the result of a failure to exercise faith. They walk as it were in a salt land, a parched wilderness. They claim little, when they might claim much; for there is no limit to the promises of God. Such ones do not correctly represent the sanctification that comes through obedience to the truth. The Lord would have all His sons and daughters happy, peaceful, and obedient. Through the exercise of faith the believer comes into possession of these blessings. Through faith, every deficiency of character may be supplied, every defilement cleansed, every fault corrected, every excellence developed.” –*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 563, 564.

“The steadfast soul, firm in the faith, can do much good; he can impart blessings of the highest order to those with whom he associates, for the law of the Lord is in his heart. But we cannot willingly associate with those who are trampling upon the law of God, and preserve our faith pure and untarnished. We shall catch the spirit, and unless we separate from them, we shall be bound up with them at last, to share their doom.” –*The Adventist Home*, pp. 459, 460.

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MISSIONARY REPORT

FROM SIERRA LEONE

To be read on Sabbath, December 27, 2014

*The Special Sabbath School Offering
will be gathered on Sabbath, January 3, 2015*

Greetings from Sierra Leone with Hebrews 13:1: “Let brotherly love continue.”

Sierra Leone is a small country in West Africa that covers an area of 27,653 square miles and has a population of 5.4 million, 1.2 million of whom live in the capital city of Freetown. The country had its beginnings as a colony of freed American slaves in March 1792 and obtained independence from Britain in 1961. Within its three provinces are 16 different ethnic languages and cultures. The official language is English, and 90 percent of the population speaks Krio (derived from English and several indigenous African languages).

It shares a border with Guinea on the north and east and with Liberia on the south; the Atlantic Ocean is on the west. Economically the country is extremely poor with great inequality in income distribution. Mining, agriculture, and fishing are the main industries.

While the country is an Islamic state, it is interesting to note that Muslim and Christians freely intermarry and live together peacefully. The population is comprised of 71 percent Muslims, 27 percent Christians, and 2 percent African indigenous religions. Following a Macedonian call from a sabbatarian group, the International Missionary Society entered the country in December 2010 with the help of Pastor Vangarral Chengbe, who was the first missionary to be sent by the General Conference to Sierra Leone. At that time, 31 souls were baptized, and Sierra Leone was organized as a mission field.

In 2012, we received another call to come and perform baptisms. On this trip, I was accompanied by Sisters Leila McTavish and Edda Tedford, from Canada. We baptized about 85 souls and held organizational meetings for the field. The work was gaining momentum, and excitement was everywhere when suddenly a rebellion became apparent. Some leaders from the Sabbatarian group saw that their hidden agendas had no room in the church, so they decided to leave. Many members followed them, leaving the church almost empty.

By May 2013, out of 116 members, 23 remained. Yet God continued to sustain His work. The brethren took up the work like the people in Nehemiah's time who said, "Let us rise up and build." Nehemiah 2:18. From May to December, we conducted baptisms on three occasions with a total of 28 souls being baptized, raising the membership from 23 to 51 members. Fifteen people attended the baptismal class, and more than 22 were interested. There is even more light ahead, since we are receiving additional calls from different places. We do not yet have the resources to fill these requests.

In the capital city, we have worship services in two places. One of them is the pastor's rented house, which also serves as the office and church. Unfortunately people in this country don't appreciate home churches; they think that using such a place for worship indicates that we are not serious or do not have any direction. The second group is renting a public school classroom for Sabbath services. Outside Freetown, the capital city, a group in the Eastern province rents a school classroom as well.

We are few in numbers and have no equipment for public evangelism. In fact, our existence is like a drop in the bucket, with one full-time worker and two part-time workers. We need to hold more seminars to continually educate and train our old and new members, who do not have an Adventist background. The harvest is ripe, but the laborers are few. Therefore, it is our hope and conviction that your generous offerings will assist this humble work with means for a central office, for publication of literature, and for missionary training. It is our prayer that our efforts will bear much fruit for the heavenly kingdom and hasten the coming of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. "Blessed are ye that sow beside all waters, that send forth thither the feet of the ox and the ass." Isaiah 32:20.

May the Lord continue to bless you so that in turn you become a blessing to His cause.

—David Gwina
Sierra Leone Mission Field President

