

GOD'S PROVIDENCE

There is something mysterious in our world that people do not understand; even Christians fail to recognize it, and it is God's providence.

People refer to it as Good Luck or Bad Luck or that things just happened by chance.

“They could not fathom the mystery of His providence should they study with all their power for a lifetime.” Test. Vol. 4 p. 585

“There are also unsearchable mysteries in the plan of redemption, what finite minds can never comprehend... God's providence is a continual school, in which He is ever leading men to see the true aims of life.” Test. Vol. 4 p. 444

Joseph could not understand why he was sold to Egypt as a slave. Was it only because of the jealousy of his brothers, or was God behind it? Why was he put into prison for many years? Was it just the accusation of Potiphar's wife or was it the providence of God? Was it just good luck or by chance that he was promoted as Prime Minister of Egypt? Many times he must have thought about these things.

Moses could not see the purpose of caring for the sheep in the land of Midian for 40 years. He had talents to do more demanding jobs. Was this all in the plan of God or was it because of his own mistake?

“Many are dissatisfied with their lifework. It may be that their surroundings are uncongenial; their time is occupied with commonplace work, when they think themselves capable of higher responsibilities; often their efforts seem to them to be unappreciated or fruitless; their future is uncertain. Let us remember that while the work we have to do may not be our choice, it is to be accepted as God's choice for us.” M.H. p.472

It was the providence of God that Moses spent the 40 years in the commonplace work. After proving himself faithful in this humble work, the Lord called him to greater responsibility.

Millions of martyrs did not see the providence of God when they had to die for their faith. The disciples did not understand why John the Baptist had to die so soon after he had started his public labours.

But one thing we do know, that to the child of God, nothing happens without a good purpose. “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.” Rom. 8:28

Did God know that His faithful servant Job was suffering? Did Job accuse the Sabeans for killing his servants and taking away the oxen and asses? Did he accuse the Caldeans for stealing his camels? Did Job accuse Satan for his misfortune? No, Job recognized that evil men or Satan can do nothing to God's children except God permits it. Therefore he said, “The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” Job. 1:21

Before all these disasters happened to Job the Lord knew exactly what he had to suffer and He did permit Satan to influence evil men to hurt him.

When we have suffered abuse or harassment, it all began with the Lord. He gave permission to Satan, and Satan influences people to hurt us. The Lord commended the angels who protected us to step aside and permitted the evil to come upon us. But yet always there is some good purpose behind it, some reason that we do not in this life fully understand.

It is very common to accuse other people for our miseries and troubles. Husbands and wives accuse one

another for their unhappiness and therefore seek divorce. We may accuse our working companions and neighbours for offending us. Yet all these offences and hurts are in the plan of God to develop our characters for eternity. Jesus said, "Woe to the world because of offences! For it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!" Matt. 18:7

God permitted the King of Babylon to punish His people. "Behold I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the Lord, and Nebuchadnezzar the King of Babylon, My servant, and bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof." Jer. 25:9

But later Babylon was punished for the offences that they inflicted upon God's people. "Babylon is suddenly fallen and destroyed: howl for her." Jer. 51:8.

"It is because God is leading them that these things come upon them. Trials and obstacles are the Lord's chosen methods of discipline and His appointed conditions of success.... In His providence He brings these persons into different positions and varied circumstances that they may discover in their character the defects which have been concealed from their own knowledge.... Often He permits the fires of affliction to assail them that they may be purified. The fact that we are called upon to endure trials shows that the Lord Jesus sees in us something precious which He desires to develop. If He saw in us nothing whereby He might glorify His name, He would not spend time in refining us. He would not cast worthless stones into His furnace. It is valuable ore that He refines." M.H. p. 471
Instead of complaining about our hardships and trials we should be thankful for them. If we murmur as did Ancient Israel the Lord may leave us alone and we will then perish in our sins as did Old Israel.

"It is dangerous to contend with the providence of God and to be dissatisfied with almost everything, as though there had been a special arrangement of circumstances to tempt and destroy."

"The work of pruning and purifying to fit us for heaven is a great work and will cost us much suffering and trial, because our wills are not subjected to the will of Christ." Test. Vol. 3 p. 67

Jacob complained of his misfortunes, "And Jacob their father said unto them, Me have ye bereaved of my children: Joseph is not, and Simeon is not, and ye will take Simeon away: all these things are against me." Gen. 42:36

Jacob failed to see the Lord's providence. In the end he did not lose any of his children but the Lord tested him to see if he would accept these trials as Job did in the similar circumstances.

"Satan is exultant when he can lead the children of God into unbelief and despondency. He delights to see us mistrusting God, doubting His willingness and power to save us. He loves to have us feel that the Lord will do us harm by His providences. It is the work of Satan to represent the Lord as lacking in compassion and pity." S.C. p. 116

Satan seeks to make religious life to appear toilsome and difficult. He wants people to think that God only gives sorrow and troubles and he and the world give joy and enjoyment.

On the contrary, even that the way to life seems narrow, yet it is a way of joy and happiness. David writes, "Thou wilt show me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of **joy**; **at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.**" Ps. 16:11

Jesus said: "These things have I spoken unto you, that My joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full." John 15:11

The joy and peace come to us by the Comforter, the Holy Spirit. Even among the trials we may feel happiness and joy in the Lord.

Paul had learned the lesson to enjoy the persecutions and distresses, "Therefore I take pleasure in

infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.

2 Cor. 12:10

The angels of God protect us and save us from 1000 dangers. Every moment of our lives is guided by God's providence.

The purpose of God's providence is our salvation. One day in heaven the Lord will reveal to us the meaning of all our trials and sorrows. When we understand that without them we would have been lost, then we will thank God for them.

In London, England a poet William Cowper in his melancholy depression decided to commit suicide. He asked his driver to take him to the bridge over the Thames River so that he can jump down to kill himself. All evening the man drove looking for the bridge, but could not find it. Finally William told his driver to take him back home. Once at home he composed a beautiful hymn, which is in the Church hymnal #107.

“God moves in a mysterious way. His wonders to perform... “

William Cowper recognized God's providence and His loving care. The Lord is watching over us that not a hair will fall from our head without Him noticing it. And nothing will happen to us without His permission.

“Above the distractions of the earth God sits enthroned. All things are open to His divine survey, and from His great and calm eternity, He orders that which His providence sees best.” M.H. p. 417

If we only let Him guide us by His providence, we all will be in heaven one day. Let us then submit ourselves to His loving care without complaining and thank Him even if trials and affliction be our lot. AMEN

Timo Martin

BEHIND THE SCENES

Often when people hear a of a secret they have a desire to find out what that secret is. They want to know the answer and their curiosity is sometimes strong. They will go to great lengths in order to find out the answer. When a magician has done a magic trick, people want to know how he did it. What is his secret; what is happening 'behind the scenes'? Or also if they watch a film and see some spectacular event, they wonder how it was done - what is going on 'behind the scenes'? What is going on where we can't visibly see what is happening; what is the secret?

In this day and age there is much interest in spiritualism. People are delving into the unknown. They are communicating with the 'dead' or with spiritual mediums who they call their 'guides.' Although not all people are directly involved in these practices there is still a growing desire to know the future, or to have secrets revealed and have mysteries unravelled, so people go see palm readers, clairvoyants and the like, who read cards, or crystal balls to give them the answers to their questions. Unfortunately they are going to the wrong places in their search for answers.

These mediums that give the answers are not seen. They are unseen visitors who communicate through various willing persons. Sometimes their answers are partly correct, sometimes they are not. However much time and money has been spent satisfying man's desire to know the future, to receive messages from the unknown world. These spiritualistic mediums are working 'behind the scenes,' revealing secrets to people to satisfy their curiosity.

Then there are other people who believe only in what they see. They don't believe any of this spiritualism, but

neither do they believe in God. They do not have any concept of faith, or the existence of the invisible world.

Yet the invisible world is very active. What secrets does it hold? It is much more active than most give credit. While great masses in the world are going to mediums to find out what is going on behind the scenes, to have secrets revealed, we as Christians need to go to the Word of God for a full understanding.

While we know that all these practices are Satanic and things to be avoided, is it important for us to know what is going on behind the scenes in the invisible world? In Christ's day it was not very different from our day. "Christ's coming was at a time of intense worldliness. Men were subordinating the eternal to the temporal, the claims of the future to the affairs of the present. They were mistaking phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms. *They did not by faith behold the unseen world.* Satan presented before them the things of this life as all-attractive and all-absorbing, and they gave heed to his temptations." COL 366.

Since they did 'not by faith behold the unseen world,' they were mixing phantoms with realities. Do we not see this happening today? Satan has the majority of the world in his grasp because of this. People are confusing reality with their imagination. It is very important that we understand fully what is going on in the unseen world. Much light has been given to us so we do not need to be in darkness.

BEHIND THE SCENES...

After His ministry on this earth for 3 1/2 years, Jesus' disciples learned to love and appreciate His presence. They looked forward to the time when He would sit on David's throne and cast the Romans out of their city. This event never happened. Rather He was crucified at the instigation of His own people. After His resurrection, the disciples' hope was renewed once again, only to see Him this time ascend to heaven. Now they "felt as though He was far away and they had been left on their own, but He didn't abandon them without any encouragement. He left them with the words, "lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." Mat. 28:20. How could this be?

'The disciples no longer had any distrust of the future. They knew that Jesus was in heaven, and that His sympathies were with them still. They knew that they had a friend at the throne of God, and they were eager to present their requests to the Father in the name of Jesus.' DA 833.

They had time now to reflect on His teachings and they tried to bring every word and work of His into remembrance. It was then that many of His words were remembered and recorded. They recalled words such as, "It is expedient for you that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send him unto you." John 16:7. Then they began to realize that they were not really alone.

"As Christ's representatives the apostles were to make a decided impression on the world. The fact that they were humble men would not diminish their influence, but increase it; for the minds' of their hearers would be carried from them to the Saviour, who, though unseen, was still working with them." AA 22

Although Jesus was not visibly amongst His people, He was still there. He was working behind the scenes to help and encourage His followers in the battle of life.

THE BATTLE

Ever since the fall of Satan, he has been working with relentless fury to bring the entire world under his domination. Although he claimed it as rightfully his after the fall of Adam, heavenly intelligences were still in ultimate control of affairs on this earth. From the beginning of the great controversy, there was a battle, "and there was war in heaven." This war has continued on this earth. All throughout history we can read stories of human cruelty towards God's faithful followers.

For the soul of every individual, there is a battle between the forces of good and the forces of evil. It lies with us who we will choose to side with in this battle. Although the battle is still waging for a few more years, the forces of evil represent a defeated enemy who is struggling with all his might in the final few scenes to be played out on this earth's history. The forces of good have already won the victory on the cross of Calvary. Who will we side with today?

"At these gatherings we must ever remember that two forces are at work. A battle unseen by human eyes is being waged. The army of the Lord is on the ground, seeking to save souls. Satan and his host are also at work, trying in every possible way to deceive and destroy. The Lord bids us: "Put on the whole armour of God, that ye may be able

to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.” Ephesians 6:11, 12. Day by day the battle goes on. If our eyes could be opened to see the good and evil agencies at work, there would be no trifling, no vanity, no jesting or joking. If all would put on the whole armour of God and fight manfully the battles of the Lord, victories would be gained that would cause the kingdom of darkness to tremble.” 6T 41

We are not left to battle alone. Sometimes we may seem overwhelmed in this battle, and be ready to give up. Only those who, “endure unto the end,” will be saved. This is one battle from which we will not be released from while we are living on this earth. However we have been promised the help of the victorious King of the Universe, who will do all He can for our salvation, barring forcing us into submission. We simply have to accept His help and co-operate with Him.

“God knows how Satan is working, and sends his angels to watch over his children, to protect them from the Devil’s power. And the battle is constantly going on between the angels of God, and the Devil’s angels. The angels of God are clothed with a complete armour, the panoply of heaven, and, although surrounded with deadly foes, fear nothing, for they are doing the will of their loved Commander. They enter the darkest places to rescue the children of God from the snares of Satan, and their presence causes the evil angels to fall back. And as the evil angels are defeated, they utter terrible imprecations against the injustice of God, and against his angels.” 2SG277

GOD SEES ALL

It is very common in this day and age to have different habits and lifestyles in the privacy of one’s home as opposed to their public life. Also for Christians, they often put their ‘best foot forward’ while at church, but have a different way of life and way of dressing outside the church and in the privacy of their own homes. As long as nobody is watching, they feel that their lifestyle is permissible and acceptable. We know, that in reality this is a fallacy because God is everywhere and He sees all. His recording angels write down every word, thought, action and motive that we have, whether in public or in private.

Even in public it is often the case that we get so busy with the activities of this life that we forget what is going on behind the scenes and concentrate our energies only at what is seen.

“Amid the busy activity of our great cities, amid the multitudes that crowd the thoroughfares and fill the marts of trade where from morning till evening the people act as if business and sport and pleasure were all there is to life, where there are so few to contemplate unseen realities-even here heaven has still its watchers and its holy ones. There are invisible agencies observing every word and deed of human beings. In every assembly for business or pleasure, in every gathering for worship, there are more listeners than can be seen with the natural sight. Sometimes the heavenly intelligences draw aside the curtain, which hides the unseen world that our thoughts may be withdrawn from the hurry and rush of life to consider that there are unseen witnesses to all we do or say. COL 176

“Human laws, though sometimes severe, are often transgressed without detection, and hence with impunity; but not so with the law of God. The deepest midnight is no cover for the guilty one. He may think himself alone, but to every deed there is an unseen witness. The very motives of his heart are open to divine inspection. Every act, every word, every thought, is as distinctly marked as though there were only one person in the whole world, and the attention of heaven were cantered upon him”. PP 217,218

WHO CARES?

Living in eternal happiness in heaven and other parts of the universe, do those heavenly beings care much about what is happening on this one small planet in rebellion? How much does it affect their lives? Does it have any bearing on their happiness? The fact is that they have great concern and interest. They have more interest in the Great Controversy that is being played out than often we do who are living here in the midst of the conflict. Our own souls are at stake and how often we take such little interest or thought upon the seriousness of what is really going on behind the scenes.

“How few contemplate the unseen agencies. Men are acting their part either for God or for Satan, the Prince of light, or the prince of darkness. *All heaven* is intensely interested in human beings who seem to be so full of activity, and yet have no thought for the unseen. Their thoughts are not on the Word of God and its instruction. If they would appropriate the Word of God, they would be astonished that there are agencies, good and evil, observing every word and deed.” UL 84

GOD GIVES THE INCREASE

While men refuse to give God the honour that is due to Him, they cannot ignore the fact that all living things

depend on His sustenance. They try to create human theories to take God out of the picture of the history of this earth and the current maintenance of it. They think themselves all-wise and that there is a practical explanation, aside from God, for all that is taking place on earth. Even in spiritual matters there is a temptation for men to take to themselves glory that is due only to God. How often we hear of religious workers boasting of the number of souls *they* have brought to conversion and a change of life. Men are trying to place themselves above God. How foolish man is in his way of thinking.

“In the natural world unseen agencies are constantly at work to produce the essential results, but the harvest to be reaped depends upon the seed that has been sown. After man faithfully prepares the land, and plants the seed, God must work constantly to cause the seed to germinate. UL 273

THE THEATRE OF GOD

“God chose this world to be the theatre of His mighty works of grace.” TDG 84

“The world is a theatre; the actors, its inhabitants, are preparing to act their part in the last great drama. With the great masses of mankind there is no unity, except as men confederate to accomplish their selfish purposes. God is looking on. His purposes in regard to His rebellious subjects will be fulfilled. The world has not been given into the hands of men, though. God is permitting the elements of confusion and disorder to bear sway for a season. A power from beneath is working to bring about the last great scenes in the drama—Satan coming as Christ, and working with all deceivableness of 7 unrighteousness in those who are binding themselves together in secret societies. Those who are yielding to the passion for confederation are working out the plans of the enemy. The cause will be followed by the effect.” 8T27/8

This earth is a theatre... Which actor will you be? Also, in every play there are those workers behind the scenes who are taking care of the sound, the lighting, the curtains etc. In our play that we are acting in, there are also those behind the scenes, those who wish to make the play a success, and they are doing all in their power to bring this about. It is up to the actors now to cooperate with those behind the scenes.

For any play to be a success, there must be spectators. Who are the spectators? “The holy inhabitants of other worlds were watching with the deepest interest the events taking place on the earth.” PP 78

“With what intense interest was this controversy watched by the heavenly angels and the unfallen worlds, as the honour of the law was being vindicated. Not merely for this world, but for the universe of heaven, was the controversy to be forever settled.” ISM 255

However in this play, there are also those elements that are trying to bring discredit to the play. They want to see it fail.

“The confederacy of darkness was also watching for the semblance of a chance to triumph over the divine and human Substitute of the human race, that the apostate might shout, “Victory,” and the world and its inhabitants forever become his kingdom.” ISM 255

WHEN MAN SINS

When a person sins, does any one care? Are the recording angels there only to record the thoughts and actions of man, without having any feelings one way or the other? Often the sinner that is defiant will say that he is his own person and it does not matter what he does. He has to answer to no one. And also the sentiment is expressed that when a person sins he is only hurting himself. That is what we see on the visible world. When someone persists in smoking, it is likely for them to develop lung cancer. When a person kills someone, they end up in jail. When young children disobey, they receive punishment. When we hear of horrible crimes committed in various parts of the world, we often feel a sense of shock. How could a human being stoop so low as to commit such atrocities as we have seen in the past? Yet it is really a hidden dark being in the invisible world that is behind these terrible crimes.

Are we really only our own person? Does anyone care when we sin? If someone commits a terrible crime, often their loved ones get saddened. What about in the invisible world? Do they care at all? Or are they just observing the outcome of the play on this earth that the actors are playing out? Is it just curiosity on their part?

Satan’s reaction: First of all, it is Satan and his agents who are behind all sin on this earth. They cause people to sin and then love to accuse them before God as we read about Joshua the high priest, “And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.” Zech. 3:1. Satan will just as surely accuse us before the heavenly angels as he did to Joshua here.

Here is a description of Satan and his reaction when a person sins: “I was shown Satan as he once was, a happy, exalted angel. Then I was shown him as he now is. He still bears a kingly form. His features are still noble, for he is an angel fallen. But the expression of his countenance is full of anxiety, care, unhappiness, malice, hate, mischief, deceit, and every evil. That brow which was once so noble, I particularly noticed. His forehead commenced from his eyes to recede. I saw that he had so long bent himself to evil that every good quality was debased, and every evil trait was developed. His eyes were cunning, sly, and showed great penetration. His frame was large, but the flesh hung loosely about his hands and face. As I beheld him, his chin was resting upon his left hand. He appeared to be in deep thought. A smile was upon his countenance, which made me tremble, it was so full of evil and satanic slyness. This smile is the one he wears just before he makes sure of his victim, and as he fastens the victim in his snare, this smile grows horrible.” EW 152

If you read in the book of Job, the first chapter you will see how actively Satan and his host are in trying to destroy God’s people.

God’s reaction: God was very patient with Ancient Israel while they wandered in the wilderness. They were very rebellious, however God was always there for them when they repented. Yet He did feel grief, “Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.” Psalm 95:10. He is saddened when we reject His love and mercy. He offers us so much and many do not want what He has to offer.

“The crimes that are committed through love of display and love of money constitute this world a den of thieves and robbers, and cause angels to weep. But Christians are professedly not dwellers upon the earth; they are in a strange country, stopping, as it were, only for a night. Our home is in the mansions, which Jesus has gone to prepare for us. This life is but a vapour, which passes away.” 4T 490.

“While angels have been commissioned to strengthen the things that remain, to withstand and counteract your influence, they have looked with the deepest grief upon your work to dishearten and destroy. You have caused pure, sinless, holy angels to weep.” 2T 104

“Can it be that angels of God are made to weep? It is even so.

“Eternal things have little weight with the youth. Angels of God are in tears as they write in the roll the words and acts of professed Christians.” IT 505/506

“In Jerusalem, Jesus beheld a symbol of the world that had rejected and despised His grace. He was weeping, O stubborn heart, for you!” MB 151

Jesus not only weeps for us, He pleads for us and has promised help in times of sorrow and need. We are not left to suffer alone. “Let us remember that Jesus knows us individually and is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He knows the wants of each of His creatures and reads the hidden, unspoken grief of every heart. If one of the little ones for whom He died is injured, He sees it and calls the offender to account. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. He cares for His feeble, sickly, wandering sheep. He knows them all by name. The distress of every sheep and every lamb of His flock touches His heart of sympathizing love, and the cry for aid reaches His ear.” 5T 346.

“Jesus cares for each one as though there were not another individual on the face of the earth. He pleads and reasons with the sinner, and in one sense - that of having Himself borne the weakness of humanity — He puts Himself on a level with him. “Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.” 4T 294

WHEN MAN IS IN DESPAIR...

A favourite song of mine is entitled, *Tears are a Language that God Understands*. He notices every tear shed and every heartache borne and longs to comfort the sufferer if they would only turn to Him for help. “I have seen the tender love that God has for His people, and it is very great. I saw angels over the saints with their wings spread about them. Each saint had an attending angel. If the saints wept through discouragement, or were in danger, the angels that ever attended them would fly quickly upward to carry the tidings, and the angels in the city would cease to sing. Then Jesus would commission another angel to descend to encourage, watch over, and try to keep them from going out off the narrow path; but if they did not take heed to the watchful care of these angels, and would not be comforted by them, but continued to go astray, the angels would look sad and weep. They would bear the tidings upward, and all the angels in the city would weep, and then with a loud voice say, “Amen.” But if the saints fixed their eyes upon the prize before them, and glorified God by praising Him, then the angels would bear the glad tidings to the city, and the angels in the city would touch their golden harps and sing with a loud voice, “Alleluia!” and the heavenly arches would ring with their lovely songs.” GET 97

“Though He was the Son of God, yet He had taken human nature upon Him, and He was moved by human sorrow. His

tender, pitying heart is ever awakened to sympathy by suffering. He weeps with those that weep, and rejoices with those that rejoice.” DA 533

WHEN MAN OVERCOMES....

Satan’s reaction: Satan knows that His time is short and therefore, he “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour.” 1 Pet.5:8. For those that are not connected with Christ, Satan appears as a powerful enemy. Many souls have been destroyed by succumbing to this enemy. He has conquered numerous victims. Many people fear the devil and shudder at the thought of an encounter with him. We must remember that Jesus conquered him at the cross of Calvary. Yes, while he may be more powerful than man, we have a helper who is much more powerful than he is. When we call upon the help of Jesus, we can overcome any sin that Satan brings our way. Prayer is powerful enough to send Satan running.

“Satan trembles and flees before the weakest soul who finds refuge in that mighty name.” DA 130

“Satan is enraged at the sound of fervent prayer, for he knows that he will suffer loss.” 4SG 84

God’s reaction: “I say unto you, that likewise joy shall be in heaven over one sinner that repenteth, more than over ninety and nine just persons, which need no repentance.” Luke 15:7

“The connection of heavenly angels with the Christian’s work is here brought clearly to light. There is more joy in the presence of the angels in heaven over one sinner that repents than over ninety and nine just persons who need no repentance. There is joy with the Father and with Christ. All heaven is interested in the salvation of man. He who is instrumental in saving a soul is at liberty to rejoice; for angels of God have witnessed his efforts with the most intense interest, and rejoice with him in his success.” 4T 263

“As a bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.” Isa. 62:5.

With all this help at our fingertips, why do many not use this help that is so freely available? Satan knows the power of prayer so therefore he makes sure to keep as many as he can from using this power. He makes people too busy to take time for agonizing prayer. He soothes their conscience that a quick prayer in the morning and evening is all that is needed to maintain a connection above. He causes many to doubt that it is even necessary to pray. “Angels marvel that we pray so little. But a word of prayer to the Lord Jesus goes like an arrow to the throne” of God, and angels of God are sent to the field of battle.” HP 297

“The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.” Psalm 34:7.

MAJORITY

Where are the majority of the people today? Often God’s church is ridiculed due to its small numbers. Other religious bodies, as well as worldly people, scoff at the few faithful followers of Christ today, mocking them with the idea that they can have no impact or influence in the world due to their small numbers. While men are defying God and His law today, the rest of the universe looks on wonderingly.

Who is really in the majority? Is it the worldly people on this earth? They may think they are so good and so great. They have made so many advances in scientific research and technology. Man is so wise in this day and age and is increasing in knowledge. Behind the scenes though, mankind on this planet is really in the minority. There is a vast number of faithful angels as well as unfallen inhabitants on other planets who far outnumber the wicked on this earth. Do we want to be on the side of the majority? Or on the side of the small minority in this universe that has rebelled against God?

“There is a great work to be done. Are you doing all you can to help? God has given us a commission, which angels might envy. Medical missionary work is to be done. Thousands upon thousands of human beings are perishing. The compassion of God is moved. All heaven is looking on with intense interest to see what stamp medical missionary work will assume under the supervision of human beings. Will men make merchandise of God’s ordained plan for reaching the dark parts of the earth with a manifestation of His benevolence?” MM 131

“Angels, who will do for you what you can not do for yourselves, are waiting for your co-operation. They are waiting for you to respond to the drawing of Christ. Draw nigh to God and to one another. By desire, by silent prayer, by resistance of satanic agencies, put your will on the side of God’s will. While you have one desire to resist the devil, and sincerely pray, Deliver me from temptation, you will have strength for your day. It is the work of the heavenly angels to come close to the tried, the tempted, the suffering ones. They labour long and untiringly to save the souls for whom Christ has died. And when souls appreciate their advantages, appreciate the heavenly assistance sent them,

respond to the Holy Spirit's working in their behalf; when they put their will on the side of Christ's will, angels bear the tidings heavenward. And there is rejoicing among the heavenly host." SD 36

It is important that we always keep in mind what is going on behind the scenes. Jesus is in the Most Holy place today doing the work of Judgment. Soon He will be finished and will come back to take home with him those that have proved faithful. May God help each one of us to use the power provided for us so that we can be ready when He does come. AMEN

Wendy Eaton

“Hast Thou Considered My Servant Job?” Job 1:8

Satan's challenge

Job of the land of Uz had many friends. He was a rich man, a God-fearing, well respected person. It seemed the more he helped others, the more he got blessed himself. His possessions increased to staggering heights. Everyone is attracted to someone who is benevolent, rich, honest, helpful and just. And Job was and had all of that. His fame spread all over and he became “the greatest of all the men of the east.” (Job 1:3).

He loved the God of Heaven and walked in righteousness before Him. His dealings were honest and just and adorned him like with a diadem (Job 29:14). For he cared for the poor, the blind, the lame and sustained the need of the forgotten widow to make her sing for joy (vs. 12-16). The very class which the ‘upper class’ despised and neglected was for Job the pleasure of his concern. His noble soul labored to lift up those whose fate had put them down, who had no hope in their misery. Job's love to the eternal God made his heart gentle and compassionate to those in need and while relieving their dire situations with his generosity, he also pointed them to the source of his own strength and joy. The blessed desired to be a blessing to the despondent. He would “search out a matter” (vs. 16) and fight for justice and to undo the evil of the wicked (vs. 17). “

The love and respect of the people would be around him and words of his counsel sought for. He was like a refreshing rain in the desert to many and the people could peacefully dwell in his realm, where he “sat chief and dwelt as a king... to comfort the mourners” (Job 29:25).

Such beauty of conduct and perfection of character must arouse the jealousy of Satan. Job was a thorn in his eyes for a long time and all his attempts to make him swerve from his integrity and faithfulness had failed. This filled him with bitter hatred and when God addressed him about Job (Job 1:8), Satan hurled his anger against the Creator, that because of divine protection, Job could not be touched!

Then Satan got permission to do with Job as he pleases, but to save his life (1:12; 2:6). So with great fury the prince of darkness left the meetings in heaven to do the work he knows best -to destroy and to afflict. (Job 1:14-19; 2:1),

With Job he left no leaf unturned to cause the greatest loss and most bitter grief that could well up from the very depth of his sinister, satanic soul.

When the hurricane of diabolic wrath had blasted over the possessions, the children of Job, Satan was content, congratulating himself that now for certain, Job is going to turn away from his perfect faithfulness and curse God. But Job did not, despite of all his loss, and worshiped as usual: “Naked came I out of my mother's womb, and naked shall I return thither: the Lord gave, and the Lord had taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.” - Job 1:21.

To come through this sudden tragedy of enormous magnitude unscathed and not to despair and to blame God,

is indeed a miracle that revealed the great strength of faith and trust of Job and his wife. But when Satan's final malicious act afflicted the body of Job and by that utterly disfigured the kind, peaceful features and appearance of the husband, Job's wife gave up in despair (2:9).

But even now Job did not curse God, yet he was stunned and could not figure out a reason for this terrifying affliction. This again baffled Satan, but he hoped that as time would pass Job would finally succumb. For this reason he made the suffering of Job as agonizing as possible, because he, the majesty of hell must not be defeated!

So the days and the life of Job became an ordeal from morning through night. The sore boils covering him from the scalp to the soles of his feet were not only painful, but also unbearably itchy, which forced the man to violently scratch the irritated skin, thus causing infection and inflammation, making matters worse. The oozing of pus from the traumatized flesh not only caused an offensive odor, but altogether destroyed the regal appearance of Job, distorting it to a truly ugly, appalling and abhorrent sight one would turn away from.

Picture this man and his situation, what a change had in a short time taken place! Out of nowhere, suddenly, without warning the world around Job was turned upside down. What devastation of order of a well organized home, affair of life and purpose of life itself. It made familiar friends, merchants, relatives and servants flee away like with a flood. Children got frightened and ran from this strange looking man who used to smile and attracted them into his presence.

Stripped of wealth, children, possessions, the person of Job became an undesired object in the mind of many whom were in his household and avoided him altogether (19:13-15). They could not endure his estranged sight; he became an alien to them.

His commands, formerly eagerly obeyed and executed by a host of servants which felt honored being worthy of service, now die away with no regard given to them. His personal servant gives him no answer, though Job kindly entreated him (Job 19:16).

Forsaken by all, Job became a very lonely man. He deeply searched his heart for any hidden sin that could have caused this calamity, but he found none. He did not quarrel with God or rage against Him, Job simply could not understand. And the Lord could not reveal to him the true reason - that Satan had challenged God Himself to allow him to afflict Job - for this would be against that agreement. Job was left to his own, Heaven was silent, but all Heaven looked with greatest admiration and deepest sympathy to the man in whom God had absolute confidence!

Not a voice on earth would plead for him, not a heart that had compassion in his lamentable situation and overwhelming suffering. Was it any wonder, when Job wished he had never been born? (Job 3:3; 11-13).

News about the disastrous event unto Job spread through the east like wild fire and reached also the three friends of Job in their quarters. Totally stunned and overwhelmed by the tragedy, they consulted one another and with one accord made arrangements to travel to the unfortunate victim.

They wanted "to mourn with him and to comfort him" (Job 2:11). They were friends of the good days of Job and had shared many a blessed time together with him; they loved him for his generosity and admired his success. They benefited well through their dealings with him and counted Job a valuable treasure to their pride, for it was an honor to anyone of being befriended to this grand man. Those three men honestly considered themselves good friends and their desire to visit Job in his sorrow and to share his lonely days, speaks for the goodness of their hearts. They had the best intention to comfort and to alleviate his pain and sadness. "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent everyone his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven." Job 2:12.

When they finally arrived in the region that belonged to the property of Job and approached the private grounds to the house, they remembered the lively activity of servants, preparing for the feast, and benevolent Job welcoming his honorable guests with all the grandeur of a mighty, wealthy host, clothed in gorgeous attire with gold and jewels. Their hearts sank at the now desolate sight, with only one loathsome looking figure sitting on the ground who was supposed to be Job, the greatest man of the east!

The friends did not recognize him and before they could come any further, they fell into lamentation and rent their mantles. When at last coming closer to greet the man they came to visit, their shock was so great they were not able to utter anything. They were not prepared for what they saw, were unable to deal with the situation. Job's appearance was so abhorrent, they could not look at him, could not comprehend, that this should be the same man they once

admired and respected, whose face had radiated kindness and dignity, whose very presence breathed authority. This same face was now disgraced by lesions and swollen from infected, ugly pustules, altogether stripped of its even features. The once tall and noble frame of Job now covered with those loathsome boils had disintegrated to a pitiable pile of misery. Thus the three men were smitten to the core of their hearts, were dumbfounded, speechless.

“So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spoke a word unto him; for they saw that his grief was very great” - Job 2:13.

It was too much for the three and they sank down where they stood before Job to sit there for days in utter shock and disbelief beyond words. It took days for them to recover somewhat and when they got used to the situation, they were afraid to say anything at all. What could be said to such a tragedy as this?

As the days went by the three men began to search in their minds why this had happened to Job, that there must be a reason that he suffers so terribly.

And here Satan saw again his chance. He breathed his dark spirit upon the wondering minds of the three friends to befog them with doubt and a new, strange, altogether different attitude and mindset against Job, to cause him to waver and to lose his faith in God.

Then it was Job who finally broke the silence and poured out his grief and wished he had not been born (3:3), for he had no strength to hope, for the affliction is sucking out his joy and vitality and sense of purpose of life. His own brethren dealt deceitfully with him (6:5), showed no pity, and pity is what he needs now, some understanding, compassion, a comforting, encouraging word to lift the oppressive clouds that had settled so thickly upon his wearied mind.

Was it not at all understandable and altogether human to speak out what troubled his soul? Do we not also find relief when talking to someone when in distress? The child of God goes first on his knees and takes all his troubles to the throne of God, looking in faith to His mercy and grace, His omnipotent power to bring help and relief. But we also confide to our loved ones or a close friend, for we hunger for understanding and sympathy of one close by.

But consider Job! His case was far more severe, a woe on a much greater scale than some tragedy that normally strikes mankind. Was he not worthy of even more compassion, consideration and any earnest effort to help him in his great need? Job did not go to any man to ask why all this had happened to him. No, no, for he had always had close communion with the God of Heaven. And to Him he went day and night, but now he is not getting any response. Heaven is shut up for him, there is a high wall between him and God, and this is what causes Job the greatest distress. Where can he go now? To whom? Humans have failed him altogether and God Himself is silent.

The three friends replied but brought no relief; they only added to his consternation and misunderstood him altogether. Instead of offering cheer to brighten and to sooth the mental anguish of Job, they shot out accusing words and sharp rebukes which were not only totally wrong and out of place (22:5-9), but in the highest degree insulting. They hit Job's tortured mind like arrows to intensify his suffering. It was mere mockery of the worst kind and Job did not deserve this in the least.

Such were his “friends” who thought being his friends. In truth, they were now more like enemies whom Job called “miserable comforters” (16:1), who broke him in pieces with words that vexed his soul (19:1). And by all this Satan was well pleased. -For this was what he wanted, to bring Job to despair and to be so discouraged as to give up.

Therefore Satan gave Eliphaz a vision in the night with an evil spirit passing before the trembling man, breaking the silence of the night with these devilish insinuations: “Shall mortal man be more just than God? Shall a man be more pure than his Maker? He put no trust in his servants;... they die, even without wisdom.” (Job 4:13-21).

By these insidious words inspired from hell, Eliphaz perceived a totally wrong concept of the character of God and thus became the tool of Satan to set also Job in a wrong light. The sin of Eliphaz was listening to that perverted voice that God does not trust any man however righteous he may be. This is completely against the character of God, and would this be true, then God could not work with any of His servants at all, for all men are erring children. Distrust is a trade of the evil one and not of the Lord of Heaven!

And God is portrayed thus as has He no pity on anyone, that men perish without hope like a moth that is being crushed. God gave to man from the beginning of his fall a permanent hope and His help for all who confide their souls to Him. He gave man the assurance of His love (Gen. 3:15) and His personal interest to restore him and to send a Redeemer, a Mediator. This truth Satan does not want one to accept and believe, therefore he presents God as

one who shows no mercy to those who dwell on earth, but leaves them to themselves, who rewards only the good, but punishes the wicked, period. There is no voice, no hope for the fallen, erring to be forgiven, to be led to hope in restoration and reconciliation through a Mediator, Intercessor on their behalf.

Thus Eliphaz the Temanite was foremost in distorting Job's character, classing him with the wicked who does not know God, whom he urged "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at peace: thereby good shall come unto thee" (22:1-27). Imagine this, a man whom the God of the Universe judged to be "a perfect man and an upright man," of whom God said: "that there is none like him in the earth," (1:8) is accused and by a faulty earthly man plainly stated as one who knows nothing of God and His justice! To whom he must "return" and "put away iniquity" and receive "the law of his mouth" that he "shalt be built up"! (22:22-23).

Can a person be more wronged in judgment than Job, with such perverted opinion about him? Words like those that were cast so injudiciously upon the disconsolate man dropped like bitter gall into the belly of the sufferer. This could but come from a mind veiled with satanic blindness, and the uttering of the two other men, were in no wise less offensive, cruel, insensitive and ill considered.

With the unjust accusations, they hoped to discover or to unearth some hidden sin as cause for the calamity and then be satisfied with their mission. But they had at the end only heaped sin upon themselves, and Satan's hope to completely overthrow Job's faith and integrity was vanquished.

Job in his terrible ordeal did not let go his hold on the Lord, yet in his suffering he sought Him the more, though he felt as one who was being persecuted by God, one who had been poured out by Him like milk and curdled like cheese (10:10) but he could not comprehend for what reason and this perplexed him day and night. Job was convinced to the innermost of his being that he lived upright before God, saying: "All the while my breath is in me, and the spirit of God is in" my nostrils; my lips shall not speak wickedness or my tongue deceit" (27:3). He will not be moved from being righteous, even as he had to say to his friends: "Ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value" (13:4), who altogether misunderstood him: "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him: but I will maintain mine ways before him" (13:5), meaning, he will live the way he did until now.

Though he was hedged in so that he cried: "Oh that I knew where I might find him! (23:3), he would not give up but said: "But he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (23:10). Such faith is commendable, is music in the ears of the Most High. And Job knew of Him for he said: "For I know that my Redeemer liveth, and that He shall stand at the latter day upon the earth: And though after my skin worms destroy this body, yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me." - Job 19:25-27.

What made the faith of Job in God so strong was his absolute confidence in an Intercessor, of the coming Messiah, God's justice, the hope of eternal life. These are the promises that were handed down by faithful people since Adam. It is believed that Job came from the line of Esau, and Job must have had a very faithful mother or father who entrusted to him those wonderful truths. His heart embraced the treasure of wisdom above rubies early in his life, and he truly understood what is understood by, namely: "the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom; and to depart from evil understands." (28:28). Job knew the truth about an Intercessor, a voice that would speak up for him, for he said: "Behold, my witness is in heaven, and my record is on high... O that one might plead (Christ) for a man with God, as a man pleaded for his neighbor." (16:19-21). This was his assurance, his life policy to which he held on and this made his faith mighty, invincible! This is the secret of Job's unmovable position. Indeed, the faith that clings to this truth - of a voice pleading in heaven for the soul to be justified, cannot be overthrown! Such was the faith of Job!

How long will God wait and not take him in His arms of infinite love to deliver Job from this dreadful ordeal? When all the words were spoken and even one young man joined the debates and nothing was gained by all the condemning and debating, God Himself did speak.

First He "answered Job out of the whirlwind" (38:1), and commanded Job to gird himself like a man to answer Him. The Lord did not rebuke but challenged Job to consider His doings, His works in nature and concern for all living things. Because Job considered himself able to approach God "I would order my cause before him, and fill my mouth with arguments" (23:4). In this way Job justified himself and put God actually on the level of a man like himself with whom he could dispute if he had the privilege. In this Job was very human and God did not condemn him. How could a human being who had not seen God have any comprehension of the majesty,

holiness and power of the omnipotent God? How great is the forbearing love and patience towards His erring children!

As the Creator opened Job's eyes to behold Him in His works and power, Job became smaller and smaller in his own eyes, considered himself vile and unworthy (40:4). He had also a wrong conception about God though he loved Him all his life and walked closely with Him. Finite eye cannot see the glorious divine arm that upholds all things, that cares for the minutest particle of creation that orders all the steps of every living creature and is directing every event.

Now Job catches a glimpse of the Divine Majesty and in greatest awe he exclaims: "I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear: but now mine eye seeth thee." And with deep humility and contrition he says; "wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes" (42:5, 6). He was no more boasting his righteousness, and saw himself also in a new light. No human being ever so righteous could measure up to the Infinite One!

Victory and Triumph

But God was not finished yet, and one more test was to come upon Job. The three friends had insulted God, they gave a false and misleading presentation of His character and judgment, and especially Eliphaz was addressed with a sharp rebuke: "My wrath is kindled against thee, and against thy two friends: for ye have not spoken of me the thing that is right, as my servant Job hath" (42:7). They were to take seven bullocks and seven rams, and were to go to Job to offer them for a burnt offering, and Job was to pray for them (42:7), because the insulted God would not accept them. So Job, who had been so wounded by the condemning words of his friends, who crushed his soul to the dust, for those same men he was now to offer prayer of intercession!

Who could do such a noble act? The despised to plead for those who mocked him! Only a soul that has been touched by the greatness of Almighty God and beheld Him in His beauty and tender love can perform the impossible. Job realized himself his need of divine grace, so it was joy to him to intercede for those who needed so much more of divine help and forgiveness.

And he bowed himself to the ground pleading for grace and pardon for the erring, blinded friends, pouring out gracious uttering from the bottom of his soul, full of love and compassion. And in that moment the Lord Himself came down to embrace His faithful servant in His arms of tenderest love to turn the captivity of the smitten man and healed him. Never was Job more precious and dear to His Lord than in that moment of intercession.

The three friends had prostrated themselves before the Lord in shame, they realized their wrong sincerely and now they depended for acceptance upon the very person they had so misjudged and this caused in them deep contrition and wrought earnest repentance in them. When after worship they rose up with gladness of heart to thank Job for his prayer on their behalf, for they felt accepted and forgiven, they looked at him and were speechless again -but this time for unspeakable joy and happiness! Because Job stood before them as they knew him before -in all his health, strength, beauty of countenance and dignity. With tears flowing from the eyes they embraced Job and one another and a peace and gratefulness filled their hearts that they never knew before.

The challenge of Satan was over! God had won; He was vindicated through the frightfulness of one who would not let go of his trust in Him! And Job had gotten the victory over every calamity, insult and hardness of heart; he came indeed forth "as gold."

Job was blessed with twice as much as he had before, and with seven sons and three daughters (42:10, 13), and lived a happy, long and satisfied life (vs. 16).

And those three friends were now true friends and must have been close to the heart of Job since that experience. For who could forget that heartrending ordeal of Job and then God's forgiving grace toward the three offenders?

Job said he wished that his words were written down, "oh that they were printed in a book!" (19:23). And Providence did take care of that, for Moses in the wilderness of Midian, while tending the sheep wrote the story of Job under the inspiration of God.

It is not an easy book to read at first, many passages are puzzling and hard to understand. But the whole tale has a beauty of speech beyond compare, with pearls of wisdom and inspiration and glitters with gold of a faith that endured the closest, trying test.

Sister White writes that this book should be the study of the saints in the last days, for many will have to face hard trials, mockery, and false accusation and altogether misconstrued ideas about their character. Like Jesus they will be misunderstood and despised, persecuted and hated without reason.

Job was a figure most Christ-like, his example is an encouragement to any child of God that suffers affliction and from his grand and firm integrity and unswerving faith we can draw strength and comfort for ourselves. Because the book of Job testifies also of the great controversy between Christ and Satan, and that the outcome is sure victory for those who are involved in this conflict, standing on the side of the Great I AM.

The hatred of Satan against Job, his protest to God and Job's perseverance serves as a model case for the trials and victory of the 144 000 in the remnant of time. There Satan will unleash his fury full scale against a group of people who firmly will resist him, after he has successfully persuaded his agents on earth to lure and compel the entire world to obey the commandment "thus saith the church," and to worship the god of Babylon - that means him, Satan himself

But the 144 000 stand the ground, nothing can move them, no threat, no penalty, no suffering is able to discourage, discomfit their faithfulness to "thus saith the Lord," though they realize their utter helplessness. But like Jesus on the cross, they cast themselves and their faith into the hands of the God of Heaven. While they have then to endure without a Mediator, they prove to be worthy of God's trust in them and vindicate His name that Satan had challenged for six thousand years before the whole Universe.

And Christ Himself comes down to deliver them, taking them to Heaven without seeing death, they cleared God's name. All the efforts of the fallen angel Lucifer to prove God as an unjust Lawgiver will at the end prove himself to be the great loser. Amen to that and Amen!

A final note about Elihu the Buzite the youngest friend of Job.

He witnessed the discussions and battle of words, but because of his youth and respect to the older, he kept silent. But when all the talking did not bring solutions he got angry and taking courage, he addressed the men with youthful enthusiasm so convincing "they were amazed, they answered no more: they left off speaking." (Job 32:15). This young man understood like Job that the inspiration of God gives understanding (32:8), and gives a beautiful description of a Deliverer, "a ransom" (33:23-30) to save those from the pit who are ready to perish. He understands that God "will render unto man HIS righteousness"(vs.26).

In those ancient times he perfectly perceived the beauty of the gospel and the righteousness of God. He set Job aright where he was wrong, rebuked him because he was extremely zealous for God's honor that He alone is righteous and mighty in power. With passion he ascribes to God the right attributes of His character. Therefore did the Lord not rebuke him? Elihu did not need to bring a sacrifice, nor needed one to plead for him like the other three friends of Job, for he already believed in an Intercessor. AMEN.

By Edda Tedford, Canada.

ETERNAL LIFE

"The Lord wants us to individually search the scriptures so that we may know about the great plan of redemption and that we may understand that great theme as far as it is possible for the human mind enlightened by the Holy Spirit to understand the purpose of God. He wants us to understand something of that love He manifested by giving His son to die in order to make amends for sin by removing the stains. Thereof restoring what had been lost; thus lifting us, ennobling and reinstating the original purity of the soul through the righteousness of Christ. The only way in which fallen humanity could be restored was through the gift of His son, equal to Him in character and possessing His attributes. RH 08-11-1892

Who can begin to comprehend the suffering Christ went through in the Garden of Gethsemane as He bore the burden of the sins of the world on His shoulders? So acutely did He feel the weight of sin that for a moment the cup in His hand shook and all of heaven heard His agonizing cry "O My Father if it be possible let this cup pass from Me." (Matt.

26:39) The Almighty God suffered with His son.

Stand before the cross of Christ and learn from it what the cost of redemption was. With a broken heart the Holy victim on the cross of Calvary lifts His eyes to God and cries "My God, my God why have you forsaken Me?" (Matt. 27:46) The angels of heaven took pity on their beloved Commander and with joy they would have lifted up an army and gone to His help. But this was not the plan of God. Our Saviour tread the winepress alone and not one of His own was with Him.

"Salvation within the reach of sinners"

"The plan of redemption was made to put salvation at the reach of sinners. Christ fulfilled His purpose; His death has brought eternal life to all who accept Him as their personal Saviour. But far too many of those for whom He died to bring salvation to, refuse to be faithful to Him." (Manuscript; 66. 28-07-1901)

The sanctuary which is in heaven is the center of the work of Christ in favour of man. This concerns every living soul on earth. He opens before our eyes the plan of redemption and takes us through to the time of the end, revealing the victorious result of the controversy between good and evil. It is to the great benefit of all to carefully investigate these subjects and to be able to give an answer to all who ask us for the reason of the hope that is in us.

In the Most Holy place one can find the law of God which is the standard of righteousness whereby all of humanity is tried. The ark which contains the 10 Commandments is covered by the Mercy Seat before which Christ offers His blood in favour of the sinner. This illustrates how righteousness and mercy are joined together in the Plan of Salvation.

Eternal Surety

The great Plan of Redemption will result in the complete re-establishment of the favour of God for this world. All who were lost because of sin will be restored. This redemption not only applies to man but also to the earth which shall be the dwelling place of all who are obedient. For six thousand years, Satan fought to obtain possession of the earth. Nevertheless, the original purpose of God in creating it will be fulfilled. "But the saints of the Most High shall receive the Kingdom, and possess the Kingdom forever, even forever and ever." (Dan. 7:18)

Here, where the Son of God lived in human form; where the King of glory lived; suffered and died; it is here when all things are renewed that the tabernacle of God shall be with men, "He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people, and God Himself shall be with them and be their God." (Rev. 21:3) Throughout eternity, as the redeemed walk in the light of the Lord, they will worship God for His priceless gift: Emmanuel: "God with us."

Your brother in Christ, Guillermo Gamallo

THE DEGREES OF FAITH

"The just shall live by faith." (Romans 1:17) Our life, our eternal life depends on our faith. There are different degrees of faith, and how much do we need to be able to remove every obstacle on our way, even those that stand as an irremovable mountain? As Jesus walked upon this earth many people approached him asking for healing, all of them had a different degree of faith.

On His way to Capernaum, a leper, that outcast of society who was forbidden to approach anybody, and who lived in a grotto outside the town among those who shared his same destiny, knew for sure that he was not going to be rejected by Jesus, that he was not going to be reminded of his condition and told to keep away from Him. So, full of trust on the Lord's mercy, he told Him: "Lord, if you are willing you can make me clean." (Matthew 8:2) And which was Jesus' response? "I am willing, be cleansed." And immediately the wonder took place after Jesus' miraculous touch. What would be Jesus' answer to us today if we said the same thing? Would He say: No, your sickness is too hard, too disgusting, your disease is incurable, you are lost? No, because we read in Luke 19:10 that the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was

lost.

As He entered Capernaum He came across a man from a completely different social status. He was not a leper, an outcast, he didn't come to worship Jesus, but to ask Him a favour. He, as a man of authority in his area, came to another man of authority whom he recognized as the Lord, and he interceded for his paralyzed servant. His admirable faith, which Jesus gave as an example that put to shame his own disciples, received an immediate response, and the servant was healed at a distance. The difference between these two men is that while the former didn't make any reference to himself, he just threw his rotten flesh before the Master's feet, the latter thought he had to be worthy to be visited by Jesus and even though he acknowledged Jesus' authority as superior to his, he still approached Him as a man of position. As he believed it was given to him. (Matthew 8:13)

Other two men of faith had an encounter with Jesus at the entrance and in another city: the blind man Bartimaeus, and the tax collector Zaccheus. The city is now Jericho, in the beautiful green valley of the Jordan where many palm trees grew. Once again an outcast, a beggar, and a man of rank express their wish to see Jesus. The former asks for physical health and the latter for spiritual healing. Their faith makes them overcome the obstacle of a crowd that, in the case of Bartimaeus, wants to make him shut up, and of Zaccheus gets in the way between Jesus and him. Both men, paying no attention to the crowd's opinion, insist on their determination to see and being seen by Jesus, so Bartimaeus calls louder and Zaccheus climbs up a tree. There is nothing that can interpose itself between Christ and man's determination to be touched by His saving hand. Big is the faith of these two men who don't want to lose the opportunity they have. While Bartimaeus is asked by the Lord what he wants, in spite of the fact that his condition and need are evident, Zaccheus is invited to come down from the tree and lead the Lord to his home. The one asks and receives, the other one is offered and he accepts joyfully; not without confessing without fear all his past sins against man and society.

Another opportunity in which Jesus is in Capernaum again preaching at a crowded house, four men of faith joined in a common cause present their plea before Jesus. Once again, as in the case of Zaccheus and Bartimaeus, there is a crowd that interposes itself between them and Jesus, but this is no motive for discouragement. The four men of faith, the four faithful friends, without asking for anybody's opinion, climb to the roof and remove the tiles lowering the paralytic friend at Jesus' feet. They recognize no physical or social obstacle to reach Jesus, neither the tiles, nor the scribes and Pharisees inhibit them, and their faith is rewarded with seeing their friend's health restored.

Among all these men of faith who approached Him, there was also one who mostly by despair than by faith was moved to come to the Divine teacher. His son suffered from seizures and the man sought first among the disciples and then in the Master for healing. Jesus said: "If you can believe, all things are possible to Him who believes." (Mark 9:22,23) His honest answer is "Lord, I believe, help my unbelief." Just as the leper, who had nothing to bring to Jesus, this man had not even faith to present Him but not even his unbelief was an impediment to approach the One who is the source of everything.

But not only men came to Jesus for their health to be restored or to intercede for others. There were women who dared defy all prejudices against a woman approaching a man. As He was in the heathen land of Sidon, He was approached by a Canaanite woman whose daughter was demon possessed. Jesus pretended to ignore her, and finally said that He was sent for the lost sheep of the house of Israel. The woman's insistence in having her plea answered made the Lord exclaim: "O woman, great is your faith. Let it be to you as you desire." (Matthew 15:28)

Faith knows no obstacle, no rejection, faith is blind trust in the God of love whose ear is always open to hear our petitions and his heart always ready to pour blessings.

There is another woman whose faith is not uttered with words but with deeds. She pushes through a crowd that we always see gathered around Jesus, and opening her way manages to touch His garments. She has spent all her money in doctors, she has experienced one disappointment after the other, but now her only hope is to be healed by the Great Physician, and immediately, with the first touch of faith, the flow of blood, which she has had for twelve years, stops forever.

In all these cases it is revealed to us not only that faith goes through trials, that faith asks, insists, and doesn't look at circumstances, but also that it is the only way to obtain healing and grace.

As a contrast to the faith of these heathen or Israelites that lived away from God, we are often confronted with the poor faith of Jesus' disciples which led Jesus to exclaim: "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they were in the boat fighting against the tempest in their own strength, (Matthew 14:31), or when they could not heal the possessed young man making use of the power bestowed upon them by their masters. All these facts made Jesus wonder if He would find faith on the earth at His coming.

Faith, no matter in which degree, is what we need when we plead to be healed. If once we are given faith and we use it not uttering words of discouragement or disappointment, and facing difficult situations with optimism, then the Lord will be able to work through us in any way He may have planned to do.

Although we are not to trust our faith but the promises of God (MYP 111), we cannot be happy if we don't live by faith because it is only through faith that the heavenly plant of love will grow in our hearts.

May the Lord grant us a faith that will soar at every opportunity He gives us to live by it.

AMEN.

Theresa Corti

INCREDIBLE, WONDERFUL, MIRACULOUS!

(MARVEL)

Isaiah 9:6

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon His shoulder; and His name shall be called Wonderful..."

We read here in reference to Jesus as Wonderful—a Marvel! The term "marvel" is used almost exclusively with reference to divinity. Old Testament writers extolled God's "marvelous" works including His creation and salvation.

Marvel can also be defined as a person or thing or even that causes astonishment and admiration, a prodigy, a marvel. It's also referred to as a feeling of surprise, admiration, caused by something strange, unexpected, incredible, miraculous... gazing in wonder at a comet, a sunset.

When Jesus preached, some did not accept His words. But many others wondered, marveled at His words. "No one else but Jesus spoke like He did." (John 7:46). It was His words! They were clear, melodic, and reached far into all the mountains, sea, lake and hillsides.

In Luke 19:47, 48, "the chief priests and scribes of the temple wanted to destroy Him, and couldn't find what to do with Him because all the people were attentive to Him."

In John 7:46 the chief priests asked the officers who went to arrest Jesus, "why haven't you brought Him?" The officers then answered, "never has man spoken like this man." They didn't arrest Him. Rather, they were enthusiastic! Are you, too, enthusiastic when you read or hear His words?

We read further on, in Col. 4:6, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how to answer every man." How is your speech? Let your words, too, be seasoned and gentle. "If any man speak, speak as the oracles of God, if any man ministers let him do it with the ability God gives. That God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, "to whom be praise and dominion forever."

In John 12:49-50, he writes of a mystique. Jesus says, "Even as I speak, the Father commands Me, what I should say, and speak. Whatever I speak the Father has said it unto Me, so I speak."

It's from the Father! Whatever He speaks. What's the secret of Jesus and the disciples? Speaking through God the Father and Jesus. You, too, can have the same power, to speak and help others through Jesus Christ. That's the secret.

People need to hear you, are waiting to hear from you. (Matt. 28:19). "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, whatever I have commanded you, and lo I am with you always..." We are commanded to go, therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father and Son, and Holy Spirit. Furthermore, teaching them to "observe all things I commanded you. All that has been taught to you, it says.

Our words, then, too are to be marveled, wondered at, admired. Teach, then, as we were taught. Acts 4:13 reads, "they marveled at Peter and John, for their boldness; they were unlearned, but they said they saw and were with Jesus." Also, Stephen, Paul, and others said much of the same.

What else was said about Jesus, the wonderful one, marveled at by so many? It was His works. "The multitude wondered when they saw the dumb speak, maim be made whole, lame to walk, and blind to see." The spirit of prophecy says, "Jesus Christ healed all... everywhere!" When the blind man was healed, he said, "This is a wonderful thing." (Matt. 9:30, 31; 16, 17).

Before Pilate a marvelous thing happened. The marvel was... silence! A child-learns to speak at two years of age, more or less, but when and how to speak takes sixty years! True? We're always learning. "Come unto me all ye that labour and I will give thee rest." (Matt. 11:28). The Pharisees tried to trap Jesus. Jesus was called the "friend of sinners". They, however, marveled at His wisdom... "seasoned with humility". Jesus Christ asked, "who is your neighbour?" then He followed with, "do the same to all men." (Luke 10:29). God's people are to be a wonder in this troubled world. (ISM 113).

The marvel of marvels is salvation... the plan of salvation!

A loving father built a small sailboat for his child. They took it together to the nearby lake to sail it. Attaching a string to the boat they let the wind carry it offshore, outwards, but unfortunately the string broke, much like when flying a kite. The boat drifted aimlessly far out into the lake, hopelessly lost. The small child cried day and night, could not sleep or eat, thinking about his little boat, for 2-3 dark days.

His father built him another boat, but it was not the same to his child. One day, the child saw his little boat for sale in a neighbourhood shop window. He desperately wanted his boat back. He told his father, who rushed to the shop and bought it back. From this experience the child was happy two times now, first when the boat was first built, and secondly when he bought it back. It's the same with the children of God... with humanity! We belong to Jesus two times. First when He created us, and second when He bought us back with His life for us with His precious blood. It was an expensive, supreme sacrifice, an unfathomable price.

He's a marvel... wonderful! Therefore, marvel at Him! All heaven marvels, all angels marvel. Marvel that you are here. Marvel that you accepted the truth. Marvel that you made a covenant with Him.

Jesus Christ's love is so great He calls us... brethren. Jesus came to fulfill and complete the plan of salvation. He is coming soon to take us with Him. Why?

Because He's WONDERFUL!

AMEN.

John Theodorou USA/GREECE

“WHITHER THOU GOEST

**“Whither thou goest
I will go, And where thou lodgest,
I will lodge; Thy people shall be
My people,
And thy God, my God.” Ruth 1:16**

These beautiful words uttered by Ruth, to Naomi her mother-in-law are a classic example of loyalty. A kind of loyalty that is not often found in the many families of today. It is a strange thing to see a daughter-in-law expressing such strong loyalty towards her mother-in-law.

Both Ruth and Naomi had just suffered a tragic loss: their husbands were no more. Imagine the sadness this must have caused these two women!

However, the Bible does not shed any light or give a specific reason about why they died. It could have been because of natural causes for Elimelech (Naomi’s husband); perhaps he was advancing in age or maybe a malady struck him and he died because of it. But what about Mahlon, Ruth’s husband and Naomi’s son? Surely “dying of natural causes” did not apply to him since he was much younger. Whatever the reason for their -death is not revealed to us so we have to be content with the facts as they are presented by the Word of God.

The country of Bethlehem was afflicted by a famine, so Elimelech, in an effort to save his wife and sons from this peril, left his native country behind and settled down in the land of Moab. Elimelech and Naomi’s two sons, Mahlon and Chilion married Moabitish women but in the course of 10 years time, Elimelech died and soon after his son’s followed.

Soon however, Naomi was informed that her country was flourishing again so she decided to leave the strange heathen land of Moab and return to Bethlehem Judah.

Both Ruth and Orpah wanted to follow their mother-in-law because they loved her and had nowhere else to turn to. It appear that Naomi did not think this was a very good idea and after some gentle coaxing she persuaded Orpah to return to her family and friends, nevertheless, when she tried to do the same with Ruth she did not succeed.

Ruth had gotten to know her mother-in-law’s character very well throughout 10 years time. She had spent countless hours together with Naomi and closely observed everything she said and did. With time Ruth grew to appreciate and love this strong, silent woman. She had also learned to know and love the God of Naomi and soon the God of Israel was her God too. So when Naomi asked her to stay behind, Ruth was not willing to do so because a strong bond had formed between them. Her famous words clearly express her loyalty “Entreat me not to leave thee, or to turn from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go: and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God: the LORD do so to me and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.” Ruth 1:16-17.

“Whither thou goest, I will go”:

In choosing to follow Naomi, Ruth demonstrated her loyalty and sealed her fate with God’s people. In those days when girls married a young man they did not only marry him but married into the family. The decision to follow Naomi was a difficult one because in so doing she was choosing to forsake her family and leave her former religion and culture behind.

“And where thou lodgest; I will lodge”:

Ruth left behind the security of her family and a land that she was familiar with to live with Naomi in a land where the inhabitants and their customs were foreign to her. Yet upon closer reflection it seems that none of this would be new to Ruth because through Naomi she had learned about the people and their customs. She had experienced what it was like to live with a follower of the God of Israel so she knew what to expect and that is why she placed her trust and confidence in Naomi. Having spent 10 years with her she knew that Naomi was an honest, dependable person, a woman of integrity who was faithful to the King of the universe and that is why she chose to rely on her and to lodge where she lodged.

“Thy people shall be my people And thy God my God”:

Ruth was morally bound to Naomi and she felt it was her duty to follow her. It could also be that after living with Naomi she had gotten a glimpse of “The LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth...” (Ex. 34:6) and was not willing to stay behind in her country where people did not worship Him. Although Naomi was not her mother she respected her as if she was. Also, the closeness and companionship that they had developed caused them to turn to each other in their time of need and Ruth would not be separated. She gladly left her people to become one with the Israelite nation, renouncing all heathen deities in favour of the true and living God.

The story of Ruth should also inspire us to show the same loyalty to our Saviour. We too should be prepared to go wherever Jesus goes.

Like Ruth, God may also call us out of the comfortable spot we are living in, surrounded by family and close friends. It is not for us to question the Lord’s leading; in His wise providence He guides us to where He wants us to go. It is not only out of a country that the Lord calls us but out of a world lost in sin; out of our preconceived ideas and notions; out of our habits and customs and finally out of “self. If we want to be with God we have to leave self behind, for it is a stumbling block that prevents us from following wherever Jesus leads and reaching the Promised Land.

If we want to lodge where Jesus lodges we are not to “forget the assembling of ourselves together.” It was Jesus’ custom to come to the synagogue every Sabbath and we should do the same. For this to happen though, we have to open the doors of our hearts and let Him come in to dwell with us so that we may always be with Him, together for all eternity.

Finally, for God’s people to be our people we have to choose to associate with them just as Ruth did with Naomi. When we become baptized we are automatically adopted as heirs of the Kingdom. God is our father; Jesus our elder brother; the Holy Spirit our Comforter; the angels our friends; and the church people our brothers and sisters. We become a part of a whole new family and our loyalty lies with them.

So like Ruth let us pledge our allegiance to the Creator of heaven and earth and go wherever He goes. AMEN

Reyna Conde

CHILDREN'S CORNER

BE READY

It was a very hot summer's day as Karl was travelling along the highway on his way home from a business trip. The drive would take him all day and he had no air conditioning in his car. This stretch of the highway also had very little vegetation and the scenery was rather monotonous to look at. The 40C temperature had heat waves rippling up from the burning asphalt. The windows were rolled down and a fevered wind was pouring in as he was making good time on his trip home. He was travelling quickly to try to cool off with a breeze blowing through his car, although the hot wind did little to keep the sweat from falling.

Karl kept thinking of the air-conditioned house that was waiting for him at his journey's end. The valley heat was most unbearable.

There were so many large billboards at the side of the road that provided a little bit of a break from the monotony of the road. He tried counting telephone poles for awhile, and listening to some quiet music on his tape recorder to pass the time as he rolled down the highway. He was suffering from heat and boredom.

A few kilometres before entering the next small town he noticed that his gas gauge registered nearly empty. He would have to stop here for some gas if he expected to continue his journey.

In a few minutes he was within the city limits and spotted a gas station and drove up to the gas pump. Immediately a young man, about 32 years of age, appeared, wiping his hands with a grease rag. "Shall I fill 'er up for you?" he asked.

"Yes, with regular unleaded please," Karl responded, getting out of the car to stretch.

The young man loosened the cap, stuck in the nozzle and began filling the tank.

"There's quite a few bugs on your glass," he observed. "Let me clean it for you."

He put the auto-clip on the gas nozzle so that the fuel still poured in and began to scrub and squeegee the spattered windshield. Abruptly he stopped. "What's that?" he asked, pointing to a sticker of the three angels of Revelation 14 that Karl had on his back window.

Now, this would have been an ideal opportunity for Karl to begin sharing his faith and his church to this stranger. What better time to unfold the good news about the nearness of the end of time and Christ's soon return. But the day was unbearably hot, and he was in a hurry, so half-heartedly he answered, "Oh, that has something to do with my church."

"Oh, yeah?" The man smiled as he continued washing the window. "What church is that?"

Somehow Karl knew that he would ask that, and he didn't feel like discussing religion today. He felt about as contrary as Jonah did when he was seated on the hill overlooking Nineveh in the stifling heat, waiting for the city to ignite. He was in no mood for conversation. He was hot and tired. And he just wanted to get on with it. But he had to answer, if for no other reason than to be civil. So he said, "Oh, you probably never heard of it. It's a small church."

"Try me," he shot back.

"Well," Karl replied, half timid, half perturbed, "I'm a Seventh-day Adventist."

“Oh, yeah, I’ve heard of them. There’s a large church in town on the main road.”

Karl nodded and even managed a slight smile “How long have you been a Christian?” the young man asked, wanting to continue talking on the subject.

“Since 1979,” Karl answered. “Over twenty years.”

“Wow, you’re lucky! My name is Mat Ellis.” He stuck out his hand and Karl shook it. “My name’s Karl.”

“Nice to meet you, Karl,” he grinned. “I’m the owner of this gas station. And I’m a brand-new Christian.

Open your hood and I’ll check your oil.” He walked stop on in around to the front, lifted the hood and inspected the dipstick. “How’s it look?” Inquired Karl.

!“Oil’s fine.” He shut the hood. “But, like I was saying, I’m a brand-new Christian.” His eyes sparkled. “Do you have a minute?”

“Sure why not?”

“Well, my life was a mess. I’m talking total disaster. My wife, Cheryl and I were about to divorce. I was into cocaine and booze. My two kids, Bruce and Carol, were out of control. I tell you, it was bad news.”

Karl listened.

“Then I met Jesus. Some guy, I don’t even know his name, stopped in the station and gave me this little pamphlet on the four spiritual laws.” He pulled out a dog-eared leaflet from his back pocket and showed it to Karl. “This guy even taught me how to pray, right *Over* there by the grease rack. I invited Jesus to come •into my life that day last April. And what a trip! I haven’t been the same since! Cheryl and the kids and I went to the Baptist church the very next Sunday. The minister made a call that day and I went forward and was baptized. I could go on and on about all the great things that have happened since then. No more coke or booze. God saved my marriage. And my business, since starting to pay tithe, has never been better! Isn’t it great being a Christian?” He beamed.

“Yes,” Karl flatly agreed, trying hard to match Mat’s enthusiasm, “The greatest!”

“I hope you didn’t mind if I talked to you a few minutes, Karl. I just have to tell folks what’s happened. I can’t keep it in. Isn’t that the way it is with you?”

Karl nodded, but in the back of his mind he was thinking of what a poor witness he had been that day.

“Oh, let’s see. That will be \$10.70 for the gas.”

“I almost forgot,” Karl mumbled, handing him the “My name’s Karl.”

“Right. Well, it’s been nice talking to you, Karl,” he said. “If you’re passing through town again, please stop on in.”

“I’ll do that, Mat, thanks for the testimony.” Karl replied sheepishly, half thinking of his own neglect.

He smiled, “Yeah, I guess that was a testimony, wasn’t it? I never thought of it that way.”

Karl climbed back into his car, fired the engine and pulled away. In the rear-view mirror he could see Mat smiling and waving. He waved back and set a course for home.

We can see quite a contrast between the enthusiasm Mat expressed about his new found faith, compared to Karl’s, who had been an Adventist for over 20 years. Karl had the blessed knowledge the 3 Angels Messages, the Sabbath and other key doctrines of present truth and he met a Christian man who had an open mind, but had only come part

way out of the darkness of this world and was thirsting for more knowledge of truth. Mat had found Jesus as his personal Saviour and then the Lord brought him in contact with Karl, hoping that Karl would share the full light of the truth with him. Karl's love of the truth had waned over the years. He had become like the believers in Ephesus who had, "left their first love."

Also Karl was not expecting to share his faith in a gas station. Mat caught him totally by surprise so Karl had little to say about his own faith. He was only thinking of how uncomfortable he was and how soon he wanted to get on his journey and arrive home to his nice comfortable house. Sharing his faith was not a priority at that moment.

We need to have the enthusiasm of Mat since we have been blessed with the light of present truth today or we will become exclusive like the Pharisees were in the day of Jesus and Jesus called them, hypocrites, and whited sepulchres full of dead men's bones. We need living faith today.

"Be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:" 1 Peter 3:15.

Excuses

"Then said he unto him, A certain man made a great supper, and bade many: And sent his servant at supper time to say to them that were bidden, Come; for all things are now ready. And they all with one [consent] began to make excuse. The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused. And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come. So that servant came, and showed his lord these things. Then the master of the house being angry said to his servant, Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant. Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel [them] to come in, that my house may be filled. For I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of my supper." (Luke 14:16-24)

The man who made the great supper:

The man that made the supper and invited the guests was Christ. He sent out the invitation to a number of chosen ones. When excuses were made He sent His servant to the hedges and highways to bring people to come to the supper.

The ones that were bidden:

Under the figures of the barren fig tree and the great supper He foretold the doom about to fall upon the impenitent nation. Those who had scornfully rejected the invitation to the gospel feast heard His warning words: "I say unto you, that none of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper." (Luke 14:24) {DA p.495} Paul and Barnabas had said to the Jews "It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you; but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles" (Acts 13:46). The Jews were given the chance to accept Jesus as their Saviour. However they rejected the light that he offered them and thus they sealed their own doom.

And the first said:

"The first said unto him, I have bought a piece of ground, and I must needs go and see it: I pray thee have me excused." In putting his property before service for Christ, this man exalted a matter of minor importance above that which was of far greater importance. (Manuscript Releases Vol.19 p.246)

And another said:

"And another said, I have bought five yoke of oxen, and I go to prove them: I pray thee have me excused." This man represents those whose minds are completely engrossed in caring for their earthly possessions, that they

cannot appreciate the goodness and mercy of Christ in conferring upon them the honor of being invited guests at the great supper. {Manuscript Releases Vol.19 p.246}

And another said:

“And another said, I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come.” The sin of this man was not in marrying, but in marrying one who divorced his mind from the higher and more important interests of life. Never should a man allow wife and home to draw his thoughts away from Christ, or to lead him to refuse to accept the gracious invitations of the gospel. {Manuscript Releases Vol.19 p.246}

The man who said, “I have married a wife, and therefore I cannot come,” represents a large class. Many there are who allow their wives or their husbands to prevent them from heeding the call of God. The husband says, “I cannot obey my convictions of duty while my wife is opposed to it. Her influence would make it exceedingly hard for me to do so.” The wife hears the gracious call, “Come; for all things are now ready,” and she says, “I pray thee have me excused.” My husband refuses the invitation of mercy. He says that his business stands in the way. I must go with my husband, and therefore I cannot come.” The children’s hearts are impressed. They desire to come. But they love their father and mother, and since these do not heed the gospel call, the children think that they cannot be expected to come. They too say, “Have me excused.” {COL 224.2}

Bring hither the poor, the maimed, the lame, the halt and the blind.

The host turned from those who despised his bounty, and invited a class who were not full, who were not in possession of houses and lands. He invited those who were poor and hungry, and who would appreciate the bounties provided.” The publicans and the harlots,” Christ said, “go into the kingdom of God before you” (Matt. 21:31). However wretched may be the specimens of humanity that men spurn and turn aside from, they are not too low, too wretched, for the notice and love of God. Christ longs to have care-worn, weary, oppressed human beings come to Him. He longs to give them the light and joy and peace that are to be found nowhere else. The veriest sinners are the objects of His deep, earnest pity and love. He sends His Holy Spirit to yearn over them with tenderness, seeking to draw them to Himself. (COL 225.3)

Go out in the highways and hedges and compel them to come in.

The servant who brought in the poor and the blind reported to his master, “It is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled.” Here Christ pointed to the work of the gospel outside the pale of Judaism, in the highways and byways of the world. (COL p.226)

When the invitation was rejected, the messengers were sent to call in people whom the Jews despised and regarded as a curse in the earth, the poor, the maimed, the halt, and the blind. The call was to go to the highways and by-ways, and to reach the poor and outcast. These are not so filled with self-righteousness that they cannot appreciate the divine favour. {Bible Echo, October 28, 1895 par. 7}

But “see that ye refuse not Him that speaketh” (Heb. 12:25). Jesus said, “None of those men which were bidden shall taste of My supper.” They had rejected the invitation, and none of them were to be invited again. In rejecting Christ, the Jews were hardening their hearts, and giving themselves into the power of Satan so that it would be impossible for them to accept His grace. So it is now. If the love of God is not appreciated and does not become an abiding principle to soften and subdue the soul, we are utterly lost. The Lord can give no greater manifestation of His love than He has given. If the love of Jesus does not subdue the heart, there are no means by which we can be reached. {Christ Object Lessons p.236}

Every time you refuse to listen to the message of mercy, you strengthen yourself in unbelief. Every time you fail to open the door of your heart to Christ, you become more and more unwilling to listen to the voice of Him that speaketh. You diminish your chance of responding to the last appeal of mercy. Let it not be written of you, as of ancient Israel, “Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone” (Hosea 4:17). Let not Christ weep over you as He wept over Jerusalem, saying, “How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not! Behold, your house is left unto you desolate” (Luke 13:34, 35). {Christ Object Lessons p.237}

We are living in a time when the last message of mercy, the last invitation, is sounding to the children of

men. The command, "Go out into the highways and hedges," is reaching its final fulfilment. To every soul Christ's invitation will be given. The messengers are saying, "Come; for all things are now ready." Heavenly angels are still working in co-operation with human agencies. The Holy Spirit is presenting every inducement to constrain you to come. Christ is watching for some sign that will betoken the removing of the bolts and the opening of the door of your heart for His entrance. Angels are waiting to bear the tidings to heaven that another lost sinner has been found. The hosts of heaven are waiting, ready to strike their harps and to sing a song of rejoicing that another soul has accepted the invitation to the gospel feast. {Christ Object Lessons p.237}

Don't make any excuses. ACCEPT JESUS NOW.

You will never know when will be your last chance. Do not make the same mistake that the Jews in the time of Jesus made.

BENJAMIN DAMMASCH, AUSTRALIA

THE LITTLE RILL

A little rill from the backwoods is attempting to battle its feeble way through to the river of life that helps keeps this poor sick and crippled world alive. God is not willing to give up repeated and persevering attempts to bring life, health and stability to a shaky world.

But the poor little rill is very feeble. Many and grave obstacles hinder its torturous progress. Sometimes the Source that feeds it gets too far behind. The little rill has tried to go too far too fast and finds itself down in a very weak trickle. But when it rests, and waits for reinforcements from behind and above, its progress is much helped.

Sometimes it seems as if the little rill had a mind of its own, and a planned course it wishes to take. Not being very far sighted the little rill knows not the obstacles in the way that would bar its progress entirely. Back and forth the little rill weaves, trying this way and that, spending its precious energy with slow results.

But when the little rill rests, a strong current of refreshment from behind and above pick it up and send it merrily along the way and speedy progress takes place.

The rests are rests of faith, and rests of trial. Dirt and debris have accumulated along the way, this waste must settle out that would do harm to the larger river of life that flows for the healing of the world. The fact that few seem willing to drink deeply of this river of life does not prevent the need for sparkling clear perfection.

And so the feeble little rill trickles on from year to year. Thankful for progress though painful and slow. Thankful for the other and larger rills that help to swell the sparkling river of the water of life that sends refreshment throughout the whole world, available to all who will come and take of the water of life freely.

Read: Education 117
Isaiah 30:15
Revelation 22:17

Submitted by: Kathleen Ross, Alberta, Canada