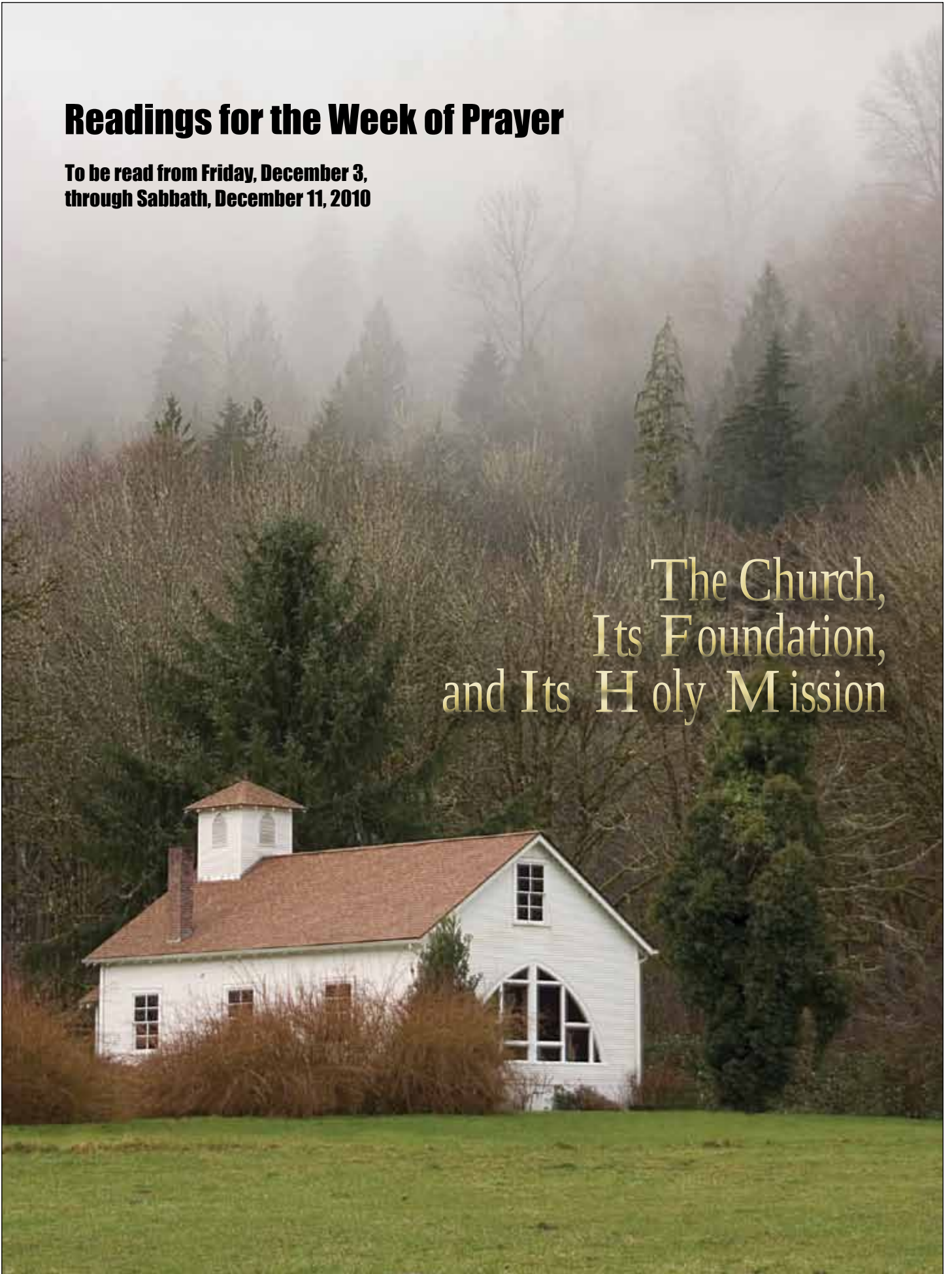


Readings for the Week of Prayer

To be read from Friday, December 3,
through Sabbath, December 11, 2010

The Church,
Its Foundation,
and Its Holy Mission



Introduction

One day, after asking the disciples who people thought He was and then hearing the confusion that existed in their minds, Jesus asked His disciples directly: "But whom say ye that I am?" One answer was: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." This singular confession recognized Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God, without the hypotheses and suppositions put forth by other individuals. It was not the conclusion of human reasoning. To the disciple who thus recognized Him, Jesus said: "... Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but My Father which is in heaven." Matthew 16:15-17.

It was at this moment that Jesus began to speak to His disciples about the church and its development, and His words have carried tremendous weight all down through history. Referring to Himself, He said: "... Upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Matthew 16:18. Jesus was going to build His church upon the rock that was Himself; and He would give such a nature to the church that, in the ensuing ages, not even the gates of hell would be able to prevail against it.

This was also a prophecy indicating that the future would test and shake the church in every way. Hatred, prohibition, persecution, dispersion, heresy, and temptation of every kind have tested the church and put it in danger of apostasy. All this has happened throughout the centuries. And although many who followed Christ became weak, denied the truth, fell into apostasy, and even became His worst enemies, today faithful followers remain and testify of the truth and the message that the Lord has entrusted to His people for the world.

Many movements and organizations have arisen, "every wind of doctrine" has blown through the world by "the sleight of men" (Ephesians 4:14), and many have been confused. Influenced by human theories, some have lost their confidence in the holy Scriptures; others assert that there is no absolute truth and everything is relative

and human; still others say that there is no true visible church, so they choose to remain without connection to any organization, considering themselves as "interdenominational Christians."

Regardless, the prophecy of Jesus will not fail: "The gates of hell shall not prevail against it." The power of the evil one cannot destroy the church. "From the beginning," the Spirit of prophecy affirms, "faithful souls have constituted the church on earth. In every age the Lord has had His watchmen, who have borne a faithful testimony to the generation in which they lived. These sentinels gave the message of warning; and when they were called to lay off their armor, others took up the work. God brought these witnesses into covenant relation with Himself, uniting the church on earth with the church in heaven. He has sent forth His angels to minister to His church, and the gates of hell have not been able to prevail against His people." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 11.

Today, after centuries of spiritual conflict, experiences of every kind, progress, and misadventures, the

church still exists with its divine identity and mission. It is "the remnant ... which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17. Of its adherents, as they continue to spread the message of salvation, it is said: "Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid." Matthew 5:14. They are privileged to be part of an indestructible, holy institution and at the same time are charged with the most noble mission: "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved;..." Mark 16:15, 16.

These Readings for the Week of Prayer present the wonderful theme of "The Church, Its Foundation, and Its Holy Mission." God has made you a precious instrument in His hand to spread light and hope in this world of darkness and confusion; let yourself be used by Him.

The Lord has given us another year of life, another possibility to receive more knowledge and witness to others concerning the signs of the end, another year of grace. Are you thank-

READINGS FOR THE WEEK OF PRAYER

December 3-11, 2010

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ful for all His blessings? Another year is before us; how do you plan to use the opportunities the Lord will grant you in the coming year? Let these articles be read with the heartfelt desire for the Holy Spirit to speak to our hearts and minds. Let us come together for each meeting during this special week with hunger and thirst for righteousness, with a deep desire to be filled with the Holy Spirit so we will be conscious of the privileges and sacred mission that we carry.

Dear brothers, sisters, young people, and friends of the truth, come to every meeting, and seek communion with all who serve the Lord and entreat Him for His blessings. Take time to visit those who are sick, isolated, or discouraged; and encourage everyone you know to come together, as the apostolic church did at the beginning of the Christian era. Be of one mind and heart, and the heavenly blessing will come.

Sabbath, December 11, will be a day of fasting and prayer. Make it a special day of meeting and blessing. Following the last reading, the offering for the Week of Prayer will be gathered. The gifts that are gathered will be used at the General Conference for operating expenses and opening new fields.

Dear ones in Christ, let us be thankful for this past year of life and grace. Let us be thankful for the grace we have received and not forget that all this came to us from the loving hand of God. Let us put forth special effort in the coming year to be faithful, active, and attentive to the progress of God's church. Let us also be messengers and lights to the world wherever the Lord has placed us and make use of every opportunity that He will grant us in this, another year of life.

If we will be dedicated followers, faithful stewards, and active light bearers, we will be a great blessing to Heaven, to the church, to those around us, and to ourselves. It is to such servants that the Lord will soon extend His welcome: "Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Matthew 25:34. May He grant each one of us to be one of them.

*—The brothers and sisters
of the General Conference*

"The world today is in crying need of a revelation of Christ Jesus in the person of His saints. God desires that His people shall stand before the world a holy people. Why? Because there is a world to be saved by the light of gospel truth; and as the message of truth that is to call men out of darkness into God's marvelous light, is given by the church, the lives of its members, sanctified by the Spirit of truth, are to bear witness to the verity of the messages proclaimed.

"God desires His people to place themselves in right relation to Him, that they may understand what He requires of them above all things else. They are to reveal to every struggling soul in the world what it means 'to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly' with their God. Wherever they are, at home or abroad, they are to be His commandment-keeping people. They are to have the assurance that their sins are forgiven, and that they are accepted as children of the Most High.

"The world is in need of a demonstration of practical Christianity. In view of the fact that those who claim to be followers of Christ are a spectacle to an unbelieving world, it behooves them to make sure that they are in right relation with God. They cannot afford to let one day pass in which they do not lay hold by living faith on the God of Israel. In order to stand as lights in the world, they need to have the clear light of the Sun of Righteousness constantly shining upon them. Ever are they to remember that all about them is a world lying in darkness, and perishing for lack of knowledge.

"When God's people so fully separate themselves from evil that He can let the light of heaven rest upon them in rich measure, and shine forth from them to the world, then there will be fulfilled, more fully than it has ever been fulfilled in the past, the prophecy of Isaiah, in which the servant of God declared of the remnant church in the last days: 'The Gentiles shall come to thy light, and kings to the brightness of thy rising. Lift up thine eyes round about, and see: all they gather themselves together, they come to thee: thy sons shall come from far, and thy daughters shall be nursed at thy side. Then thou shalt see, and flow together, and thine heart shall fear, and be enlarged; because the abundance of the sea shall be converted unto thee, the forces of the Gentiles shall come unto thee.' ...

"God's faithful messengers are to seek to carry forward the Lord's work in His appointed way. They are to place themselves in close connection with the Great Teacher, that they may be daily taught of God. They are to wrestle with God in earnest prayer for a baptism of the Holy Spirit, that they may meet the needs of a world perishing in sin. All power is promised those who go forth in faith to proclaim the everlasting gospel. As the servants of God bear to the world a living message fresh from the throne of glory, the light of truth will shine forth as a lamp that burneth, reaching to all parts of the world. Thus the darkness of error and unbelief will be dispelled from the minds of the honest in heart in all lands, who are now seeking after God, if haply they may 'feel after Him, and find Him.' " —*The Review and Herald*, March 31, 1910.

The Church—the Most Precious Object to God

By Ellen G. White

A solid, divine foundation

“Other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” 1 Corinthians 3:11. “Upon this rock,” said Jesus, “I will build My church.” In the presence of God, and all the heavenly intelligences, in the presence of the unseen army of hell, Christ founded His church upon the living Rock. That Rock is Himself—His own body, for us broken and bruised. Against the church built upon this foundation, the gates of hell shall not prevail.

How feeble the church appeared when Christ spoke these words! There was only a handful of believers, against whom all the power of demons and evil men would be directed; yet the followers of Christ were not to fear. Built upon the Rock of their strength, they could not be overthrown. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 595.

Foundation, organization, and perspective

With the calling of John and Andrew and Simon, of Philip and Nathanael, began the foundation of the Christian church. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 141.

It was at the ordination of the twelve that the first step was taken in the organization of the church that after Christ’s departure was to carry on His work on the earth....

Later in the history of the early church, when in various parts of the world many groups of believers had been formed into churches, the organization of the church was further perfected, so that order and harmonious action might be maintained. Every member was exhorted to act well his part. Each was to make a wise use of the talents entrusted to him. Some were endowed by the Holy Spirit with

special gifts—“first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues.” 1 Corinthians 12:28. But all these classes of workers were to labor in harmony. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 18, 91, 92.

Human power and human might did not establish the church of God, and neither can they destroy it. Not on the rock of human strength, but on Christ Jesus, the Rock of Ages, was the church founded, “and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18. The presence of God gives stability to His cause. “Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man,” is the word that comes to us. Psalm 146:3. “In quietness and in confidence shall be your strength.” Isaiah 30:15. God’s glorious work, founded on the eternal principles of right, will never come to nought. It will go on from strength to strength, “not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” Zechariah 4:6. —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 595, 596.

God loves His church

Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant....

God has a church, a chosen people;... Christ identifies Himself with His people.... —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 45, 20.

God has a denominated people, who are to wait on and trust in Him. —*The Paulson Collection*, p. 109.

God’s love for His church is infinite. His care over His heritage is unceasing. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 228.

The Father loves His people today as He loves His own Son. Someday it will be our privilege to see Him face to face. —(Manuscript 103, 1903) *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 396.

The church militant is not now the church triumphant; but God loves

His church and describes through the prophet how He opposes and resists Satan, who is clothing the children of God in the blackest and most defiled garments, and pleading for the privilege of destroying them. The angels of God were protecting them from the assaults of the enemy. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 22.

... The church is very precious in His sight. It is the case which contains His jewels, the fold which encloses His flock, and He longs to see it without spot or blemish or any such thing. He yearns after it with unspeakable love. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 261.

... The Lord Himself rejoices over His church with singing. —*Welfare Ministry*, p. 93.

To God, the dearest object on earth is His church. “The Lord’s portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance. He found him in a desert land, and in the waste howling wilderness; He led him about, He instructed him, He kept him as the apple of His eye.” “For thus saith the Lord of hosts: After the glory hath He sent me unto the nations which spoiled you; for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye.” —*The Signs of the Times*, July 13, 1904.

The object of God’s supreme regard

I testify to my brethren and sisters that the church of Christ, enfeebled and defective as it may be, is the only object on earth on which He bestows His supreme regard. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 15.

... God has called us as a people to be a peculiar treasure unto Himself. He has appointed that His church on earth shall stand perfectly united in the Spirit and counsel of the Lord of hosts to the end of time. (Letter 54, 1908.)

Nothing in this world is so dear to God as His church. With jealous care He guards those who seek Him. —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 397.

The church, enfeebled and defective, needing to be reproved, warned, and counseled, is the only object upon earth upon which Christ bestows His supreme regard. —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 49.

Men need to understand that Deity suffered and sank under the agonies of Calvary. Yet Jesus Christ, whom God gave for the ransom of the world, purchased the church with His own blood. The Majesty of heaven was made to suffer at the hands of religious zealots, who claimed to be the most enlightened people upon the face of the earth. —*That I May Know Him*, p. 70.

The depository of sacred trust

Many have an idea that they are responsible to Christ alone for their light and experience, independent of His recognized followers on earth. Jesus is the friend of sinners, and His heart is touched with their woe. He has all power, both in heaven and on earth; but He respects the means that He has ordained for the enlightenment and salvation of men; He directs sinners to the church, which He has made a channel of light to the world. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 122.

When Christ ascended, He left the church and all its interests as a sacred trust to His followers. And the work of the church is not to be left to the minister alone, or to a few leading men. Every member should feel that he has entered into a solemn covenant with the Lord to work for the best interests of His cause at all times and under all circumstances. Each should have some part to act, some burden to bear. If all church members felt an individual responsibility, greater advancement would be made in spiritual things. The solemn burden of responsibility resting upon them would lead them to seek God often for strength and grace.

The real character of the church is measured, not by the high profession she makes, not by the names enrolled on her books, but by what she is actually doing for the Master, by the number of her persevering, faithful workers. Personal, unselfish effort will accomplish more for the cause of Christ than can be wrought by sermons or creeds. —*Gospel Workers*, p. 200.

Entrusted with a sacred mission

The church of Christ is organized for service. —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 148.

The church is God's appointed agency for the salvation of men. It was organized for service, and its mission is to carry the gospel to the world. From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to "the principalities and powers in heavenly places," the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10. —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

Every church member should be engaged in some line of service for the Master. Some cannot do so much as others, but everyone should do his utmost to roll back the tide of disease and distress that is sweeping over our world. Many would be willing to work if they were taught how to begin. They need to be instructed and encouraged. —*The Ministry of Healing*, pp. 148, 149.

Just as soon as a church is organized, let the minister set the members at work. They will need to be taught how to labor successfully. Let the minister devote more of his time to educating than to preaching. Let him teach the people how to give to others the knowledge they have received. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 20.

Brethren and sisters who have long claimed to believe the truth, I ask you individually, Have your practices been in harmony with the light, the privileges, and the opportunities granted you of heaven? This is a serious question. The Sun of Righteousness has risen upon the church, and it is the duty of the church to shine. It is the privilege of every soul to make advancement. Those who are connected with Christ will grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Son of God, to the full stature of men and women. If all who claim to believe the truth had made the most of their ability and opportunities to learn and to do, they would have become strong in Christ. Whatever their

occupation—whether they were farmers, mechanics, teachers, or pastors—if they had wholly consecrated themselves to God they would have become efficient workers for the heavenly Master. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 423.

The heavenly messengers are doing their work; but what are we doing? Brethren and sisters, God calls upon you to redeem the time. Draw nigh to God. Stir up the gift that is within you. Let those who have had the opportunity to become familiar with the reasons of our faith, now use this knowledge to some purpose. —*Historical Sketches*, p. 288.

There is work to be done for those who know not the truth, just such work as was done for you when you were in darkness. It is too late to sleep, too late to become indolent do-nothings. To every one the Householder has given a work. Let us go forward, and not backward. We want a new conversion daily. We want the love of Jesus throbbing in our hearts, that we may be instrumental in saving many souls. —(*The Review and Herald*, June 10, 1880) *Christian Service*, pp. 90, 91.

It is in working to spread the good news of salvation that we are brought near to the Saviour. —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 102.

Working churches are blessed churches

Every member of the church is responsible for the talents entrusted to him; and in order to meet his responsibilities he needs to be instructed diligently, patiently, and with the spirit of Christ. This work devolves largely on the minister, but often his work is so slightly done that it cannot be acceptable to God or accomplish His purpose. Talent must be trained that the very highest service may be rendered by individual members of the church. When the churches become living, working churches, the Holy Spirit will be given in answer to their sincere request. Then the truth of God's word will be regarded with new interest, and will be explored as if it were a revelation just from the courts above. Every declaration of inspiration concerning Christ will take hold of the

inmost soul of those who love Him. Envy, jealousy, evil surmising, will cease. The Bible will be regarded as a charter from heaven. Its study will absorb the mind, and its truths will feast the soul. The promises of God now repeated as if the soul had never tasted of His love, will then glow upon the altar of the heart, and fall in burning words from the lips of the messengers of God. They will then plead with souls with an earnestness that cannot be repulsed. Then the windows of heaven will be open for the showers of the latter rain. The followers of Christ will be united in love. —*The Review and Herald*, February 25, 1890.

Every truly converted soul will be intensely desirous to bring others from the darkness of error into the marvelous light of the righteousness of Jesus Christ. The great outpouring of the Spirit of God, which lightens the whole earth with His glory, will not come until we have an enlightened people, that know by experience what it means to be laborers together with God. When we have entire, wholehearted consecration to the service of Christ, God will recognize the fact by an outpouring of His Spirit without measure; but this will not be while the largest portion of the church are not laborers together with God. God cannot pour out His Spirit when selfishness and self-indulgence are so manifest; when a spirit prevails that, if put into words, would express that answer of Cain—"Am I my brother's keeper?" —*The Review and Herald*, July 21, 1896.

Christ has promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His church, and the promise belongs to us as much as to the first disciples. But like every other promise, it is given on conditions. There are many who believe and profess to claim the Lord's promise; they talk about Christ and about the Holy Spirit, yet receive no benefit. They do not surrender the soul to be guided and controlled by the divine agencies. We cannot use the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is to use us. Through the Spirit God works in His people "to will and to do of His good pleasure." But many will not submit to this. They want to manage themselves. This is why they do not receive the heavenly gift. Only to those who wait humbly upon God, who watch for His

guidance and grace, is the Spirit given. The power of God awaits their demand and reception. This promised blessing, claimed by faith, brings all other blessings in its train. It is given according to the riches of the grace of Christ, and He is ready to supply every soul according to the capacity to receive. —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 672.

Faithfulness, work, and triumph

To His church, Christ has given ample facilities, that He may receive a large revenue of glory from His redeemed, purchased possession. The church, being endowed with the righteousness of Christ, is His depository, in which the wealth of His mercy, His love, His grace, is to appear in full and final display. The declaration in His intercessory prayer, that the Father's love is as great toward us as toward Himself, the only-begotten Son, and that we shall be with Him where He is, forever one with Christ and the Father, is a marvel to the heavenly host, and it is their great joy. The gift of His Holy Spirit, rich, full, and abundant, is to be to His church as an encompassing wall of fire, which the powers of hell shall not prevail against. In their untainted purity and spotless perfection, Christ looks upon His people as the reward of all His suffering, His humiliation, and His love, and the supplement of His glory—Christ, the great center from which radiates all glory. "Blessed are they which are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb." —*Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 356.

There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places.... —*The Faith I Live By*, p. 305.

Those who hear and obey walk in safe paths, under the protection of the Lord of heaven. Through the power of Christ they are victorious over every foe. Those who do faithful, unselfish service for God will be blessed in their unity, as they work in obedience to Jehovah....

All who love Jesus will search the Scriptures, that they may know and obey His will. Christ will be to them a very present help in time of need; for God's power is pledged to faithfulness. He will fulfill His word to all who are

true. Christ triumphs in the triumph of His people; therefore prepare His way, that He may bestow His richest gifts on His church. —*The Review and Herald*, April 8, 1902.

By beholding the goodness, the mercy, the justice, and the love of God revealed in the church, the world is to have a representation of His character. And when the law of God is thus exemplified in the life, even the world will recognize the superiority of those who love and fear and serve God above every other people on the earth. The Lord has His eye upon every one of His people; He has His plans concerning each. It is His purpose that those who practice His holy precepts shall be a distinguished people. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 12.

God has a faithful people upon the earth. The company of the Lord's precious ones are not now all in sight to be distinguished and counted. They are hidden now, but the proclamation of the third angel's message is to bring them to sight ere long. —(Letter 254, 1899) *Manuscript Releases*, vol. 20, p. 10.

The end is near, stealing upon us stealthily, imperceptibly, like the noiseless approach of a thief in the night. May the Lord grant that we shall no longer sleep as do others, but that we shall watch and be sober. The truth is soon to triumph gloriously, and all who now choose to be laborers together with God, will triumph with it. The time is short; the night soon cometh when no man can work. —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 135. Amen.

"The Saviour's commission to the disciples includes all believers to the end of time. All to whom the heavenly inspiration has come are put in trust with the gospel. All who receive the life of Christ are ordained to work for the salvation of their fellow men. For this work the church was established, and all who take upon themselves its sacred vows are thereby pledged to be co-workers with Christ." —*Counsels to Parents, Teachers, and Students*, p. 466.

Earthly Powers Cannot Overthrow God's Church

By Parmenas Shirima, Tanzania

"And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." Isaiah 2:2, 3.

Every Christian who loves God is greatly interested in studying the facts concerning His church. The word of God and prophecy show clearly that He has a church—and only one church—which in all generations has been the target of the devil's attacks. As we trace history from the world's creation down to our time, we see that Satan has waged a deadly war to annihilate the church. But the mighty protection of our unfailing God has thwarted the evil one's plans. In accordance with His great purpose and promise, God's hand has kept "the gates of hell" from prevailing against His people. Matthew 16:18.

His word tells us that ever since the great adversary was cast out of heaven he has put forth every destructive effort to destroy the church. "And when the dragon saw that he was cast unto the earth, he persecuted the woman which brought forth the man child." Revelation 12:13. Let us look at this great struggle to gain an understanding of what God's church is facing now and will face in the future. The following inspired statement presents the gravity of this subject: "The fallen world is the battlefield for the greatest conflict the heavenly universe and earthly powers have ever witnessed. It was appointed as the theater on which would be fought out the grand struggle between good and evil, between heaven and hell. Every human being acts a part in this conflict. No one can stand

on neutral ground." —(Manuscript 56, 1899) *Lift Him Up*, p. 253.

Definition of the church

"The 'church' in the spiritual sense is the whole of the believers in Christ who profess and live the same faith and are united in one body. It includes all the believers throughout the world and thus is also called the worldwide church. In addition, the term 'church' refers to a single congregation—the local church." —*Church Manual*, p. 15.

This definition agrees with Christ's teaching that "there shall be one fold, and one shepherd." John 10:16. Also, as the apostle Paul said, "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Ephesians 4:4-6.

The teaching that all Christian churches and groups constitute the universal church of God is unbiblical and false. It is a well-calculated, satanic deception to divert minds from the Biblical teaching that God has one peculiar church which can be identified by the following characteristics:

- It keeps the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus. Revelation 14:12.
- It preaches the three angels' messages and keeps holy the seventh-day Sabbath. Revelation 14:6-11.
- It upholds the unity of the faith by teaching the foundational principles of the present truth, as presented in the Bible and the Spirit of prophecy. Revelation 12:17.
- It stresses the importance of health and dress reform standards to support each person's spiritual, mental, and physical powers to the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17.
- It uplifts high moral standards through the message of Christ Our

Righteousness. Romans 3:23-26; 5:1, 2; Ephesians 2:5-10.

- It opposes participation in warfare and worldly politics as contrary to God's law. John 17:14-17.
- It teaches against cooperation with any ecumenical movement or alliance with fallen churches, trade unions, or Adventist groups, independent or otherwise. It does this consciously, taking into account the peculiarity, responsibility, and privilege God has entrusted to His church. 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 6:14-18.

The above characteristics are the source of spiritual strength for God's people and at the same time are powerful weapons against the attacks of the great adversary.

"God has a church on earth who are lifting up the downtrodden law, and presenting to the world the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world....

"There is but one church in the world who are at the present time standing in the breach, and making up the hedge, building up the old waste places;...

"Let all be careful not to make an outcry against the only people who are fulfilling the description given of the remnant people who keep the commandments of God and have faith in Jesus, who are exalting the standard of righteousness in these last days.

"God has a distinct people, a church on earth, second to none, but superior to all in their facilities to teach the truth, to vindicate the law of God." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 50, 58.

Weapons the devil uses to attack God's church

Satan has numerous ways and sophisticated weapons with which he attacks the church and its adherents. Here are

a few which he has used successfully to entrap his victims:

- Open apostasy—transgression of God's holy law. Hebrews 3:12, 13; 1 John 3:4.
- Love of money, boasting, pride, blasphemy, disobedience, ingratitude, neglect of holiness, failure to love God and one's fellow man, lack of forgiveness, slander, lack of self-control, brutality, despising of that which is good, treachery, and having the form of godliness while denying its power. 2 Timothy 3:2-5.
- Persecution, affliction, and inflicting all manner of suffering. 2 Timothy 3:11, 12.
- Sexual immorality, which is the curse of this generation. 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6.
- Conflict in the church, in the workplace, at home, and in society. James 4:1, 2.
- Hatred, jealousy, envy, wrath, malice, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, dissension, heresy, murder, drunkenness, and every type of selfishness—all of which the Scriptures call the works of the flesh. Galatians 5:19-21.
- Fornication, idolatry, homosexuality, sodomy, theft, covetousness, and reviling. 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10.
- Hypocrisy and pretense. Jude 4.
- Pharisaical pride and a spirit of ingratitude, insincerity, and formalism. Matthew 23:13, 15.
- Presumptuous sins. Psalm 19:13, 14; Deuteronomy 17:12, 13.
- Worldly fashion and adornment, jewelry, and costly apparel. Isaiah 3:16-24; 1 Timothy 2:9, 10.
- Heresy, false and erroneous teachings, and rebellion against church order and organization. Ephesians 4:14.

As we saw in the above Spirit of prophecy statements, every individual is involved in the great controversy between good and evil, between Christ and Satan. One point which is generally not considered seriously before making a decision or taking action is that most of us, in one way or another, actively side with the enemy, resisting the expressed will of Almighty God and His church. When we transgress His commandments or commit even one of the sins enlisted above—unless

we repent, confess, and seek God with all our heart—we are surely enemies of God through our condoning of satanic practices.

Powerful assurances of protection

"Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom." Luke 12:32.

"We should remember that the church, enfeebled and defective though it be, is the only object on earth on which Christ bestows His supreme regard. He is constantly watching it with solicitude, and is strengthening it by His Holy Spirit." —(Manuscript 155, 1902)....

"Trust to God's guardianship. His church is to be taught. Enfeebled and defective though it is, it is the object of His supreme regard." —(Letter 279, 1904) *Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 396.

"Nothing else in this world is so dear to God as His church. Nothing is guarded by Him with such jealous care." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 42.

"The church of Christ is God's agency for the proclamation of truth; she is empowered by Him to do a special work; and if she is loyal to God, obedient to His commandments, there will dwell within her the excellence of divine power. If she will honor the Lord God of Israel, there is no power that can stand against her. If she will be true to her allegiance, the forces of the enemy will be no more able to overpower her than is the chaff to resist the whirlwind." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 11.

"The Lord has His appointed agencies, and a church that has lived through persecution, conflict, and darkness. Jesus loved the church, and gave Himself for it, and He will replenish, refine, ennoble, and elevate it, so that it shall stand fast amid the corrupting influences of this world. Men appointed of God have been chosen to watch with jealous care, with vigilant perseverance, that the church may not be overthrown by the evil devices of Satan, but that she shall stand in the world to promote the glory of God among men." —*Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 52, 53.

"For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath He sent me unto

the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye." Zechariah 2:8.

Nothing to fear

"We have nothing to fear for the future, except as we shall forget the way the Lord has led us, and His teaching in our past history." —*Life Sketches of Ellen G. White*, p. 196.

The past confirms our confidence in the future. The precision with which each event in prophecy has been and is being fulfilled in our day assures us that events still future will surely come to pass. The wonderful way in which God has guided and protected His people through the centuries, overruling the designs of evil powers, indicates that the church that is now militant will continue to be guided until it soon becomes the church triumphant. It will pass through a severe process of trimming and pruning.

Before the great final day of our deliverance from this world and before probation ends, while men can still accept the provisions of the gospel, the following prophesied events will occur: The sealing of the 144,000, the outpouring of the latter rain, the sounding of the loud cry, the shaking, enforcement of the Sunday, the finishing of God's work, and the close of probation, which will be followed by the seven last plagues. This does not imply that these events must occur in the sequence as listed. Some of them may be simultaneous. During these events, God's people will be seriously tested and proved.

These events will bring about the early time of trouble and persecution. In Revelation 13:11-17 is given a prophetic description of the persecution to occur before the close of probation under the enforcement of the Sunday law; and it will become more intense after that, particularly during the time of Jacob's trouble.

"Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, Looking unto Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set be-

fore Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God." Hebrews 12:1, 2.

God's people (1 Peter 5:6-10; James 4:7, 8) will be strengthened as they:

- Keep His holy statutes. Deuteronomy 4:5-8.
- Exercise genuine love for His expressed will. Deuteronomy 6:4, 5; Mark 12:30.
- Are faithful to and honest with Him. John 4:24; Ephesians 6:16.
- Dedicate and commit themselves to Him. Ephesians 6:13, 14.
- Are diligent and zealous in witnessing for Him. Ephesians 6:8.
- Pray and meditate unceasingly. 1 Thessalonians 5:17, 18; Ephesians 6:18.

We should remember that in the warfare with the devil we need to utilize the heavenly weapons. In His battle with Satan, Jesus never used the enemy's weapon or spirit—not once. He fought Satan in heaven, in the wilderness, and also upon the cross at Calvary. In every instance, He overcame the devil. But what weapons did He use to defeat him? The answer is: God's word, prayer, and words of mercy. He also said: "Thy will be done!" We need to practice using Heaven's weapons, spirit, and approach in our spiritual warfare. It will give us a decisive victory over the devil. We may say boldly, in accordance with the words of the prophet to King Jehoshaphat: "Hearken ye, all Judah, and ye inhabitants of Jerusalem, and thou king Jehoshaphat, Thus saith the Lord unto you, Be not afraid nor dismayed by reason of this great multitude; for the battle is not yours, but God's." "Ye shall not need to fight in this battle: set yourselves, stand ye still, and see the salvation of the Lord with you, O Judah and Jerusalem: fear not, nor be dismayed; to morrow go out against them: for the Lord will be with you." 2 Chronicles 20:15, 17.

Persecution and the mighty shaking

"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution." 2 Timothy 3:12.

"Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when

men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for My sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you." Matthew 5:10-12.

"The words of Paul will be literally fulfilled: 'All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' 2 Timothy 3:12. As the defenders of truth refuse to honor the Sunday-sabbath, some of them will be thrust into prison, some will be exiled, some will be treated as slaves. To human wisdom all this now seems impossible; but as the restraining Spirit of God shall be withdrawn from men, and they shall be under the control of Satan, who hates the divine precepts, there will be strange developments. The heart can be very cruel when God's fear and love are removed.

"As the storm approaches, a large class who have professed faith in the third angel's message, but have not been sanctified through obedience to the truth, abandon their position and join the ranks of the opposition." *—The Great Controversy*, p. 608.

"The mighty shaking has commenced and will go on, and all will be shaken out who are not willing to take a bold and unyielding stand for the truth and to sacrifice for God and His cause." *—Early Writings*, p. 50.

"The members of the church will individually be tested and proved. They will be placed in circumstances where they will be forced to bear witness for the truth. Many will be called to speak before the councils and in courts of justice, perhaps separately and alone....

"Soon God's people will be tested by fiery trials, and the great proportion of those who now appear to be genuine and true will prove to be base metal. Instead of being strengthened and confirmed by opposition, threats, and abuse, they will cowardly take the side of the opposers....

"The days are fast approaching when there will be great perplexity and confusion. Satan, clothed in angel robes, will deceive, if possible, the very elect. There will be gods many and lords many. Every wind of doctrine will be blowing. Those who have rendered supreme homage to 'science

falsely so called' will not be the leaders then. Those who have trusted to intellect, genius, or talent will not then stand at the head of rank and file. They did not keep pace with the light. Those who have proved themselves unfaithful will not then be entrusted with the flock. In the last solemn work few great men will be engaged. They are self-sufficient, independent of God, and He cannot use them. The Lord has faithful servants, who in the shaking, testing time will be disclosed to view." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, pp. 463, 136, 80, 81.

"I saw that we are now in the shaking time." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 429.

"God is now sifting His people, testing their purposes and their motives. Many will be but as chaff—no wheat, no value in them." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 51.

"Those who have had great light and precious privileges, but have not improved them, will, under one pretext or another, go out from us. Not having received the love of the truth, they will be taken in the delusions of the enemy; they will give heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils, and will depart from the faith. But, on the other hand, when the storm of persecution really breaks upon us, the true sheep will hear the true Shepherd's voice. Self-denying efforts will be put forth to save the lost, and many who have strayed from the fold will come back to follow the great Shepherd. The people of God will draw together and present to the enemy a united front. In view of the common peril, strife for supremacy will cease; there will be no disputing as to who shall be accounted greatest." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, pp. 400, 401.

Experience of the prophesied reformation in the Laodicean church

The reformation of 1914, which brought about a great shaking in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, provided an example of what the remnant church will experience in the future.

- God's people must be tried, tested, and proved; the main test will be loyalty to the commandments of

God in contrast to the commandments of men.

- God's people will be unable to endure the test unless they experience revival and reformation. The apostasy which was tolerated in the church caused open apostasy and the violation of God's commandments.
- To have a true and faithful remnant which constitutes God's church, a first stage of the shaking in the Laodicean church period was permitted by God in 1914; this resulted in 98 percent falling away from the original principles of faith while 2 percent remained faithful.
- Yet, since the remnant is still at battle with the great adversary and his agents, the prophecy of Revelation 12:17 shows that the dragon is furious with the remnant of the pure woman's seed, which church we are today. This war will result in another final shaking, and those who will stand will be called true and faithful.

This brings us to where we are today; it is absolutely urgent that we dedicate ourselves and surrender fully to God as we think about the terrible events and challenges lying just ahead. Only a complete surrender of his life to God and a constant growing in grace will protect anyone from the enormous danger on the horizon and keep God's consecrated men and women united for the glorious triumph when Jesus shall appear.

The prophet Amos prophesied: "For, lo, I will command, and I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Amos 9:9.

Jesus told Peter at a very critical moment: "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not:..." Luke 22:31, 32.

Every child of God individually and the church as a whole will meet a very special trial of their faith. This test is called "the shaking" or "sifting." It has happened in the past and will be repeated at the end in the final shaking. The enemy, knowing that he has just a short time, will work with increasing

virulence to cause as many as possible to fall away.

In the final stage of church history, a great shaking will occur among the members of the church. The basic reasons for this will be the following:

- Religious carelessness and indifference and general apostasy.
- Fear of facing persecution during enforcement of the Sunday law.
- Failure on the part of some to accept the message of Christ to the Laodiceans, which calls for repentance, revival, and reformation.
- Choosing to follow false teachings and perverted doctrines.
- Taking side with the enemies of present truth.

"Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." 1 Corinthians 10:12. God's people will overcome. But this will be experienced only by those who are true and dedicated to God.

"I saw some, with strong faith and agonizing cries, pleading with God. Their countenances were pale and marked with deep anxiety, expressive of their internal struggle. Firmness and great earnestness was expressed in their countenances; large drops of perspiration fell from their foreheads. Now and then their faces would light up with the marks of God's approbation, and again the same solemn, earnest, anxious look would settle upon them." —*Early Writings*, p. 269.

"Satan will work his miracles to deceive; he will set up his power as supreme. The church may appear as about to fall, but it does not fall. It remains, while the sinners in Zion will be sifted out—the chaff separated from the precious wheat. This is a terrible ordeal, but nevertheless it must take place." —*Selected Messages*, book 2, p. 380.

Reexamination of our spiritual condition

"Where is the spirituality of the church? Where are men and women full of faith and the Holy Spirit? My prayer is: Purify Thy church, O God...."

"God is sifting His people. He will have a clean and holy church. We cannot read the heart of man. But the Lord has provided means to keep the church pure. A corrupt people has arisen who

could not live with the people of God. They despised reproof, and would not be corrected. They had an opportunity to know that theirs was an unrighteous warfare. They had time to repent of their wrongs; but self was too dear to die. They nourished it, and it grew strong, and they separated from the trusting people of God, whom He is purifying unto Himself. We all have reason to thank God that a way has been opened to save the church; for the wrath of God must have come upon us if these corrupt pretenders had remained with us." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 99.

"God has in store love, joy, peace, and glorious triumph for all who serve Him in spirit and in truth. His commandment-keeping people are to stand constantly in readiness for service. They are to receive increased grace and power, and increased knowledge of the Holy Spirit's working. But many are not ready to receive the precious gifts of the Spirit which God is waiting to bestow on them. They are not reaching higher and still higher for power from above that through the gifts bestowed, they may be recognized as God's peculiar people, zealous of good works...."

"The time has come for a thorough reformation to take place. When this reformation begins, the spirit of prayer will actuate every believer and will banish from the church the spirit of discord and strife. Those who have not been living in Christian fellowship will draw close to one another. One member working in right lines will lead other members to unite with him in making intercession for the revelation of the Holy Spirit. There will be no confusion, because all will be in harmony with the mind of the Spirit. The barriers separating believer from believer will be broken down, and God's servants will speak the same things. The Lord will cooperate with His servants. All will pray understandingly the prayer that Christ taught His servants: 'Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.' Matthew 6:10." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, pp. 247, 248, 251.

May God in His mercy give us that experience is my wish and prayer. Amen.

Living Witnesses in the World

By Pablo Hunger, Austria/U.S.A.

Jesus has risen from the dead! The angels joyfully announced this wonderful event to the women who came to the sepulchre, and the news was not just to remain there: "... Go quickly, and tell His disciples that He is risen from the dead." Matthew 28:7. What did they do? "... They departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring His disciples word." Matthew 28:8. The same thing happened with the disciples on the road to Emmaus. As soon as they realized that the stranger who had walked and talked with them was Jesus, they got up, hurried back to Jerusalem, and told the disciples, "The Lord is risen indeed." Luke 24:34. When Jesus appeared to the eleven, He announced, "And ye are witnesses of these things" (Luke 24:48), and so it really was. At Pentecost, the apostle Peter preached, "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses." Acts 2:32.

Proclaiming the good tidings of the gospel was exactly what Jesus had told many people to do during His ministry. To a man whom He had healed and who wanted to remain with Him, Jesus "suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee. And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all men did marvel." Mark 5:19, 20.

The testimony of a truthful witness is something that cannot be forgotten. That is why a personal testimony of our experience with God is very powerful. It is a privilege that the Lord has granted to every Christian. No one can deny what you have seen and heard, and even less what you have experienced in your personal life with the Lord. Tell it to others! Share it!

The power of an experience with God

We can imagine the hymn of joy that was sung after God, with His power,

opened the way through the Red Sea to allow His people to go free, after years of suffering and slavery, and then released the waters to destroy the Egyptian army! Now Israel could continue the journey to Canaan absolutely free! It was an unforgettable experience that was later repeated to the people many times to encourage and strengthen their trust in the Almighty.

"And ye have seen all that the Lord your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for the Lord your God is He that hath fought for you." Joshua 23:3. The testimony of God's great works was transmitted from one generation to the other, thus encouraging parents and children to trust in the great power of God.

To remember the experience of liberation in our own life is a blessing that strengthens our faith and the faith of our children. How sad it is that, although the people of Israel were blessed with so many miracles in the wilderness, they did not appreciate the fact that they had been witnesses of so many wonders; of that generation only two men of faith, Joshua and Caleb, entered the promised land!

Many times, just as happened with the people of Israel, we see only our limitations and are discouraged. We are not ready to go forward in faith, and we are even ashamed of our experience with God. Let us learn to trust in God's guidance all the time.

We should point out that the news of the miracles in the wilderness caused great fear among the people of Canaan as they saw how God led His people. Some, like Rahab in Jericho, acknowledged God's power and asked for His mercy. She declared, "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. 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. 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." Joshua 2:9-11. God heard this sincere acknowledgment and set the woman free. She was even privileged to be part of the Saviour's lineage.

In the same manner, today many people watch us from a distance and admire the blessings that God has bestowed upon us. They want to hear our testimony and experience such blessings in their own lives.

Looking for a different experience

How many people are trying to quench the thirst of their soul but without result! Over and over again, they fall into the snares of Satan, and each time the fall is deeper and more devastating. Many are looking for a different way and want to hear the testimony of liberation. This was the case of the Samaritan woman: "The woman then left her waterpot, and went her way into the city, and saith to the men, Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ? Then they went out of the city, and came unto Him." Many Samaritans believed in Him because of the testimony of the woman who said, "a man ... told me all things that ever I did." John 4:28-30, 39. What a great blessing it was for the inhabitants of that city to hear the testimony and the call of the Samaritan woman! They took hold of the opportunity, and their sincere desire to find a Saviour was fulfilled.

I am sure there are many around us who want to hear about our life and receive a call to know Him who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. That was the case with the inhabitants of the city in Samaria who later declared, "Now

we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world." John 4:42.

During the earthquake in Chile at the beginning of 2010, a 12-year-old girl who was living on an island some distance from the mainland heard the news about the earthquake from her grandfather. As she looked out the window, she could see the small boats on the coast being rocked by the water. Without delay, she rushed to the town square and with all her strength sounded the bell to warn the village of the coming danger. A few minutes later, a tsunami struck the island; but many lives were saved because of the girl's quick action and warning.

Let us not lose a single opportunity that the Lord gives us to share the experience we have had with Christ. Through our testimony we can help and save many lives.

They glorified God

Every time Jesus set a suffering sinner free, there was great joy. Not only was the one who experienced the miracle happy, but also those who were witnesses of what had happened rejoiced with him. "And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all; insomuch that they were all amazed, and glorified God, saying, We never saw it on this fashion." Mark 2:12.

In another case in which Christ healed a man of palsy, "they were all amazed, and they glorified God, and were filled with fear, saying, We have seen strange things to day." Luke 5:26. Everyone who sees what God does will have the same reaction and will acknowledge and glorify His name. This is why, when John the Baptist was in prison and confused regarding the Master's ministry, Jesus told His disciples to tell John about the wonderful things they had witnessed. This strengthened and confirmed their faith in the Redeemer of the world. "Jesus ... said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached." Luke 7:22.

An undeniable testimony

One of the most powerful means that Jesus used to reach the hardened hearts of the priests was the testimony of the man with palsy who had been healed. "And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them." Matthew 8:4.

Concerning this, the Spirit of prophecy states: "The same priests who condemned the leper to banishment certified his cure. This sentence, publicly pronounced and registered, was a standing testimony for Christ. And as the healed man was reinstated in the congregation of Israel, upon the priests' own assurance that there was not a taint of the disease upon him, he himself was a living witness for his Benefactor. Joyfully he presented his offering, and magnified the name of Jesus. The priests were convinced of the divine power of the Saviour." *—The Desire of Ages*, pp. 265, 266.

Maybe today we also think that sharing the wonderful works of God through personal testimony is not producing results; but just as happened in the times of Jesus, a personal testimony is one of the most effective ways to reach people's hearts. Since there are only two options—one's message is either accepted or rejected—we should trust that through the work of the Holy Spirit the seeds sown in a person's heart will bear fruit for eternity.

Telling about what our hands have handled

The apostle John gave two important clues so our testimony will be a living one. "That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it and bear witness, and show unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) that which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ." 1 John 1:1-3. His

message was based on an ensemble of experiences that should also be part of our own personal witness.

That which we have heard. The apostle Paul wrote that faith comes from hearing the word of God. Romans 10:17. This means that, in the first place, the message has to be shared; if it is not spoken, no one will hear it or have knowledge of it. The knowledge of the truth of God should be shared through the many means available—verbally, by letter, by email, and today even through SMS messages. Each of us should share what he has learned from the Holy Scriptures, and we have many ways to communicate with those around us.

That which we have seen. What we see often produces a greater impression on our minds than that which we hear. If we share what God has done in the life of others, the truth is even more strongly affirmed, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Romans 1:16.

That which we have looked upon. To see is not the same as to behold. How many times, perhaps when taking a long trip, we see road signs without even registering what we have seen. But when we behold a flower, we observe the wonderful details of God's creation and realize His great power. And when we take time to meditate on a Bible text, we can understand the depth and vitality of the words and the beauty of the message, thus seeing God more clearly. This leads us to share the same joy and assurance that David expressed: "That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple." Psalm 27:4.

That which our hands have handled. What is of greatest value in our witness is our personal experience with God. Beyond what we have heard and what we have seen and beheld, sharing with others what we have lived and touched with our hands is something very wonderful. It is a great joy for the one who has made the experience, and it is also a special inspiration for one who hears about it. If we have not had a personal experience with the Lord,

we should seek for it with all our heart in sincere prayer, because He promised: "Ask, and it shall be given you." To share the knowledge of the truth is of great value, but to share one's personal experience with that truth is even greater.

The Lord wants a personal relationship and constant communion with every one of His children. He wants us to be aware of His blessings in our life every day. Do not let even one day go by without taking time to meditate on what you have heard about God and what He has revealed to you. Think about what you have experienced and received from His hand during the day. What would it have been like if God had not been at your side? Do not think that everything just happened automatically or was the result of your own doing. The grace of God has been with you. His hand has carried you, and let Him be praised and glorified for that!

I must admit that in my personal life, whenever I have neglected my daily relationship with God, my own experience suffered. We need to take time to read the inspired writings and cultivate our relationship with God so we do not lose our security but are strong to face every situation with joy and peace. One's witness may seem insignificant, but it is as salt that gives flavor. As light is to one who must walk in the dark and as water is to one who is thirsty, so is the living testimony to the world. Let us use every opportunity to share the divine joy and security.

The joy of sharing

"For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard." Acts 4:20. Considering the great impact that our personal testimony can make on the lives of others, I would like to take this opportunity to encourage you to write down your testimony and share it with those around you. Also, send it to the headquarters of the General Conference so that it may be considered for publication.

A testimony without words

Reflect for a moment on the following experience. Fanny Crosby, the famous hymn writer, who was blind, once vis-

ited a mission and asked whether there was any boy there who had no mother. She wanted to spend a little time with him and hug him. A little orphan boy came up to her, and she put her arms around him and kissed him tenderly.

When she left that place, she wrote the wonderful hymn: "Rescue the Perishing." One day, when Ira Sankey had sung this hymn in Saint Louis, a man from the audience stood up and said, "I am the boy whom Fanny Crosby kissed that evening. I could never forget the impression made upon me by those tender hands and the beat of that heart full of love for the abandoned children; and I became a Christian, as she advised us."

Dear brothers and sisters, every moment we are testifying of our relationship with Christ, even without words. It is important to experience the simple, practical blessings of living with the Lord. The moments alone with God and His word are multiplied and strengthened from above when we share what we have beheld and touched. Remember that many people will receive the image of God and Christianity through the testimony of your life.

"In the behavior of children away from home, strangers can read, as in an open book, the history of the home life. They read there of duties left undone, of want of thoughtfulness, of lack of self-forgetfulness, of a disposition toward strife, fretfulness, impatience; while those who show that they have the fear of the Lord before them will, in character and in words, testify of a home where love is cherished, where there is peace, where patience is cultivated, where attention is given to the little proprieties of life, each mindful of his duty to make others happy...." *—Sons and Daughters of God*, p. 113.

Living witnesses

Another inspired message reminds us: "The lives of professing Christians who do not live the Christ life are a mockery to religion. Everyone whose name is registered on the church roll is under obligation to represent Christ by revealing the inward adorning of a meek and quiet spirit. They are to be His witnesses, making known the advantages

of walking and working as Christ has given them example. The truth for this time is to appear in its power in the lives of those who believe it, and is to be imparted to the world. Believers are to represent in their lives its power to sanctify and ennoble....

"They are to show forth the power of the grace that Christ died to give men.... They are to be men of faith, men of courage, whole-souled men, who, without questioning, trust in God and His promises." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, pp. 22, 23.

We should be careful not to repeat the experience of the lawyer who kept silent and thus lost his case. The distinguished lawyer Samuel Hoar (1778-1856) was representing a defendant. When it was time to present his case, he told the jurors that the facts favoring his client were so obvious that he would not insult their intelligence by presenting arguments to them.

The jury retired to deliberate and returned in a few minutes with a verdict of guilty. Samuel Hoar was astonished! "How," he asked, "could you have reached such a verdict?"

The foreman replied, "We all agreed that if anything could be said for a case, you would say it. But since you didn't present any evidence, we decided to rule against you." Silence had lost the case.

How many times do we keep silent when we have the opportunity to share about Christ? In such a case, those who need to hear the message will come to the conclusion that speaking about faith in Christ is of minor importance and not worth spending time on. Let us not allow them to reach such a conclusion! Every opportunity to share what we have experienced with Jesus is a golden moment.

"Every witness for God is now to work intelligently in the lines which God has appointed. We should daily obtain a deep and living experience in the work of perfecting Christian character. We should daily receive the holy oil that we may impart to others. All may be light bearers to the world if they will. We are to sink self out of sight in Jesus." *—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, p. 510.

We find the same thoughts in various verses in God's Word: "I will praise

Thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will show forth all Thy marvellous works." Psalm 9:1.

"I will remember the works of the Lord: surely I will remember Thy wonders of old. I will meditate also of all Thy work, and talk of Thy doings. Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary: who is so great a God as our God? Thou art the God that doest wonders: Thou hast declared Thy strength among the people. Thou hast with Thine arm redeemed Thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph." Psalm 77:11-15.

"O sing unto the Lord a new song: sing unto the Lord, all the earth. Sing unto the Lord, bless His name; show forth His salvation from day to day. Declare His glory among the heathen, His wonders among all people. For the Lord is great, and greatly to be praised...." Psalm 96:1-4.

May the Lord grant us this experience and the joy, as the psalmist wrote, of being His living witnesses to a world in need. Amen.

"The church at this time should have the faith once delivered to the saints, which will enable them to say boldly: 'God is mine helper'; 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.' The Lord bids us arise and go forward. Whenever the church at any period have forsaken their sins, and believed and walked in the truth, they have been honored of God. There is in faith and humble obedience a power that the world cannot withstand. The order of God's providence in relation to His people is progression—continual advancement in the perfection of Christian character, in the way of holiness, rising higher and higher in the clear light and knowledge and love of God, to the very close of time."
—*Lift Him Up*, p. 338.

Spreading Light Amid the Darkness

By Joel Barnedo, Philippines/U.S.A.

Momentous events are taking place in our world. Everything is in agitation. Crime is increasing rapidly. Floods, famines, wars, and earthquakes follow one another in quick succession. Two major earthquakes struck within the short space of two months at the beginning of this year—one in Haiti on January 12, and another in Chile on February 28, with major aftershocks and tsunamis. There was terrible devastation. Surely we are standing on the threshold of great and solemn events. Only a moment of time remains for us to fulfill our Lord's commission to preach the gospel to every creature.

While darkness covers the earth and gross darkness the people, a prophecy of wonderful glory is given by the prophets for our world: "For the earth shall be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea." Habakkuk 2:14.

In vision Sister Ellen G. White saw the glory of God as streams of light going all around the world. How will God's glory shine? In a great measure through the divine agency of the publishing work! But the next question is: How is the publishing work to go forward? Making reference to the cooperation of every one of us who is called to salvation, the prophet Isaiah says: "Arise, shine, for thy light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon thee." Isaiah 60:1.

In the book of Revelation, a wonderful prophecy states: "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory." Revelation 18:1. Concerning this, the Spirit of prophecy comments: "And in a large degree through our publishing houses is to be accomplished the work of that other angel who comes down from heaven with great power and who lightens the

earth with his glory." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 7, p. 140.

When God has a work to do on this earth, He calls men and women to His service; and His glory shines through them. Jesus, looking at the multitudes of unsaved people, "was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd." He said, "The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few; pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that He will send forth labourers into His harvest." Matthew 9:36-38. What a scene is portrayed here! God's children are scattered like sheep without a shepherd. People are hurting today. Many are sick and discouraged, alone and afraid. They live in villages and towns, and many are trapped in the large cities. To reach them, a call is extended for laborers.

As leaves of autumn

In our time, particular messengers have been provided to spread the light; these messengers are the publications. "Publications," writes the Spirit of prophecy, "must be multiplied, and scattered like the leaves of autumn. These silent messengers are enlightening and molding the minds of thousands in every country and in every clime." —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 5. This is the very work which the Lord desires us to do—to spread the light of the gospel. "Canvassers should be impressed with the fact that the canvassing work is the very work the Lord desires them to do. They should remember that they are in the service of God...."

"O that thousands more of our people had a realization of the time in which we are living, and of the work to be done in field service, in house-to-house labor. There are many, many who know not the truth. They need

to hear the call to come to Jesus. The sorrowing are to be cheered, the weak strengthened, the mourners comforted. The poor are to have the gospel preached to them.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 58, 24.

The great need of this hour, then, is for workers who:

- are consecrated
- are willing to do God’s work
- will carry the love of Jesus to every home
- will engage in God’s business
- will go forward regardless of the circumstances

Important work

“If there is one work more important than another, it is that of getting our publications before the public, thus leading them to search the Scriptures. Missionary work—introducing our publications into families, conversing, and praying with and for them—is a good work and one which will educate men and women to do pastoral labor.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 390.

Spreading publications is not a secondary work; according to the Testimonies, “The importance of this work is fully equal to that of the ministry.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 8.

“There is no higher work than evangelistic canvassing. For it involves the performance of the highest moral duties. Those who engage in this work need always to be under the control of the Spirit of God. There must be no exalting of self. What have any of us that we did not receive from Christ? We must love as brethren, revealing our love by helping one another.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 331.

Do not delay or neglect this work

“Let us not be backward now. That which is to be done in warning the world must be done without delay. Let not the canvassing work be left to languish. Let the books containing the light on present truth be placed before as many as possible.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 329.

“The canvassing work should no longer be neglected. Many times I have been shown that there should be a more general interest in our can-

vassing work. The circulation of our literature is one very important means of placing before men and women the light that the Lord has committed to His church to be given to the world. The books sold by our canvassers open to many minds the unsearchable riches of Christ.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 16.

Let every colporteur and the missionary leader in every church, field, and union go out with the believers every Sunday and work at least two hours in house-to-house work. While some members are canvassing, the members of the Dorcas department can prepare lunch for them. This will unite the believers and will result in a wonderful harvest of souls. Then on Sabbath morning the colporteurs should be given time to tell about the experiences they made in the previous Sunday’s canvassing work.

Don’t lose even one day!

This is our urgent mission, and the Spirit of prophecy confirms it: “You cannot afford to lose one day. Take up your neglected work. Put away your querulous unbelief, your envy and evil thinking, and go to work, in humble faith, and with earnest prayer to the Lord to pardon you for your years of unconsecration. Ask the Lord for help. If you seek Him earnestly, with the whole heart, you will find Him, and He will strengthen and bless you.” —*Colporteur Ministry*, p. 47.

This kind of evangelistic effort needs to be done as quickly as possible. “God has ordained the canvassing work as a means of presenting before the people the light contained in our books, and canvassers should be impressed with the importance of bringing before the world as fast as possible the books necessary for their spiritual education and enlightenment. This is the very work the Lord would have His people do at this time. All who consecrate themselves to God to work as canvassers are assisting to give the last message of warning to the world. We cannot too highly estimate this work; for were it not for the efforts of the canvasser, many would never hear the warning.” —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 313.

Years ago, when Brothers Carlos Kozel and Raul Escobar, along with Brother and Sister Augusto and Lydia Pizarro, first went to the Philippines in missionary service, they started by canvassing in Manila. Sister Pizarro did not speak our language and did not even speak English. What she and the others did was trust the Lord to guide them to someone who would accept the Reformation and health message. They found a Filipino teacher who spoke both English and Spanish. He helped translate Brother Kozel’s book into the Filipino language.

One day Brother Escobar found a seventeen-year-old young lady, and he trained her to do the canvassing work. After completing the colporteur seminar, she was sent to different provinces. It was from this sister that my family received the message. When I was 14 years old, she asked me to carry her bag containing health books, and we went to our neighbors to sell our literature. To this day, I remember her telling me that the canvassing work was the very highest profession in the sight of heaven. She died 20 years ago and never knew that one day the seed she planted in my heart would germinate. It was a blessed seed, and now I am privileged to serve the Lord as General Conference canvassing leader. I hope to meet this sister in heaven and thank her for knocking on the door of my father’s house. I also want to thank all those pioneering brethren who came to Asia. Now in the Philippines we have more than a thousand members and a good number of colporteurs.

Carrying the gospel message to different parts of the world is still the church’s mission. South Vietnam is also receiving missionaries to extend the work there. The General Conference Committee made the year 2010 the year to reach Asia. Let us pray that the gospel light will shine more and more in this populous region of the world.

The Lord is calling you

“Young men, young women, you are called by the Master to take up His work. There is a famine in the land for the pure gospel....

“This work is to continue without the forbiddings of anyone. Souls are

perishing out of Christ. Let them be warned of His soon appearing in the clouds of heaven....

"By the canvassing work the truth is presented to thousands who otherwise would never hear it." —*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 24, 25, 8.

In 2008 the Philippine Union sent a colporteur to Malaysia. She was also trained as a medical missionary. The result was that last year we had our first baptism in Malaysia. Now, thanks to the Lord, we have more than 6 members there. Is it not encouraging that new souls are won to the truth through the cooperation of brothers and sisters who put their talents at the service of the Lord?

The privilege of every church and every believer

Dear brothers and sisters, I have much in my heart that I would like to share with you, but we all know that God has spoken and given every believer inspiring invitations. Let them speak to our hearts, and let us answer their appeal.

"We want Calebs now ... who with courageous words will make a strong report in favor of immediate action." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 383.

"A great and important work is before us. The enemy of souls realizes this, and he is using every means in his power to lead the canvasser to take up some other line of work. This order of things should be changed. God calls the canvassers back to their work. He calls for volunteers who will put all their energies and enlightenment into the work, helping whenever there is opportunity." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 332.

"God calls for workers from every church among us to enter His service as canvasser evangelists. God loves His church. If the members will do His will, if they will strive to impart the light to those in darkness, He will greatly bless their efforts....

"Let every believer scatter broadcast tracts and leaflets and books containing the message for this time. We need colporteurs, who will go forth to circulate our publications everywhere....

"In this closing work of the gospel there is a vast field to be occupied; and,

more than ever before, the work is to enlist helpers from the common people. Both the youth and those older in years will be called from the field, from the vineyard, and from the workshop, and sent forth by the Master to give His message." —*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 20, 21.

Messengers of light

Soon another year will end, never to return. Let us spread light to our contacts, friends, and relatives through the spoken and written word. Let us reach people in their need. The Lord has given us a little more time and grace, and His work must be finished. In view of this great mission, the following inspired messages appeal to every one of us.

"There is no release for any who have talents and capabilities. They are required to be the Lord's instruments, required to cooperate with the Lord Jesus in shedding the light of heaven into this sin-darkened world....

"As long as probation continues, there will be opportunity for the canvasser to work. When the religious denominations unite with the papacy to oppress God's people, places where there is religious freedom will be opened by evangelistic canvassing. If in one place the persecution becomes severe, let the workers do as Christ has directed. 'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.' " —*Colporteur Ministry*, pp. 20, 11.

Of Jesus it is recorded: "And it came to pass afterward, that He went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with Him." Luke 8:1. Let us do the same through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Today Jesus is calling men and women to give the last message of mercy to this dying world. He is speaking to your heart right now. In your quiet, private time with God, consider this urgent need. As you listen to His voice, look up into His face and give Him your answer. Amen!

"Abundant provision has been made that those who will seek God with the whole heart may find Him a present help in every time of need; for help has been laid on One that is mighty. Today He commissions His workers, 'Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost; teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' God calls for living, acting, working men, men who from the first moments of their religious life will depend upon God and trust in Him who is the Head of the church. 'Ye are a chosen generation,' He says, 'a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.' The Lord has a great work for His disciples to do, not in their own wisdom, but in the wisdom which He will give them. In every church we need Christlike workers, those who in life and character are growing in the divine likeness by working to call sinners to repentance. The spiritual life of the church can be kept alive only as the members make personal efforts to win souls to Christ. No amount of mental culture or theological training will do this work. But it can be done by the soul who is humble and contrite, and imbued with the Spirit of God. The bright beams of the Sun of Righteousness must shine upon the heart of the worker and purify his life before light from the throne of God can come to those who sit in darkness." —*The Signs of the Times*, December 20, 1899.

Jesus, the Cornerstone

By Alfonso Reto, Peru

“And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone.” Ephesians 2:20.

The cornerstone of a building is one that is large enough and strong enough to bear enormous weight and environmental pressure. It is placed at the corner of a building to anchor and interlock two walls. The size of the stone is determined by the dimensions of the building.

When Solomon’s temple was being built, a huge stone was brought from the quarry to Jerusalem, but it was rejected by the builders and was considered a stone that was always in the way. However, after a very long time, they realized that it was the best stone for the corner, for it could bear much weight. Although it had been a rejected stone, it fit the structure of the building; therefore they placed it in the foundation of the magnificent temple.

That cornerstone represented Jesus. The psalmist David and the apostle Peter referred to this stone in a figurative way when they wrote: “The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.” Psalm 118:22; 1 Peter 2:7.

The Cornerstone in patriarchal times

The patriarchs who believed in the Lord as the foundation, the Cornerstone, of their faith passed down the wonderful proclamation that, according to divine revelation, the Messiah would come as the Rock—the Saviour.

The patriarch Abraham believed God the Father and waited for the fulfillment of the blessed promise that he would have a son and many descendants who would inherit the promised land where milk and honey flowed (Genesis 15:1-5), and in due time God fulfilled that promise.

Under inspiration the patriarch Jacob presented prophecies concerning

his descendants, and more specifically about the One who would come from one of his sons: “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be.” Genesis 49:10. Another verse reinforces this: “Out of him [Judah] came forth the corner....” Zechariah 10:4.

And this is exactly how it happened; the Saviour was born into this world through the tribe of Judah. He was the cornerstone that unites man with man, the earth with heaven, and man with God.

“This hope of redemption through the advent of the Son of God as Saviour and King, has never become extinct in the hearts of men. From the beginning there have been some whose faith has reached out beyond the shadows of the present to the realities of the future. Adam, Seth, Enoch, Methuselah, Noah, Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—through these and other worthies the Lord has preserved the precious revelations of His will. And it was thus that to the children of Israel ... God imparted a knowledge of the requirements of His law, and of the salvation to be accomplished through the atoning sacrifice of His beloved Son.” —*Prophets and Kings*, pp. 682, 683.

All of the patriarchs were sustained by and established upon the eternal Rock, our Saviour Jesus Christ; and they had personal experiences with Him. The inspired pen says: “Through type and promise God ‘preached before the gospel unto Abraham.’ Galatians 3:8. And the patriarch’s faith was fixed upon the Redeemer to come. Said Christ to the Jews. ‘Your father Abraham rejoiced that he should see My day; and he saw it, and was glad.’ John 8:56, R.V., margin. The ram offered in the place of Isaac represented the Son of God, who was to be sacrificed in our stead. When man was doomed to death by transgression of the law of God, the

Father, looking upon His Son, said to the sinner, ‘Live: I have found a ransom.’” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 154.

The apostle Paul, referring to the patriarchs, said concerning them: “Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; Whose are the fathers, and of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen.” Romans 9:4, 5.

The Angel who bears God’s name

Jesus is spoken of as the Angel who guided the people: “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of Him, and obey His voice, provoke Him not; for He will not pardon your transgressions: for My name is in Him. But if thou shalt indeed obey His voice, and do all that I speak; then I will be an enemy unto thine enemies, and an adversary unto thine adversaries. For Mine Angel shall go before thee, and bring thee in unto the Amorites, and the Hittites, and the Perizzites, and the Canaanites, and the Hivites, and the Jebusites: and I will cut them off.” Exodus 23:20-23.

It was through His “Angel,” the Lord Jesus, that God set His people free. “And when we cried unto the Lord, He heard our voice, and sent an angel, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt: and, behold, we are in Kadesh, a city in the uttermost of thy border.” Numbers 20:16.

“All through the pages of sacred history, where the dealings of God with His chosen people are recorded, there are burning traces of the great I AM....

“In all these revelations of the divine presence the glory of God was manifested through Christ. Not alone at the Saviour’s advent, but through all the ages after the Fall and the prom-

ise of redemption, 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19. Christ was the foundation and center of the sacrificial system in both the patriarchal and the Jewish age. Since the sin of our first parents there has been no direct communication between God and man. The Father has given the world into the hands of Christ, that through His mediatorial work He may redeem man and vindicate the authority and holiness of the law of God. All the communion between heaven and the fallen race has been through Christ. It was the Son of God that gave to our first parents the promise of redemption. It was He who revealed Himself to the patriarchs. Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Moses understood the gospel. They looked for salvation through man's Substitute and Surety. These holy men of old held communion with the Saviour who was to come to our world in human flesh; and some of them talked with Christ and heavenly angels face to face.

"Christ was not only the leader of the Hebrews in the wilderness—the Angel in whom was the name of Jehovah, and who, veiled in the cloudy pillar, went before the host—but it was He who gave the law to Israel. Amid the awful glory of Sinai, Christ declared in the hearing of all the people the ten precepts of His Father's law. It was He who gave to Moses the law engraved upon the tables of stone." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 366.

The Cornerstone in the exodus

The cornerstone, which supported the people of Israel during their bondage in Egypt, is central to the wonderful story of and plan for deliverance from sin.

God called Moses as His representative to lead the people. And although, at the beginning, he felt incapable and presented an excuse—"... I am slow of speech, and of a slow tongue"—God reassured Him, "Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say." Exodus 4:10, 12.

Moses was the human instrument which God used for the deliverance of His people from Egypt, but in all cir-

cumstances he relied on God and His "Angel" to lead the people to freedom. Therefore, it is reported of Moses, "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing Him who is invisible." Hebrews 11:27. God was always present in his thoughts in the midst of danger and insult. The Lord was his present Helper; He was the Rock on which Moses leaned.

After the exodus from Egypt to the promised land began, the Israelites crossed the Red Sea; but because they refused to enter Canaan, they had to wander for 40 years in the wilderness. "It was not the will of God," writes the inspired pen, "that Israel should wander forty years in the wilderness; He desired to lead them directly to the land of Canaan, and establish them there, a holy, happy people. But 'they could not enter in because of unbelief.' Hebrews 3:19. Because of their backsliding and apostasy, they perished in the desert, and others were raised up to enter the promised land." —*The Great Controversy*, p. 458.

Yes, when the ten spies came back from searching the land and gave a negative report, the immediate reaction of the Hebrews was wailing and lamentation that they had been placed in such a situation for which, according to their thinking, there was no solution and only fear of God's judgments. Some refused to accept the divine decision; they attempted to go and conquer Canaan on their own, despite the fact that Moses had warned them not to do so. They were severely defeated.

Later, others, led by Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, defied Moses' authority, flattering the people and gaining the support of 250 princes. "They accused Moses of pretending to act under divine guidance, as a means of establishing his authority; and they declared that they would no longer submit to be led about like blind men, now toward Canaan, and now toward the wilderness, as best suited his ambitious designs. Thus he who had been as a tender father, a patient shepherd, was represented in the blackest character of a tyrant and usurper. The exclusion from Canaan, in punishment of their own sins, was charged upon him." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 399.

The destiny of those rebels and their followers was death. "Moses, by divine direction, bade the people, 'Depart, I pray you, from the tents of these wicked men, and touch nothing of theirs, lest ye be consumed in all their sins.'..."

"As he ceased speaking, the solid earth parted, and the rebels went down alive into the pit, with all that pertained to them, and 'they perished from among the congregation.' The people fled, self-condemned as partakers in the sin.

"But the judgments were not ended. Fire flashing from the cloud consumed the two hundred and fifty princes who had offered incense." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 400, 401. There were 14,700 people who lost their lives in the rebellion and its aftermath.

In spite of all this, the merciful God still called them "My people." "And I will walk among you, and will be your God, and ye shall be My people." Leviticus 26:12. He loved them, protected them, gave them a leader, and organized them in tribes with a priesthood; yet they were continually ungrateful. After Korah's rebellion, they sought a reason to protest, as happened in the desert of Sin. We read: "And the people chode with Moses, and spake, saying, Would God that we had died when our brethren died before the Lord! And why have ye brought up the congregation of the Lord into this wilderness, that we and our cattle should die there?" Numbers 20:3, 4.

Having to face this great protest, "Moses and Aaron went from the presence of the assembly unto the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they fell upon their faces: and the glory of the Lord appeared unto them.

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Take the rod, and gather thou the assembly together, thou, and Aaron thy brother, and speak ye unto the rock before their eyes; and it shall give forth his water, and thou shalt bring forth to them water out of the rock: so thou shalt give the congregation and their beasts drink. And Moses took the rod from before the Lord, as He commanded him. And Moses and Aaron gathered the congregation together before the rock, and he said unto them, Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you wa-

ter out of this rock? And Moses lifted up his hand, and with his rod he smote the rock twice: and the water came out abundantly....” Numbers 20:6-11.

On this occasion, Moses, the meekest man on the earth, lost his patience and called them “rebels.” He was actually telling them the truth, but not in the right spirit. To tell the truth is right, but this is not to be done in anger. God’s command was, “Speak to the Rock.” Moses should not have smitten it, because the Rock or Stone represented Christ. Moses committed another mistake when he said, “Must we fetch you water out of this rock?” Moses spoke passionately; he knew that it was God and not he and his brother who had power. He could not fetch water out of the rock; only God could do that. The work of saving thirsty souls is solely God’s prerogative, not man’s; therefore God told Moses, “Speak ye unto the rock.”

Of this experience the Spirit of prophecy states: “From the smitten rock in Horeb first flowed the living stream that refreshed Israel in the desert. During all their wanderings, wherever the need existed, they were supplied with water by a miracle of God’s mercy.... Wherever in their journeyings they wanted water, there from the clefts of the rock it gushed out beside their encampment.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

“It was Christ, by the power of His word, that caused the refreshing stream to flow for Israel. ‘They drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.’ 1 Corinthians 10:4. He was the source of all temporal as well as spiritual blessings. Christ, the true Rock, was with them in all their wanderings. ‘They thirsted not when He led them through the deserts: He caused the waters to flow out of the rock for them; He clave the rock also, and the waters gushed out.’ ‘They ran in the dry places like a river.’ Isaiah 48:21; Psalm 105:41.

“The smitten rock was a figure of Christ, and through this symbol the most precious spiritual truths are taught.” —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 411.

How can we speak to the Rock today? Do we realize who the Rock is? “... And did all drink the same spiritual drink: for they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them: and that Rock was Christ.” 1 Corinthians 10:4.

To speak to the Rock, the Cornerstone or living Stone, means to pray and surrender ourselves to Him. A Christian will not smite the Rock, because this will shut him out of the promised land. The Lord says in His word, “And whosoever shall fall on this Stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Matthew 21:44.

The Cornerstone in the New Testament

Jesus said to Peter: “And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build My church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Matthew 16:18. The church built upon the Rock or Cornerstone—even if it is persecuted, ill treated, or slandered—will not be destroyed.

“How feeble the church appeared when Christ spoke these words! There was only a handful of believers, against whom all the power of demons and evil men would be directed; yet the followers of Christ were not to fear. Built upon the Rock of their strength, they could not be overthrown.

“For six thousand years, faith has builded upon Christ. For six thousand years the floods and tempests of satanic wrath have beaten upon the Rock of our salvation; but it stands unmoved.” —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 413.

This Rock, the chosen and precious Cornerstone, has united the hearts of men who were far apart and enemies to one another—the Jews and Gentiles—into one people. Therefore, we now confidently go forward on the same platform of truth, sure that by His grace the Scripture will be fulfilled which proclaims: “Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Sion a chief Corner Stone, elect, precious: and he that believeth on Him shall not be confounded.” 1 Peter 2:6.

“Upon the foundation that Christ Himself had laid, the apostles built the church of God. In the Scriptures the figure of the erection of a temple is frequently used to illustrate the building of the church....

“In the quarry of the Jewish and the Gentile world the apostles labored,

bringing out stones to lay upon the foundation. In his letter to the believers at Ephesus, Paul said, ‘Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God; and are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone; in whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: in whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.’ Ephesians 2:19-22....

“One after another the foremost of the builders fell by the hand of the enemy. Stephen was stoned; James was slain by the sword; Paul was beheaded; Peter was crucified; John was exiled. Yet the church grew. New workers took the place of those who fell, and stone after stone was added to the building. Thus slowly ascended the temple of the church of God.” —*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 595-597.

Just as they did, we will also have to face many difficulties in the church and in our personal lives. We will be shaken and tested before entering Canaan. If we endure until the end and by God’s grace are covered by the robe of Christ’s righteousness in the investigative judgment, then, under the power of the latter rain we will advance in His work and meet in the promised land. Be of good courage, beloved brothers and sisters! The end is very near! The moment will come soon when the militant church will become the triumphant church!

Looking at the near future, we can see the Lamb of God with the redeemed ones who have His name and the name of His Father written in their foreheads. By faith we hear the harps playing and innumerable voices singing a new song of redemption. Speaking of the 144,000, John testified: “These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first fruits unto God and to the Lamb.” Revelation 14:4.

Standing firmly upon the Cornerstone that pardons all our confessed sins, we shall be there, because He will keep us until we meet on Mount Zion. Amen.

The Church Militant

By Dai Chun Kang, South Korea

God's plan

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God." Ephesians 3:9, 10.

God had a plan from the very foundation of the world. It reveals His wisdom and love to the entire world and to the powers in heavenly places. He established His church on earth to accomplish this plan.

"From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency. The members of the church, those whom He has called out of darkness into His marvelous light, are to show forth His glory. The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10." *—The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

The church is the community of all who are redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. He is the Head, the church is His body, and every individual in the body constitutes a part of it. Thus, in completing the plan of redemption, Christ and church have the same objectives and share the same destiny.

"For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ." "And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it." "For we are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." 1 Corinthians 12:12, 26; Ephesians 5:30.

We need to understand that if the church were not to gain the victory in

the controversy between good and evil, all the sacrifices, the death of Christ, and the plan of God would be for nothing.

There are times when we may need to amputate an arm or a leg because of disease to preserve life when it is threatened. But it is not possible to separate the head from the body in such a case, for this would cause immediate death. Likewise, it is absolutely impossible to separate Christ from the church when it comes to the plan of salvation, because He is the Head and the church is His body. Christ and His church make up one body—one community.

"Very close and sacred is the relation between Christ and His church—He the Bridegroom, and the church the bride; He the Head, and the church the body. Connection with Christ, then, involves connection with His church." *—Education*, p. 268.

"Christ and His church are inseparable." *—Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 418.

One body and one church

God's church on earth was purchased with the blood of His own dear Son. "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which He hath purchased with His own blood." Acts 20:28. Christ gave His own life for the church. "Even as Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it." Ephesians 5:25.

It is the church's privilege to know that Christ died not only for individuals but for the entire church (the whole community). And further, "The plan of redemption had a yet broader and deeper purpose than the salvation of man. It was not for this alone that Christ came to the earth; it was not merely that the inhabitants of this little world might regard the law of God as it should be regarded; but it was to vin-

dicate the character of God before the universe." *—Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 68.

How great it would be if we all understood that the church was organized for a purpose greater and deeper than simply the salvation of man! The church has a very high calling—to vindicate God's law and to reveal His character to the whole world. How wonderful it is that we as members of the church were purchased with His precious blood! And remember that as a head has only one body, so God has only one church.

"God has a church on earth who are lifting up the downtrodden law, and presenting to the world the Lamb of God that taketh away the sins of the world. The church is the depository of the wealth of the riches of the grace of Christ, and through the church eventually will be made manifest the final and full display of the love of God to the world that is to be lightened with its glory....

"Consider, my brethren and sisters, that the Lord has a people, a chosen people, His church, to be His own, His own fortress, which He holds in a sin-stricken, revolted world; and He intended that no authority should be known in it, no laws be acknowledged by it, but His own." *—Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers*, pp. 50, 16.

The church militant

God's church on earth is still militant, not the church triumphant. "Has God no living church? He has a church, but it is the church militant, not the church triumphant." *—Last Day Events*, p. 52.

What is meant by the church militant, or the struggling church? We understand from Revelation 12:7 that there was a struggle in heaven between Christ and Satan; the battle between evil and good originated there. But by the transgression of Adam and Eve, the battlefield was transferred to this earth;

and it continues here, with the church heavily involved.

We know that the warfare that started in heaven was over the issue of God's law. Satan rebelled against the love, wisdom, and reign of God and brought accusations against His character before the angels and the inhabitants of the universe. He claimed that God's law, the transcript of His character, is imperfect and cannot be observed unless it is changed.

"From the first the great controversy had been upon the law of God. Satan had sought to prove that God was unjust, that His law was faulty, and that the good of the universe required it to be changed. In attacking the law he aimed to overthrow the authority of its Author." —*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 69.

"Satan had claimed that it was impossible for man to obey God's commandments; and in our own strength it is true that we cannot obey them. But Christ came in the form of humanity, and by His perfect obedience He proved that humanity and divinity combined can obey every one of God's precepts." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 314.

Joining the war

The church plays a pivotal role in this controversy between good and evil. Christ came to this earth, taking on human nature; and He obeyed the law and lived a sinless life in victory. For this reason, it was possible for Him to declare, "Which of you convinceth Me of sin?" "For the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me." John 8:46; 14:30.

The church of God on earth should be able to say the very same thing! This is the will of God and the essence of the plan of salvation. "There was in Him nothing that responded to Satan's sophistry. He did not consent to sin. Not even by a thought did He yield to temptation. So it may be with us. Christ's humanity was united with divinity; He was fitted for the conflict by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. And He came to make us partakers of the divine nature...."

"The Saviour's life of obedience maintained the claims of the law; it proved that the law could be kept in

humanity, and showed the excellence of character that obedience would develop. All who obey as He did are likewise declaring that the law is 'holy, and just, and good.' Romans 7:12. On the other hand, all who break God's commandments are sustaining Satan's claim that the law is unjust, and cannot be obeyed. Thus they second the deceptions of the great adversary, and cast dishonor upon God. They are the children of the wicked one, who was the first rebel against God's law." —*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 123, 309.

The church today needs to resist strongly the pessimistic idea that God's law cannot be obeyed. How surprising it is that most Christians—yes, those who profess to believe in Christ—actually take this position and stand on the side of Satan!

Struggling in a generation of iniquity

The church of God should truly understand what it means to enlist divine power to uphold His law—the moral standard. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12. We are living in a time when iniquity abounds. The observance of the Sabbath is under particular attack by the powers of darkness; and on this point, the church will contend with them.

"Far more sacredness is attached to the Sabbath than is given it by many professed Sabbath keepers. The Lord has been greatly dishonored by those who have not kept the Sabbath according to the commandment, either in the letter or in the spirit. He calls for a reform in the observance of the Sabbath." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 353.

"... I was shown a company who were howling in agony. On their garments was written in large characters, 'Thou art weighed in the balance, and found wanting.'... I saw that they had drunk of the deep waters, and fouled the residue with their feet—trodden the Sabbath underfoot—and that was why they were weighed in the balance and found wanting." —*Early Writings*, p. 37.

The servant of God saw a crowd wailing because they had lost salvation, and the reason was that they were declared to be found wanting because

they had trodden upon the holy Sabbath. This is a warning to the church today. It should be instant in instructing the people to observe the holy Sabbath according to the perfect witness of the word and the Spirit. Let us remember that God's holy law is complete and perfect, serving the happiness and well being of mankind. "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath." Mark 2:27. The church should be very courageous in standing against the present generation of prevailing iniquity.

Struggling against falsehood

Satan is the father of lies. "Satan has wrought with deceiving power, bringing in a multiplicity of errors that obscure truth." —(Letter 43, 1895) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1094.

"It is through false theories and traditions that Satan gains his power over the mind. By directing men to false standards, he misshapes the character." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671. The church should teach the present truth clearly, including such basics as the three angels' messages, righteousness by faith, Christ Our Righteousness, the heavenly sanctuary, the investigative judgment, the sealing of the 144,000, the message of the angel of Revelation 18, the latter rain and loud cry, etc.

"The doctrines must be plainly understood. The men accepted to teach the truth must be anchored; then their vessel will hold against storm and tempest, because the anchor holds them firmly. The deceptions will increase." —(Letter 1, 1897) *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 1, p. 1114.

Satan will do everything he can to gain a foothold through false doctrines, to lead the hearts of men from the truth, and to deceive the elect of God. The church should be awake and resisting false doctrine through the power of the word and the Holy Spirit.

Church of love

Before ascending to heaven, Jesus gave a special commandment to the disciples: "A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one

another. By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another." John 13:34, 35.

Jesus was clear that His followers are to love each other as He loved them. Consider how Jesus loved the disciples. Think about the case of Judas Iscariot, who would betray and sell himself and his Master to the enemy. "The Son of man goeth as it is written of Him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born." Matthew 26:24.

Jesus knew what Judas was going to do and that he would not be saved. But Jesus loved him until the end and spared no effort and sacrifice to save him. This is how we are to love each other and every soul we meet. In the church, there are people with varying personalities and defects, just as was the case with the twelve sons of Jacob and Jesus' twelve disciples. Very likely there are brothers and sisters whom you do not feel kindly toward and who repeatedly offend you. You may not feel like loving these people. But what is the command of Jesus? "Love one another as I have loved you."

Dear brothers and sisters! Do you profess to keep the holy commandments? You may consider, as did the rich young ruler in the time of Jesus, that you have never committed adultery, murdered anyone, stolen anything, or lied, and that you honor your parents and keep the Sabbath day holy. "When Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing." Luke 18:22. Jesus asks us to love others as He loved us. Many people read this and think, How on earth can I love a person whom I do not want to love? Oh, that's difficult! Then they go away in sorrow, as did the rich ruler.

But consider this: God is love. His character is love, and His law is love. And there is more. His work of creation is love, and His work of redemption is love. He rules all the worlds, and the plan of salvation to overcome sin testifies that He is love.

God's love that gave His only Son "while we were yet sinners" (Romans 5:8) and the very same love that was manifested on the cross "when we were enemies" (Romans 5:10) is actually His law and commandments. Only

those who possess such love are the people who keep the commandments of God. Are we one of those people?

Taking up the battle with the armor of righteousness

"Clad in the armor of Christ's righteousness, the church is to enter upon her final conflict. 'Fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners' (Song of Solomon 6:10), she is to go forth into all the world, conquering and to conquer." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 725.

The last remnant church will be clad with the armor of Christ's righteousness. The spirit of Christ, who prayed for His enemies, will be manifested in the spirit of every Christian. In this way, a final witness will be given to the world and the powers in heavenly places that God is love and His holy law can be obeyed.

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted." —*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

Do not forget God's purpose in establishing the church. "From the beginning it has been God's plan that through His church shall be reflected to the world His fullness and His sufficiency.... The church is the repository of the riches of the grace of Christ; and through the church will eventually be made manifest, even to 'the principalities and powers in heavenly places,' the final and full display of the love of God. Ephesians 3:10." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 9.

Then the head of Satan will be bruised, and death will be abolished. "The church will yet see troublous times. She will prophesy in sackcloth. But although she must meet heresies and persecutions, although she must battle with the infidel and the apostate, yet by the help of God she is bruising the head of Satan." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 594.

For this purpose, let us—individually and collectively—resist evil today and practice love in order to enlighten the whole world with God's glory.

"Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and

with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself." Luke 10:27. Let us pray earnestly and labor so the church where we belong will truly reflect the love of the infinite God, which will be accomplished solely through His great power and Holy Spirit. Amen.

"The truth is soon to triumph gloriously, and all who now choose to be laborers together with God will triumph with it. The time is short; the night soon cometh when no man can work. Let those who are rejoicing in the light of present truth now make haste to impart the truth to others. The Lord is inquiring: 'Whom shall I send?' Those who wish to sacrifice for the truth's sake are now to respond: 'Here am I; send me.' Isaiah 6:8.

"Let those who bear responsibilities remember that it is the Holy Spirit who is to do the fashioning. It is the Lord who controls. We are not to try to mold, according to our own ideas, those for whom we work, but to let Christ do the molding. He follows no human pattern. He works according to His own mind and Spirit. It is man's work to reveal to the world that which Christ has placed in his heart; through His grace man becomes a partaker of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust. The higher powers of the one who receives Christ are strengthened and ennobled, and he receives a fitness for God's service." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 9, p. 135.

The Church Triumphant

By Idel Suarez, Jr., U.S.A.

Two lords but one heart

Alexander the Great was at war with Darius, the last emperor of the Persian Empire. Darius saw that his end was near, and so he offered a truce to Alexander. Darius sent Alexander a message: "Let us reign together over the entire world." Alexander answered, "Since two suns do not rule the sky, neither can two lords rule the earth." He went on to defeat Darius and later took his daughter as his wife.

In like manner, two lords cannot govern our hearts or our minds. Jesus said, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon." Matthew 6:24.

While each of our three major enemies—sin, the world, and the devil—tempt us to make a truce, we need to reply as did Alexander: "*Two lords cannot rule my heart.*" There can be no compromise with sin, with the world, or with demons.

"There is victory for all who strive lawfully, in perfect harmony with the law of God. They will triumph over all opposition. As they carry forward God's work in the face of all foes, they will be given the guardianship of holy angels....

"Hold fast the Word of life. The tempest of opposition will spend itself by its own fury. The clamor will die away. Carry forward the Master's work bravely and cheerfully. The Father above, who watches over His chosen ones with the tenderest solicitude, will bless the efforts made in His name. His work will never cease until its completion amid the triumphant shout, 'Grace, grace unto it.'"
—(*The Signs of the Times*, November 14, 1900) *Ye Shall Receive Power*, p. 371.

The triumphant rider on the white horse

Historians tell us that many great warriors rode white horses. Cyrus the Persian had a white horse. Alexander had

a white horse. Napoleon had a white horse. George Washington galloped on a white horse. Perhaps the white horse was a symbol of majesty and triumph.

Similarly, in vision the apostle John saw the triumphs of the gospel in the time of the apostolic church as symbolized by a rider on a white horse having a bow in his hand and a crown on his head. In a way, those first Christians foreshadowed the last Christians who will compose the triumphant church. The early Christians received the early rain. They took the gospel message *to every nation—in a single generation*. They were able to reveal the glory of God to the then-known world. "And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer." Revelation 6:2.

Paul wrote that, in his day, "the gospel, which ye have heard,... was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister." Colossians 1:23.

"The commission that Christ gave to the disciples, they fulfilled. As these messengers of the cross went forth to proclaim the gospel, there was such a revelation of the glory of God as had never before been witnessed by mortal man. By the cooperation of the divine Spirit, the apostles did a work that shook the world. To every nation was the gospel carried in a single generation. Glorious were the results that attended the ministry of the chosen apostles of Christ." —*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 593.

Likewise, the last generation of Christians, known as reformers and members of the militant church, are destined to receive the latter rain. They will preach the gospel to every nation and to every creature. "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come." Matthew 24:14.

The banner of both the militant and the triumphant church

Looking at the last Christians, the author of the Song of Solomon described the believers as being like a beautiful, orderly army. "Who is she that looketh forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, and terrible as an army with banners?" Song of Solomon 6:10.

The banner of both the militant and the triumphant church is Jesus Christ. It is a banner stained with blood—the blood of Calvary. It is a banner that says, "*Jehovah Nissi—The Lord is my banner.*" As with any army, the church's commission is to move the banner forward and upward—to raise the banner of truth, to win more ground for the King and Lord of heaven and earth.

When the Americans reached the moon on that memorable day on July 20, 1969, aboard Apollo 11, their lunar lander was named Eagle. As Neil Armstrong placed an American flag on the moon, He claimed it for his country. Look at this interesting verse in Obadiah 1:4: "Though thou exalt thyself as the eagle, and though thou set thy nest among the stars, thence will I bring thee down, saith the Lord."

But we have a different banner in the spiritual realm. The banner of Jesus must be set up in the hearts and minds of men and women. Jesus must be first and foremost for those who wish to pass to higher ground, to other worlds, to other galaxies, to another different dimension that is beyond the first and second heaven, reaching into the third heaven where God resides.

What jubilation gripped America when the astronauts reached the moon! Yet what far greater joy there will be in the universe when the elect reach paradise beyond Orion in the third heaven!

Paul, like John, was taken in vision to the heavenly paradise. "I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I can-

not tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter." 2 Corinthians 12:1-4.

Words cannot describe the glory, joy, splendor, and ecstasy which the believing saints will experience in the third heaven beyond the Milky Way Galaxy. In chariots of fire, with the holy angels, the Lord's missionary army will be guided through the expanse of the universe into another dimension—paradise.

What are you doing to carry the banner of truth, share the gospel with every creature, and thus usher in the church triumphant? Are you part of the Lord's army which is marching to the heavenly Zion?

The church triumphant defined

The church triumphant is spoken of as the church of heaven, because "then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." 1 Corinthians 15:54. Those of earth's last generation will have reflected the glory of God in their characters before the world. They are the faithful, obedient, perfected followers of Jesus. Before they stand before Him in glory, they will have received the seal of the living God in their foreheads. They are pictured as being with Jesus in the heavenly Zion. They are redeemed to dwell with God for eternity because they have overcome while still upon earth.

"The remnant are to overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony. Some expect to overcome alone by the blood of the Lamb, without making any special effort of their own. I saw that God has been merciful in giving us the power of speech. He has given us a tongue, and we are accountable to Him for its use. We should glorify God with our mouth, speaking in honor of the truth and of His unbounded mercy, and overcome by the word of our testimony through the blood of the Lamb." —*Early Writings*, p. 114.

"And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with Him an hundred forty and four thousand, hav-

ing His Father's name written in their foreheads. And I heard a voice from heaven, as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of a great thunder: and I heard the voice of harpers harping with their harps: And they sung as it were a new song before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: and no man could learn that song but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth. These are they which were not defiled with women; for they are virgins. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the firstfruits unto God and to the Lamb. And in their mouth was found no guile: for they are without fault before the throne of God." Revelation 14:1-5.

Some have already crossed the threshold of paradise. Enoch, Moses, Elijah, and the 24 elders are tokens of all the redeemed who will one day live in the presence of God. With our crucified and risen Saviour they await the day when all the other members of the church triumphant can join them and the angelic host who ever serve God and carry out His holy will on high. But now these heavenly watchers, who are spoken of as already being members of the church triumphant, seek to draw near us. And for what purpose? "The members of the church triumphant—the church in heaven—will be permitted to draw near to the members of the church militant, to aid them in their necessity. Let us ever remember that we are laborers together with God." —*The Southern Watchman*, September 8, 1903.

Those who have lifted the banner of Jesus, living His life on earth and sharing His message with others on this planet, are candidates for the church triumphant. Only those who are faithful in living the three angels' messages will live to see Christ return or be resurrected during the special resurrection to see the white cloud and the Son of man coming in glory to glorify those who have lived and worked to share the gospel.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:

Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them. And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle." Revelation 14:12-14.

"The work is soon to close. The members of the church militant who have proved faithful will become the church triumphant." —*Evangelism*, p. 707.

"The church upon the earth is not perfect. The church militant is not the church triumphant. Earth is not heaven." —*The Ellen G. White 1888 Materials*, p. 249.

The secret of triumph

The apostle Paul wrote that it is only in Christ that one can triumph. Christ Jesus is the secret of triumph. "Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of His knowledge by us in every place." 2 Corinthians 2:14.

When he wrote those words to the Corinthian church, the apostle had a vivid picture of the Roman armies returning from conquest to the city of Rome. As they entered the city, they led slaves and prisoners. Some would be released; others, sacrificed. Virgins elegantly dressed and carrying incense would run between the soldiers. To the Roman soldiers and centurions, this incense was the savor of life unto life. But the same incense was a savor of death to the captives.

Incense is a symbol of Jesus, whose life was one of prayer. The frankincense presented to Him by the wise men foreshadowed that His life would be a life of prayer—public and private, believing prayer. He was also given gold. Gold symbolizes faith and love. It is spiritual gold which Jesus offers the Laodicean church. His life was one of loving service to the poor in spirit, the outcasts of society, the prisoners, the sick, and the forgotten. His life was one of faith which wrought miracles for the blessing of society and the glory of God. The secret of triumph in this life, which prepares us for the life to come, is secret, believing prayer. This prepares us to share the gospel and obtain the victory.

"Do not neglect secret prayer. Plead as earnestly as you would if your mortal life were at stake. Remain before God until unutterable longings for salvation are begotten within you, and the sweet evidence is obtained of pardoned sin. Do not lay off your armor or leave the battlefield until you have obtained the victory, and can triumph in your Redeemer." —*The Signs of the Times*, May 1, 1884.

Do you remember what Joshua did before crossing the Jordan, before going into the promised land? He went aside and prayed secretly to God. He prayed earnestly, believing that God would hear him and help him. What was the result? The Lord led the Israelite army around Jericho and the walls came tumbling down. Israel triumphed over their enemies and consecrated the first fruit of their conquest to God. They were victorious.

Likewise, we need to pray more in secret prayer to prepare to share the gospel and overcome all evil. Secret prayer will prepare the militant church to become the triumphant church.

"That prayer which comes forth from an earnest, believing heart is the effectual, fervent prayer that availeth much. God does not always answer our prayers as we expect, for we may not ask what would be for our highest good; but in His infinite love and wisdom He will give us those things which we most need. Happy the minister who has a faithful Aaron and Hur to strengthen his hands when they become weary, and to hold them up by faith and prayer. Such a support is a powerful aid to the servant of Christ in his work, and will often make the cause of truth to triumph gloriously." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 4, p. 531.

Look at Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith. He struggled in prayer with God. He cried and even shed large drops of blood to obtain the victory. "The sins of the world were upon Him. He was suffering in man's stead as a transgressor of His Father's law. Here was the scene of temptation. The divine light of God was receding from His vision, and He was passing into the hands of the powers of darkness. In His soul anguish He lay prostrate on the cold earth. He was realizing His Father's frown. He had taken the

cup of suffering from the lips of guilty man, and proposed to drink it Himself, and in its place give to man the cup of blessing." —*God's Amazing Grace*, p. 69.

He became our substitute, our surety, and our example. If Jesus needed to wrestle in secret prayer to be victorious, how much do we need to do so today as we end another year and prepare to enter a new year of life?

"Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered; And being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." Hebrews 5:7-9.

A glimpse of the church triumphant

My father tells me that when he was a little boy, he remembers the day World War II ended. He recalls hearing train whistles and church bells; there was a widespread atmosphere of joy everywhere. People seemed to jump for joy, clap, and laugh. Everyone seemed happy that peace had finally arrived and that the Axis powers had surrendered to the Allies.

And oh, what joy the news of the end of the great controversy between God and Satan will bring to the un-fallen worlds. What hymns of gladness will be sung by both the redeemed and the angelic host!

Why don't we peek as if through a keyhole into the future and behold the church triumphant? What a day of rejoicing that will be! It is compared in scripture with a joyful marriage feast—a huge celebration.

A minister's wife once said that when we all get to heaven, there will be three major surprises. The first surprise will be to notice that people we never thought would make it will be among the triumphant saints. The second surprise will be to find out that people we thought would be there are not. And the last and greatest surprise will be to find ourselves in that glorious place.

Imagine the saints dressed in pure white robes, crowned with a golden miter, holding palm branches in one

hand and harps in the other. See them literally walking on water over a sea of glass and arrayed to sing the song of Moses and the Lamb. Each one will cast his and her crown at the feet of Jesus. Each will declare that He is worthy to receive all honor, adoration, and praise.

Later, Jesus will lead them to the tree of life, and they will taste the same fruit which Adam and Eve ate in the garden of paradise. The redeemed saints will taste the hidden manna. Each of them will receive a little stone and a new name. They will be in ecstasy as they behold the green pastures, the rolling hills, the meadows full of flowers which never fade. What else will they see? The sky will have a special color. There will be no night. Before them will be the heavenly Zion with the New Jerusalem, where every saint has a special residence. Every saint will have an awesome throne in God's grand throne room. The gates of the city are made of gigantic pearls. The walls are transparent gold. The streets are made of gold richer than that of Ophir.

The apostle Paul, beholding eternity and the reward of the church triumphant, quoted the evangelist Isaiah, saying: "But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God." 1 Corinthians 2:9, 10.

The best is just ahead. We have such wonderful promises through Jesus our Lord and General. Why not make a commitment right now to become people of prayer? Why not be devoted to sharing the gospel with everyone around us? Why not enroll in the Lord's army by giving Him our hearts and allowing Him to plant the banner of Christ Our Righteousness in our hearts and minds? I pray that we will do so.

Let us repeat the prayer of the psalmist in Psalm 106:47, 48: "Save us, O Lord our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto Thy holy name, and to triumph in Thy praise. Blessed be the Lord God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting; and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the Lord. Amen."

“Serve the Lord with Gladness”

“Your words have been stout against Me, saith the Lord. Yet ye say, What have we spoken so much against Thee? Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts? And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered. Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name. And they shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”

There are times when under adversity and sorrow, the servants of God become discouraged and despondent. They brood over their circumstances, and, contrasting their condition with the prosperity of those who have no thought or care for eternal things, they feel aggrieved. They manifest a spirit of reproach, and murmur and repine at their lot. They seem to consider that God is under special obligation to bless them and prosper their undertakings, and therefore, as they are placed in situations of trial, they grow rebellious, and look with envy on the wicked who flourish in their iniquity. They seem to regard the condition of the transgressor as preferable to their own. These bitter thoughts are suggested to the mind by the deceiver of mankind. It is his delight to stir up rebellion in the breasts of the children of God. He knows it causes them weakness, and is a source of dishonor to their God. He desires us to think that it is a vain thing to serve God, and that those who are unmindful of the claims of Heaven are more favored than those who strive to obey the commandments of God.

The psalmist David had this experience. When he looked upon the flourishing condition of the wicked he was envious of their success, and said, “Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. For all the day long have I been plagued.” But

when he went into the sanctuary, and communed with the Lord, he no longer desired the portion of the wicked; for then he understood their end. He saw that their way led to destruction at last, and their pleasure was but for a season. Envy had no more a place in his heart. His rebellious spirit bowed in humble submission to his God, and he declared, “Thou shalt guide me with Thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory.” He saw that the guidance of the Lord was of infinitely more value than all the temporal prosperity of the world; for the way of the Lord kept the feet in the paths of righteousness that lead to eternal glory.

The true servant of God will take the suggestions and temptations of Satan to the throne of grace, where peace and submission will flow into the soul. When he enters into the sanctuary he will know the end of those who have not the fear of the Lord before their eyes. The Lord has heard our murmuring. He says, “Ye have said, It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinance?” This question will present itself, with more or less force, to the minds of the people of God; but before you answer it think of the exalted honor that the God of Heaven has conferred upon you. Think how He has given His only begotten Son, that a way of salvation might be opened for you. Think how He has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light, called you to be the children of the Most High, called you to an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. Is this no compensation? no encouragement?

In these last days there is a call from Heaven inviting you to keep the statutes and ordinances of the Lord. The world has set at naught the law of Jehovah; but God will not be left without a witness to His righteousness, or without a people in the earth to proclaim His truth. The door of the heavenly sanctuary has been opened, and no man can shut it, and the light of the Holy of Holies is shining into the world. The people of God have had their attention called to the ark of the testimony, and the law within it has been revealed with its unalterable precepts. In holy vision, John saw the remnant church on the earth, in an age of lawlessness, and he points them out

in unmistakable language: “Here is the patience of the saints; here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus.” They are in harmony with that law that rests in the ark in the most holy place of the heavenly sanctuary. The whole duty of man is summed up in its sacred precepts. In the heart of the law is the commandment enjoining upon man the observance of the Sabbath of Jehovah, which the world and the church have trodden under their feet. For centuries men have walked in blindness concerning the true Sabbath, and the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now is the day of reformation, and He calls upon men everywhere to repent. When the light of God’s disregarded commandment shone upon the path of those who sincerely loved God, they delayed not to keep His statutes. They realized that they must come out from the world and be separate, and touch not the unclean, that they might claim the promise, “I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be My sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty.” They became the repairers of the breach that has been made in the law of God, because they turned away their feet from the Sabbath, from doing their pleasure on God’s holy day, and called the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the Lord, honorable, and did honor Him, not speaking their own words or finding their own pleasure.

Now the question is, Will we ally ourselves with those who keep the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus? Will we cease to trample upon the Sabbath of the Lord our God? We want to be sure that we are the children of light; that we are following in the footsteps of our Redeemer and Example. The cross lies in our pathway, but shall we not take it up and bear it for His sake who bore the cross for us? All who are seeking to serve God will have trials; but shall we say, What does it profit to come out from the world and be separate? Shall we call the proud happy? Shall we say that those who work wickedness are set up? that those who tempt God are even delivered, and we are left unaided in the midst of sorrows?

This is the evil that will prevail in the hearts of many. They will grow despon-

dent in their service, because they are not prospered as the wicked are. Some are acting on the suggestions of the enemy today, and are distrusting their best Friend. But we want you to understand that if you rely on God in your trial, with living faith, not one of His gracious promises will fail. The Lord is acquainted with all our sorrows and self-denials. Those who have embraced the truth in all ages have had to suffer for its sake, and shall we be exempt? Let the mind dwell upon the sufferings of our precious Saviour. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." He made Himself of "no reputation," took upon Him the "form of a servant," and humbled Himself "even to the death of the cross." "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen; but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."

There must be a coming up, lest Satan divert the mind from the contemplation of the spiritual and eternal, to the earthly and temporal. God is willing to give you grace and strength for every time of need, if you seek for it with a sincere heart.

We read that "they that feared the Lord spake often one to another; and the Lord hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." When the people that are engaged in the service of God come together, they are to speak words that will encourage and comfort and upbuild their brethren in the faith. They are not to find fault with their lot, and question the dealing and work of God. They are not to murmur against each other, and magnify their trials and sacrifices, thus leaving the impression that it is unprofitable to serve God. Let them remember the loving-kindnesses of the Lord, and the multitude of His tender mercies, and, out of hearts melted with gratitude and love, let them praise His name and inquire, "What shall I render unto the Lord for all His benefits?" Angels record the words of your lips in the books of remembrance. God hearkens

and hears the utterances of His servants; and those who appreciate His mercy and love His name "shall be Mine, saith the Lord of hosts, in that day when I make up My jewels; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him."

Do not say it is a vain thing to serve God. Have respect unto the recompense of the reward. Even in this life you are to cast all your care upon Him; for He careth for you. His promise is, that if you seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all necessary things shall be added unto you. Not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, and the hairs of your head are all numbered.

The glory of the eternal world has been opened before me, and I want to tell you that Heaven is worth your winning. An infinite price has been paid that you might share in its indescribable glories, and enjoy its exalted privileges. The God of Heaven did not spare even His only Son, that rebel man might be restored to the favor of Heaven; and shall we hesitate to yield to Him grateful and wholehearted service? Oh, that no word of murmuring might ever escape the lips of those who have tasted of the heavenly gift! This is no time to ask, What does it profit to keep the ordinances of our God? The celestial city is just before us. If you could get one glimpse into the glories of that place, you would not count any loss too great if you might only walk its streets of transparent gold, and sing the song of triumph with the white-robed company of Heaven. You would not wish for the prosperity of earth, or be envious of the wicked.

There are traces, even amid the havoc that sin has wrought, of what God has done to make the earth beautiful. I enjoy these prospects of loveliness in nature. My mind is carried up through nature to nature's God, and I adore Him who has created such scenes of beauty; but I know that if I love God and keep His commandments there is "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory" awaiting me in the kingdom of Heaven. Beautiful as are the landscapes of earth, "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him." God designs that we should contemplate heavenly things, and that we should dwell upon the attributes of His character, till we see matchless

charms in our God, and become changed into the same image. When we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, we shall have no disposition to murmur at our lot; the praise of God will be welling up in our hearts continually. The solemn responsibilities that God has laid upon us for the salvation of souls will absorb our whole heart and mind, and we shall have no time to talk of our trials and sacrifices. Oh! we must wash our robes of character from every stain, in the blood of the Lamb, and prepare for the great day of God. We must not wait till the Lord comes in the clouds of heaven before we make our calling and election sure.

Enoch walked with God three hundred years before his translation to Heaven. He had the daily testimony that his ways pleased God. Why should not every Christian follow Christ as did this faithful servant? Do you love Jesus a great way off? Do the tidings of His coming seem a message of joy to your heart? Do you find His service a profitable service? How can you win others to the truth, if your own heart is not in the work, and you do not see matchless charms in your Redeemer? The prayer of Christ was, that He might be glorified in those He had left upon earth to carry on His work, and we do not glorify our Redeemer when we complain of the difficulties of the way, and murmur at the providences of God.

Jesus is soon coming in power and great glory, and we are not to sit down in idle expectation of this event. We are to show our faith by our works. He has committed to every man his work. A great truth has been given to us, and the world must be warned of the fast-approaching judgments. Every talent must be given out to the exchangers, that it may be used for the good of man and the glory of God. And those who are faithful to the small trusts of earth, will be made rulers of many things in the eternal world. Now we have the precious privileges of probation. We have the opportunity of laboring in the greatest cause that ever engaged the attention of the servants of God. Let us not spend these valuable moments in discontent at our lot. Let us praise God, and speak often one to another and to all that we meet, of His marvelous truth. The Lord will count such among His jewels, and will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. —Ellen G. White, *The Signs of the Times*, February 3, 1888.



“The church of God below is one with the church of God above. Believers on the earth and the beings in heaven who have never fallen constitute one church. Every heavenly intelligence is interested in the assemblies of the saints who on earth meet to worship God.

In the inner court of heaven they listen to the testimony of the witnesses for Christ in the outer court on earth, and the praise and thanksgiving from the worshipers below is taken up in the heavenly anthem, and praise and rejoicing sound through the heavenly courts because Christ has not died in vain for the fallen sons of Adam. While angels drink from the fountainhead, the saints on earth drink of the pure streams flowing from the throne, the streams that make glad the city of our God.”

—*Counsels for the Church*, pp. 240, 241.