

The Reformation
Messenger

VOLUME 23, NUMBER 6, JUNE 2016

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WE BELIEVE: The all-wise loving God created all things in the universe by His Son, Jesus Christ. He is the Owner and Sustainer. He met the challenge to His loving leadership and authority by reconciling the world to Himself through the life, death, and resurrection of His Son, the Word made flesh. The Holy Spirit, Jesus' representative on earth convicts of sin, guides into truth, and gives strength to overcome all unrighteousness. The Bible is the record of God's dealings with mankind and the standard of all doctrine, the Ten Commandments are the transcript of His character and the foundation of all enduring reform. His people, in harmony with God's word and under the direction of the Holy Spirit call all men everywhere to be reconciled to God through faith in Jesus. Bible prophecy reveals that earth's history will soon close with the visible return of Jesus Christ as King to claim all who have accepted Him as the world's only Redeemer and their Lord.

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The Reformation Messenger is published monthly. It is an Official Publication of the International Missionary Society the Seventh-Day Adventist Church Reform Movement, Canadian Field. Subscriptions can be paid online on the website or by mail.

- Telephone: 905-876-2518
- E-mail: imsessenger@yahoo.com
- Internet: www.imsessenger.org
- Mail: RR #3, 7899 15 Side Road
Milton, ON L9T 2X7, Canada

PHOTO CREDITS

Front Cover Photo: Henry Dering, USA

Back Cover Photo: Sharon Eaton, USA

Inside Front Cover: Sharon Eaton, USA

COST:

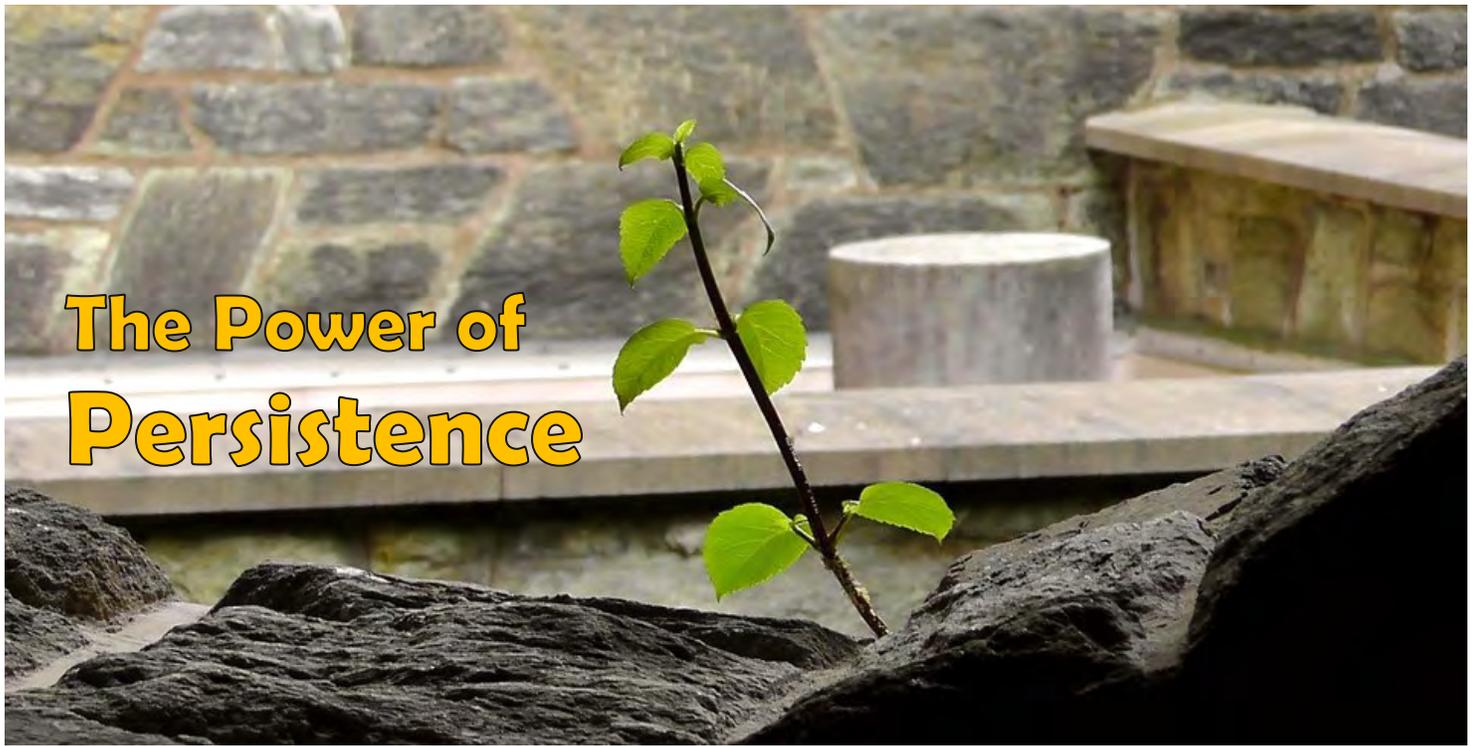
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The Power of Persistence

TRIGGERING POINT

Not long ago, it was on Friday, April 22, 2016 while reading *The Desire of Ages*, I came across a certain portion talking about the disciples of Jesus, which reads: “They blamed themselves for yielding so readily to His command. They reasoned that if they had been more persistent they might have accomplished their purpose.” –*The Desire of Ages*. p. 379. Even though, in that context, the persistence was in a negative direction because they regretted that they had not persisted in refusing to yield to Christ’s purpose, the statement triggered me to study more on the importance of the subject of persistence, as Christian runners. Finally, conviction gained ground that some portions of the stories dealing with this subject of persistence should be gathered together, and then arranged as a lesson format for our benefit as God’s family.

Persistence, as done by faith, is marked in the Bible as one trait that a Christian must definitely have, not only if he is to be successful in this life, but also in his quest for eternal life. No time, I believe, has there been in the past, when such persistence was needed as now. As we study, we discover that words such as: constancy, patience, perseverance, and steadfastness, are synonymous with persistence.

A WARNING RIGHT FROM THE ONSET

For fear of repeating past mistakes, (ours or those of others), we must quickly mention here that persistence must be directed only to, or on, what is right. We must

know on what we must persist, and on what we must not persist. Take, for example, the case of Lucifer. When God bore long with him in heaven, the latter pointed to the patience of the earlier as evidence that his claims were true. He urged his angels that must they be more persistent; God will concede to their demands.

“A compassionate Creator, in yearning pity for Lucifer and his followers, was seeking to draw them back from the abyss of ruin into which they were about to plunge. But His mercy was misinterpreted. Lucifer pointed to the long-suffering of God as an evidence of his own superiority, an indication that the King of the universe would yet accede to his terms. If the angels would stand firmly with him, he declared, they could yet gain all that they desired. He persistently defended his own course, and fully committed himself to the great controversy against his Maker. Thus it was that Lucifer, ‘the light bearer,’ the sharer of God’s glory, the attendant of His throne, by transgression became Satan, ‘the adversary.’” –*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 39

“And there was war in heaven: Michael and His angels fought against the dragon; and the dragon fought and his angels, And prevailed not; neither was their place found any more in heaven. And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him.” Revelation 12: 7–9

So, beware of persisting in sinful pursuits and the lust

of it thereof, for sin will forever separate you from God!

PERSISTENT UNTO VICTORY

Now that we have read the warning above, we are free to discuss those that persisted and overcame the world.

Long tortured by his conscience was the patriarch Jacob so that he desperately longed for relief—an assurance from heaven that his sin had been forgiven. He had just made his supplications before the God of heaven and took some steps to avert any possible danger before him, and then he was alone at a place which, after his victory, he called Peniel. Suddenly, he finds himself wrestling with a man. As he later discovers, it was a divine being and he sees it as a token of divine deliverance! He persists on clinging to Him, even after the dislocation of his bone. To the plea: “Let me go, for the day breaketh,” he maintains the answer: “I will not let Thee go, except Thou bless me.” Genesis 32:26. So it was that Jacob the deceiver became the victorious Israel (Hosea 12:4.).

“The violence here meant [Matthew 11:12] is a holy earnestness, such as Jacob manifested. We need not try to work ourselves up into an intense feeling, but calmly, persistently, we are to press our petitions at the throne of grace. Our work is to humble our souls before God, confessing our sins, and in faith drawing nigh unto God. . . . It is the design of God to reveal Himself in His providence and in His grace.”—*That I May Know Him*, p. 272

“We could then approach the mercy seat; and seeing the bow of promise, kneel with contrite hearts, and seek the kingdom of heaven with a spiritual violence that would bring its own reward. We would take it by force, as did Jacob.”—*The Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1089

PERSISTENCE AND OUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

“But they constrained Him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And He went in to tarry with them. And it came to pass, as He sat at meat with them, He took bread, and blessed it, and brake, and gave to them. And their eyes were opened, and they knew Him; and He vanished out of their sight.” Luke 24:29–31

“During the journey the sun had gone down, and before the travelers reached their place of rest, the laborers in the fields had left their work. As the disciples were about to enter their home, the stranger appeared as though He would continue His journey. But the disci-

ples felt drawn to Him. Their souls hungered to hear more from Him. ‘Abide with us,’ they said. He did not seem to accept the invitation, but they pressed it upon Him, urging, ‘It is toward evening, and the day is far spent.’ Christ yielded to this entreaty and ‘went in to tarry with them.’

“Had the disciples failed to press their invitation, they would not have known that their traveling companion was the risen Lord. Christ never forces His company upon anyone. He interests Himself in those who need Him. Gladly will He enter the humblest home, and cheer the lowliest heart. But if men are too indifferent to think of the heavenly Guest, or ask Him to abide with them, He passes on. Thus many meet with great loss. They do not know Christ any more than did the disciples as He walked with them by the way.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 800

A certain widow was living in a city in which there was an unjust judge (Luke 18:2–6). She pressed her demand on the judge persistently and the scripture says of the unjust judge: “but afterward he said within himself, Though I fear not God, nor



regard man; Yet because this widow troubleth me, I will avenge her, lest by her continual coming she weary me.” Luke 18:4–5. At the beginning of the chapter (verse 1), the writer tells us why Jesus gave that particular parable. “That men ought always to pray, and not to faint.” Jesus concludes the parable by saying that there will be an answer by the heavenly Father to all who seek Him earnestly and persistently in faith.

“Faith is an essential element of prevailing prayer. ‘He that cometh to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.’ ‘If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us: and if we know that He hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him.’ Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 5:14–15. With the persevering faith of Jacob, with the unyielding persistence of Elijah, we may present our petitions to the Father, claiming all that He has promised. The honor of His throne is staked for the fulfillment of His word.”—*Prophets and Kings*, p. 157



The Saviour said: “In your patience possess ye your souls.” Luke 21:19

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For Thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:35–39

Having expounded on several worthies of faith, the Apostle Paul finds himself short of time and resolves to just listing the remaining ones (Hebrews 11:32). With him we may say “and what shall we more write? For space would fail us to write of: Ruth who persisted in following her mother-in-law, and deciding that Naomi’s people will be her people, and her God her God, till death (Ruth 1:16–17). Ruth is “slotted into” the genealogy of Jesus (Ruth 4:13–22). A gentile Moabite became part of the progenitor of the Messiah! And also of Elisha also who insisted on following Elijah the prophet (2 Kings 2:1–13), and thus ended up being endowed with a double portion of the prophet Elijah’s spirit (verse 15). He is ranked in the line of great men of God where we need to find our place.

PERSISTENT UNTO SALVATION

As we conclude this wonderful lesson, let us come to the point of persistence as linked to our salvation.

Winston Churchill is known for his speech in which all he said was: “Never, give up,” before taking his seat.

Persistence saves. Lot was saved by it. “And he said,

Behold now, my lords, turn in, I pray you, into your servant's house, and tarry all night, and wash your feet, and ye shall rise up early, and go on your ways. And they said, Nay; but we will abide in the street all night. And he pressed upon them greatly; and they turned in unto him, and entered into his house; and he made them a feast, and did bake unleavened bread, and they did eat.” Genesis 19:2–3

“And the men said unto Lot, Hast thou here any besides? son in law, and thy sons, and thy daughters, and whatsoever thou hast in the city, bring them out of this place: For we will destroy this place, because the cry of them is waxen great before the face of the LORD; and the LORD hath sent us to destroy it.” Genesis 19:12–13

In His letter to the Hebrew believers, the Apostle Paul encourages them not to go back or give up. He refers to the soon coming of Jesus when he says: “For yet a little while, and He that shall come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, My soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.” Hebrews 10:37–39

As we meditate on these words in our time, we again hear the wonderful words of our Savior from the Mount of Olives as He refers to the time of the end just before His coming. He says: “And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. But he that shall endure [persist] unto the end, the same shall be saved.” Matthew 24:12–13. Amen.

Joel L. Msiska, Malawi



“Let us grasp the rich promises of God. The garden of God is full of rich promises. Oh, let us gather them; let us take them home; let us show that we believe in God. Let us take Him at His word; let not one of us be found distrusting God or doubting Him.

“Let us be growing Christians. We are not to stand still. We are to be in advance today of what we were yesterday; every day learning to be more trustful, more fully relying upon Jesus. Thus we are to grow up. You do not at one bound reach perfection; sanctification is the work of a lifetime.” —*Selected Messages*, bk. 3, p. 193

“Many seem to think that it is impossible not to fall under temptation, that they have no power to overcome, and they sin against God with their lips, talking discouragement and doubt, instead of faith and courage. Christ was tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin. He said, ‘The prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in Me.’ What does this mean? It means that the prince of evil could find no vantage ground in Christ for his temptation; and so it may be with us.” —*The Review and Herald*, May 19, 1891



We Christians are not living peaceful, quiet lives; no, we are running a race, putting forth every effort into it. We are running this race not only for a little while, but for our entire life.

The Apostle Paul writes, “Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.” Hebrews 12:1

The athletes who are running a race do not carry anything heavy with them, because it would hinder them from winning the race.

Paul also wrote that in order to win the race, we must put away sin, and every weight. The weight may not always be sinful, but it could take our time, our strength, and our money. The weight could be hobbies, vacations, social involvements, collecting interesting items, and many other things that take our time from missionary work, from Bible reading, and from attending all church meetings.

Not everyone who becomes a Christian will finish the race. There will be a large number of professing Christians who will not finish the race. They did not put away every sin, and every weight, and this neglect made them not finish the race.

“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.” 1 Corinthians 9:24–27 NKJV

In our world today there are over two billion Christians who belong to different church organizations, and they all expect to be in heaven and have eternal life; but most of them will be lost in the end. Even in the very church of God there are members who will not be in heaven. They were running the race, but did not put every effort into it.

Jesus said, “Strive to enter in at the strait gate: for many, I say unto you, will seek to enter in, and shall not be able.” Luke 13:24

When someone buys a lottery ticket, he does not know if he will win the prize or not. But the race that we are running is not a gamble; we can know if we are winners before the race is even over.

Paul was still living and still running the race when he knew that he was saved, that he will be in heaven, and that he was a winner. “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.” 2 Timothy 4:7–8

We also know if we are saved by the seal of the Holy Spirit. “And grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.” Ephesians 4:30

“After that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise.” Ephesians 1:13

“Who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts.” 2 Corinthians 1:22

When the Holy Spirit enters our hearts, that moment we are saved. If we would die while the Holy Spirit dwells in us, we would be in heaven in the end; but if we stop running the race suddenly, then the Holy Spirit

would leave us.

Jesus said, "So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be My disciple." Luke 14:33

Many try not to invest too much, because it seems so risky. They may say, "maybe I am not good enough for heaven, and I also would lose the enjoyment and pleasure of sin."

To lose 20 dollars in the lottery is not too much, but to lose all for heaven and not to gain heaven would be too much to lose. Many risk little time and money on religion, hoping that they may win and have eternal life.

Peter writes, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." 2 Peter 1:10

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Philippians 2:12

Do not leave your salvation in the hands of others. No, you must do it yourself. If you run the race faithfully to the end, and give to God all that you have, then God will give you the Holy Spirit as a seal; a promise of eternal life.

How do you know that you have the Holy Spirit? It is very clear because when the Holy Spirit does enter into you, you will produce the fruit of the Spirit. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance." Galatians 5:22-23

When you can love even your enemies, and you have continuous joy, always rejoicing, faith to move mountains, then you know that the Holy Spirit is in you, and that you are winning the race.

Paul took an example of the worldly games, where only one gained the victory, but all competitors put forth rigid discipline and practice in order to win. "Such is not the case in Christian warfare. Not one who complies

with the conditions will be disappointed at the end of the race. Not one who is earnest and persevering will fail of success. The race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong. The weakest saint, as well as the strongest, may wear the crown of immortal glory. All may win who, through the power of divine grace, bring their lives into conformity to the will of Christ. The practice, in the details of life, of the principles laid down in God's word, is too often looked upon as unimportant—a matter too trivial to demand attention. But in view of the issue at stake, nothing is small that will help or hinder. Every act casts its weight into the scale that determines life's victory or defeat. And the reward given to those who win will be in proportion to the energy and earnestness with which they have striven." — *The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 313-314

Paul writes, "For we are made a spectacle unto the world, and to angels, and to men." 1 Corinthians 4:9

We are doing nothing in secret, there are many spectators watching us running the race. God Himself is watching us constantly, angels watch us very closely, the people in the unfallen worlds are watching us; and on this world, where we live, many people are keeping their eyes on us.

The heavenly spectators are very much concerned about our running the race. They rejoice when we make progress, but are sorrowful when we are slowing down. Jesus wept for the people whom He tried to save.

Let us put out every effort in order to finish the race. Ask for God's help to strengthen you to run to the very end, faithfully. You will be thankful for it for all eternity. Satan wants to slow you down into a life of quiet living, which means you will not finish the race. Daily you must see the advancement you are making in running toward perfection of character. We all can be winners in this race. Amen.

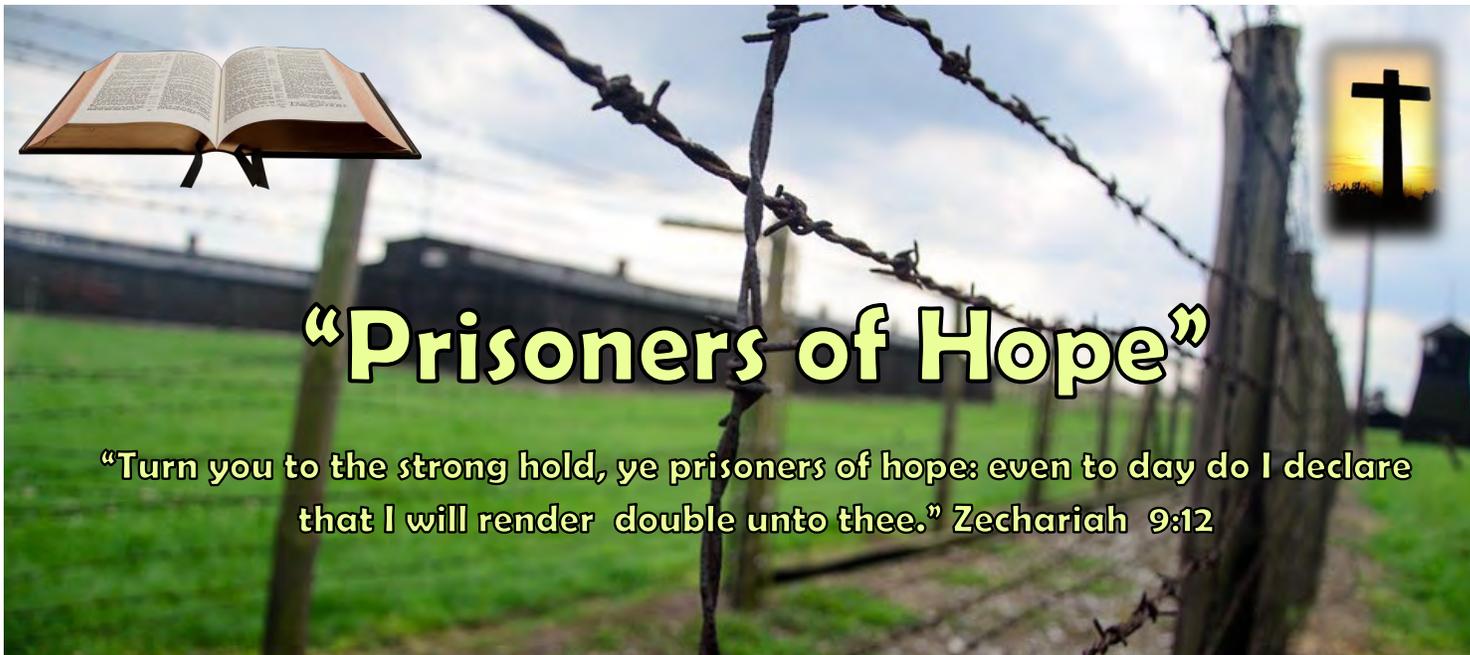
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“Prisoners of Hope”

“Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee.” Zechariah 9:12

This verse was written by Zechariah to the Jews who had just returned from Babylonian captivity. Since they had just returned, were they not free? From the world’s point of view the situation the Jews faced at that time was pretty hopeless, since their city was in ruins. They were an impoverished people, yet God calls them “*prisoners of hope*”.

The returned exiles thought themselves to be the prisoners of circumstance, but God gave them something to hope for. He promised deliverance from their seemingly hopeless situation if they would diligently obey His voice. They seemed hopeless and helpless from the world’s point of view, but they were “*prisoners of hope*” from God’s perspective. They were promised double if they would hold on with hope to the promise that God had given them.

How can you be a prisoner of hope?

Hope means: a confident and eager expectation of something good, while prisoner means: a person that is deprived of liberty. They seem so opposite. No freedom, but confident, expecting something good from something that does not appear so good. How can we be a prisoner of something good? People like hope; the word has a positive connotation. However, the word prisoner has a negative connotation. How can we reconcile the two ideas?

Many prisoners are held in captivity due to some crime they committed. They are often not happy to be in their situation, and wish to be free. Then there are prisoners who are held captive, not for any crime they committed, as was Joseph in the Old Testament. Their liberty is restricted. Or today, some people doing humanitarian work in various war-torn countries have found

themselves hostages by rebel soldiers. They also are not happy in their situation, wishing freedom.

Jesus says, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.” John 8:32. So, if the truth liberates us, why are we a prisoner of hope? How can hope imprison us? Does not hope set us free?

Although we may not be behind prison bars, there are times when we may feel a prisoner of our circumstances in life.

God had promised David that he would rule the kingdom of Israel, and Samuel had anointed him for the position (1 Samuel 16:13). But after David had been anointed as king of all Israel, he had to go back to tending sheep. It was years before the promise came to pass for David, and he spent many of those years being chased by the man whose throne he would inherit. Back in the pasture on his father’s farm, he did not envision himself hiding out in caves or pretending to be a madman in order to save his own life (1 Samuel 21:13–22:1). King David, before he became king, likely did not feel truly free when he was living in a cave and fleeing from King Saul. He knew he was to be the next king, but why was he running for his life? His faith even faltered at some point when he cried, “Mine eyes fail for Thy word.” Psalm 119:82. Perhaps he felt as though the promise would never be fulfilled. But it was. God’s promises will never fail.

Perhaps Moses also felt “in prison” when he was 40 years in the wilderness tending sheep, knowing that the promise had been made in the past that he would be the one to deliver the Israelites from Egypt. Did he have hope? Did he see it as a hopeful situation? Perhaps not at the time.

People living in free countries today still feel like prisoners. Maybe their circumstances are not what they want them to be. They feel trapped and imprisoned, with no way out. They eat, sleep, work to pay their bills, and life goes round and round in that cycle.

We may be a prisoner of time. We have so much to do, but the time does not allow it all to be done. We are held captive to time.

Can we say we truly are living in hope in these varied kinds of experiences?

The promise is, “God never leads His children otherwise than they would choose to be led, if they could see the end from the beginning and discern the glory of the purpose which they are fulfilling as co-workers with Him.” —*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 479. We have to believe His promises and trust Him fully—have hope.

In the New Living Translation of the Bible, the text in Zechariah 9:12 reads: “Come back to the place of safety, all you prisoners who still have hope! I promise this very day that I will repay two blessings for each of your troubles.”

Here it reads, “prisoners who still have hope.” Captives who have hope of deliverance because they are still trusting in God. Or, in other words, those who feel like prisoners (whether an actual prisoner physically or a prisoner of circumstances), can find hope. And they are promised “two blessings for each of your troubles.” “That thou mayest say to the prisoners, Go forth; to them that are in darkness, Show yourselves. They shall feed in the ways, and their pastures shall be in all high places.” Isaiah 49:9

Being a prisoner of hope is not a shameful position to be in. “And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us.” Romans 5:5

What results in this hope that the Apostle Paul wrote of? How is it obtained? Let us read the verses preceding this in Romans chapter 5. “Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; And patience, experience; and experience, hope.” Romans 5:1–4

Hope is the end product of tribulations. It is something to be glad about. “Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer.” Romans 12:12. Yes,

have hope, as the promise is, you will be given two blessings for each of your troubles.

“Tell Jesus your wants in the sincerity of your soul. You are not required to hold a long controversy with, or preach a sermon to, God, but with a heart of sorrow for your sins, say, ‘Save me, Lord, or I perish.’ There is hope for such souls. They will seek, they will ask, they will knock, and they will find. When Jesus has taken away the burden of sin that is crushing the soul, you will experience the blessedness of the peace of Christ.” —*Our High Calling*, p. 131

Do you feel sometimes as though you are hopeless? Well, you are not without hope; you are not hopeless, but you are helpless. God has put you in a position of helplessness or complete dependency on Him, and you are helpless to help yourself. You struggle to gain some measure of control over your life, but your pride is being crushed during this helpless state, and the only thing for you to do is to surrender and receive God’s peace. You may feel hopeless, but really it is the condition of helplessness that is causing you pain. God wants you completely dependent on Him, and He will keep you a prisoner of hope until you are.

What now feels like a prison cell to you, God sees as a fortress. “The name of the LORD is a strong tower: the righteous runneth into it, and is safe.” Proverbs 18:10. He loves you and if you give Him control of your life, He will guard it for you. Perhaps what feels to you like a prison cell may really be your place of safety and protection. David did not like being in a cave, but it saved him from King Saul. You may not like the circumstances you are in now, but do not run from them. They may be what are saving your life. Be patient in your particular tribulation. Take the words of Jesus to heart. If you rejoice in your tribulation it will work patience, then experience, and then hope, in your life.

“Christ became the sinless sacrifice for a guilty race, making men prisoners of hope, so that through repentance toward God because they had broken His holy law, and through faith in Christ as their Substitute, Surety, and righteousness, they might be brought back to loyalty to God and to obedience to His holy law.” —*Faith and Works*, p. 117. “We may make mistakes; we may err; but God will not leave us in error. ‘If we sin we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.’ There is hope for us; we are prisoners of hope.” —*Selected Messages*, vol. 3 p. 192

Just ask the Holy Spirit to lead you and He will use you to inspire others to become prisoners of hope. “There

is no excuse for the faith of our churches to be so faint and feeble. 'Turn you to the Stronghold, ye prisoners of hope.' Zechariah 9:12. There is strength for us in Christ. He is our Advocate before the Father. He dispatches His messengers to every part of His dominion to communicate His will to His people. He walks in the midst of His churches. He desires to sanctify, elevate, and ennoble His followers. The influence of those who truly believe in Him will be a savor of life in the world. He holds the stars in His right hand, and it is His purpose to let His light shine through these to the world. Thus He desires to prepare His people for higher service in the church above. He has given us a great work to do. Let us do it with accuracy and determination. Let us show in our lives what the truth has done for us." —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 418

"Often the hearts of men will harden under rebuke, but they cannot withstand the love expressed toward them in Christ. We should bid the sinner not to feel himself an outcast from God. Bid the sinner look to Christ, who alone can heal the soul leprous with sin. Reveal to the desperate, discouraged sufferer that he is a prisoner of hope. Let your message be: 'Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.'" —*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 279

"God calls upon His faithful ones, who believe in Him, to talk courage to those who are unbelieving and hopeless. Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name." —*Prophets and Kings*, p. 260

Many Christians may be prisoners "with" hope. Through all their trials and difficulties, they have hope for a better future, if not on this world, then when Christ will come. David and Moses both had this kind of hope as they were given the promise of leadership and they held on to this hope.

Here is another slightly different way of looking at this verse in Zechariah 9:12 as opposed to being a prisoner "with" hope. What other way can we be described as, being prisoners "of" hope as written in the original King James Version?

The Apostle Paul tells us that we are servants. "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness? But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became the servants of righteousness." Romans 6:16–18

The Greek word for servants here used is, "douloi", which is literally translated to mean, slaves or bond servants. A slave is regarded as property and the master can dispose of him as he pleases. Under a cruel master the life of a slave is very oppressive and he is often treated worse than an animal. This is the true condition of every sinner. They are a slave to Satan, who is a cruel taskmaster, who has relentlessly enslaved people with evil desires and appetites. Those who serve sin and Satan are the slaves of their own impulses and passions, which in turn are under the control of Satan. Ask a smoker to give up his habit, and see how easy it is. Ask a person with any addiction to give up his addiction. They feel bound by chains of circumstances that they cannot free themselves from.



Interesting that Paul uses the same Greek word to describe the followers of Christ. By doing so, he states that the Christian is the property of Christ. Since Christ is a good and benevolent task master, then serving Him truly is freedom because He requires no obedience that He does not turn into eternal advantage for His servants.

Paul goes on to say we cannot serve two masters. We only serve one. The conduct of our life will reveal which servant we are obeying.

So, conversion is simply a change of masters. The believer is delivered from the slavery of sin and becomes a slave of righteousness. But slavery to righteousness equates with freedom. A slave then could be said to be a prisoner as they have no freedom to do what they want. They are obeying one master or the other.

Hence, a person who surrenders to Christ can they not be said to be a "prisoner of hope"?

"What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a

price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

The converted man is a willing slave (prisoner) of Jesus Christ, who lives only to please his Master. Being a slave, the true Christian is the property of Jesus, bound to live mentally, physically and spiritually as God directs. Gladly will he rather be a prisoner of hope than a prisoner of his evil passions and desires (the devil).

Or you can choose to be a slave (prisoner) to Satan, and then you will be bound to live, mentally and physically as he directs, fulfilling all fleshly desires and passions. Although Satan presents it as a life free from restraint, it is truly the worst kind of slavery, which only the power of God can deliver a man from.

The choice is ours. We are a prisoner of the devil or a prisoner of Christ—a prisoner of hope.

"And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." Joshua 24:15

"And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow Him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word." 1 Kings 18:21

By every decision we make daily, whether small or large, we are deciding who is our master/Master.

We will speak the words of our chosen master/Master. We will eat the foods of our master/Master, we will spend our time as our master/Master would. We will dress like our master/Master,

we will think and act like our master/Master.

"We have done great dishonor to our Master in turning away from Christ to seek wisdom from finite human beings. Shall we continue to cherish the sin of unbelief, which doth so easily beset us, or shall we cast away this weight of unbelief, and go to the Source of strength believing that we shall receive pity and compassion from the One who knows our frame, who loves us so well that He gave His own life for us, who bore in His own body the strokes which fell because of our transgression of the law of God. All this He did that we might become prisoners of hope." —*Lift Him Up*, p. 93

Make a decision to cultivate an attitude of hope in your life. Remember the promise, two blessings for each of your troubles. Speak positive things about your future and refuse to be negative. You may not always feel hopeful but do not give in to your feelings. Catering to bad feelings feeds and empowers them. But standing our ground and not giving in to negative feelings starves them and causes them to lose their power over us.

"Turn to the Lord, ye prisoners of hope. Seek strength from God, the living God. Show an unwavering, humble faith in His power and His willingness to save. From Christ is flowing the living stream of salvation. He is the Fountain of life, the Source of all power. When in faith we take hold of His strength, He will change, wonderfully change, the most hopeless, discouraging outlook. He will do this for the glory of His name." — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 8, p. 12. Amen.

Wendy Eaton



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Disobedience

Neglecting little things, may lead to great consequences: God's requirements are to be respected and obeyed: there is no little sin!

"Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD our God, until that He have mercy upon us. Psalm 123:2

"It is a mistake for any to suppose that they can with safety pass by the little things with indifference. In the home and in the church there are matters which are looked upon as 'little things.' But it is these 'little things' that have the great results. It is the 'little things' that discipline the soul, and prepare men to act with lowly-mindedness under large responsibilities." —*The Signs of the Times*, October 27, 1898

"Faithfulness in little things should characterize the life, true integrity should mark all the course of action. It is the conscientious attention to what the world calls little things that makes the great beauty and success of life." —*The Youth's Instructor*, April 21, 1898

"The children of God should cultivate a keen sensitiveness to sin. . . . It is one of Satan's most successful devices to lead men to the commission of little sins, to blind the mind to the danger of little indulgences, little digressions from the plainly stated requirements of God. Many who would shrink with horror from some great transgression are led to look upon sin in little matters as of trifling consequence. But these little sins eat out the life of godliness in the soul." —*That I May Know Him*, p. 252

Nowhere in the Bible does God give the slightest tolerance for men to modify His revealed will. God says

what He means to say, and He accepts nothing less than full compliance with His commandments. Some dramatic experiences are recorded in the Scriptures which emphasize this urgent truth. Two sons of the high priest offered strange fire before the Lord, and they died on the spot. God had required that they use only the sacred fire in the sanctuary during their priestly ministry. While under the influence of alcohol, to them it seemed unreasonable that one fire could not burn sacrifices as well as another fire. Using such human judgment, Nadab and Abihu disobeyed the direct command of the Lord and died. They did not understand the seriousness of violating the sanctity of that



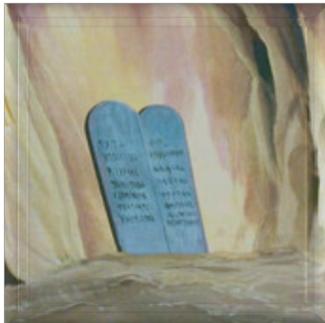
which God had set apart for a holy use. Similar arguments are used today in connection with things which have been sanctified by God. Often it is asked, "What is the difference between

worshiping on the Sabbath and worshiping on Sunday? One day is just as good as the other." The tremendous difference is that God made one day holy and wrote an unchangeable law about it on tables of stone. The day is different because it has God's special blessing upon it. Woe to the man who touches with common hands those holy institutions of God!

Nadab and Abihu were not guilty of any rebellious defiance of their faith in other areas of their religious office. They never considered refusing to carry out the proper type of offering in the manner prescribed by the Levitical statutes. The small matter of the fire was the only command which struck them as frivolous and arbitrary while intoxicated. In that area alone, they felt justified in making a tiny change that would more easily and smoothly fit into their idea of functional worship. They reasoned that such a minor deviation in the interests of such a sanctified program could not bring any serious consequences. God would certainly not count it a sin to improve on a program to worship Him. It is thus they reasoned while under the influence of alcohol.

“God requires us to prove our loyalty to Him by unquestioning obedience. In deciding upon any course we should not ask merely whether we can see harm to result from it, but whether it is contrary to the will of God. We must learn to distrust self and to rely wholly upon God for guidance and support, for a knowledge of His will, and for strength to perform it. . . . ‘As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress,’ so should our eyes be upon the Lord our God. His commands should be received with implicit faith, and obeyed with cheerful exactness.” *–Ibid.*, p. 252

Jehovah, the Lord says: “Abraham obeyed My voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws.” Genesis 26:5



“Parental indulgence causes disorder in families and in society. It confirms in the young the desire to follow inclination, instead of submitting to the divine requirements. Thus they grow up with a heart averse to doing God’s will, and they transmit their irreligious, insubordinate spirit to their children and children’s children. Like Abraham, parents should command their households after them. Let obedience to parental authority be taught and enforced as the first step in obedience to the authority of God.” *–Reflecting Christ*, p. 194

“As the mother teaches her children to obey her because they love her, she is teaching them the first lessons in the Christian life. The mother’s love represents to the child the love of Christ, and the little ones who trust and obey their mother are learning to trust and obey the Saviour.” *–The Desire of Ages*, p. 515

What an irony that much disobedience of God’s law takes place in the name of religion! Christ acknowledged that men would be worshiping Him while they substituted the “commandments of men” for His requirements. He rejected such worship as vain and empty. In the Sermon on the Mount, He described a large class who would seek entrance into the kingdom because they had prophesied, cast out demons, and done many wonderful works “in thy name.” Yet Jesus will say to them, “I never knew you: depart from Me.” Matthew 7:23

How can people become so blind and deceived that they feel securely saved while willfully breaking God’s commandments? In their vain worship, they bowed

“Children who dishonor and disobey their parents, and disregard their advice and instructions, can have no part in the earth made new. The purified new earth will be no place for the rebellious, the disobedient, the ungrateful, son or daughter. Unless such learn obedience and submission here, they will never learn it; the peace of the ransomed will not be marred by disobedient, unruly, unsubmitive children. No commandment breaker can inherit the kingdom of heaven. . . .

“What a promise is here made upon condition of obedience! Do you have to cut loose from friends and relatives in deciding to obey the elevated truths of God’s Word? Take courage, God has made provision for you, His arms are open to receive you. Come out from among them and be separate, and touch not the unclean, and He will receive you. He promises to be a Father unto you. Oh, what a relationship is this! higher and holier than any earthly tie. If you make the sacrifice, if you have to forsake father, mother, sisters, brothers, wife, and children for Christ’s sake, you will not be friendless. God adopts you into His family; you become members of the royal household, sons and daughters of the King who rules in the heaven of heavens. Can you desire a more exalted position than is here promised? Is not this enough? — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 497-510.” *– To Be Like Jesus*, p. 51

regularly in prayer, sang songs of praise, and probably never missed a church service. They professed great love for God and gave moving testimonies of the same.

Does the same problem exist today? Do religious people still disobey God's law while professing to love Him? On any given Sabbath, look around you to see what is going on. People will be ignoring the very heart commandment which God wrote on the tables of stone: "The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work." Exodus 20:10

Who are these people who ignore God's Sabbath commandment? As you see them hurrying about their regular work program, pursuing their own pleasure on the seventh day, there seems to be no remorse for violating the clear command of God. Yet tomorrow many of them will be in church, praying, singing, and talking about how much they love Jesus. Where did they get their definition of love? Was it from the bumper stickers on the interstate—"Smile if you love Jesus," "Wave if you love Jesus," "Honk if you love Jesus"? That is not what Jesus said, is it? He declared, "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." John 14:15

TO OBEY IS BETTER

Why do people feel secure in breaking one of the Ten Commandments? For the same reason Saul felt secure in bringing back the forbidden sheep and oxen. God had told him not to bring back anything after he defeated the Amalekites. But Saul was going to use those animals to sacrifice in his worship of God. Notice how incredibly illogic his actions are. He disobeyed in taking the animals and then tried to justify the disobedience by using the stolen animals in worshiping God. In the same way, modern church members disobey God by taking the Sabbath for their own use. Then they do like Saul and try to justify their disobedience by worshiping God in the name of what they have stolen.

God declared through the prophet Samuel, "To obey is better than sacrifice." It is also better than all the vain worship of a thousand religious services performed in conjunction with the willful violation of His specific command. Obedience is better than anything else in revealing our love. Jesus said so. "If ye love Me, keep My commandments." Disobedience is worse than anything because it is an act of disloyalty in its very nature.

Observing a counterfeit day derived from the pagan worship of the sun is no more acceptable to God than Saul's prize-winning sheep and cattle. He is not honored by disobedience, and He is especially offended by the breaking of His commandments in the name of worship.

Have you noticed that in the stories of Nadab, Abihu, and Uzzah (see Numbers 26:61; 2 Samuel 6:6-7) the seemingly slight offense had to do with things God had set apart for sacred use? The fire was holy and the Ark of the Covenant was holy. Both were to be reserved and preserved for one sacred purpose only. Common hands were not to be laid on the ark and common fire was not to replace the holy fire. When those "set apart" things were treated just like common things, the judgments of God fell.

Are there sanctified things today which God has set apart for a holy use? Indeed there are. The Sabbath has been described by God as "My holy day." Isaiah 58:13-

14. That one-seventh of time has been signally blessed and commanded by God for rest and worship.

The tithe is something else which has been separated by the Word of God for a special, sacred purpose. To appropriate that one-tenth for ourselves is actually to steal from the very coffers of God.

The Scriptures describe it thus: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings." Malachi 3:8

Some people are horrified to read about the judgments which fell upon Uzzah when he touched the ark of God and upon Lot's wife when she simply turned her head. Are tiny infractions so serious that sudden death can ensue? Does this indicate that the quantity of sin is not so significant as the quality of it? If Eve's simple act of biting the fruit could precipitate six millenniums of planetary suffering and death, surely we dare not measure disobedience in terms of size or appearance.

No wonder, then, that Lot's wife suffered the same terrible consequences as all others who trifled with the word of a holy God. The offense of looking back indicated a divided will. It also revealed the fact that her heart was still bound up with the affairs of a corrupt, condemned social order. Two voices were competing for her allegiance: one, the voice of the highlands—the

**"According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall show thee, to the right hand, nor to the left."
Deuteronomy 17:11**

voice of God calling her to liberty, purity, and salvation; the other, the voice of the lowlands—the voice of popularity and pleasure, the voice of Sodom. Slowly the voice from beneath gained the mastery of a badly bent



conscience, and Lot's wife stands before us as a tragic example of a divided heart.

Jesus said, "Remember Lot's wife" (Luke 17:32), and He said it to those who would live through the final

traumatic moments of earth's history. He is saying it to us right now—"Remember Lot's wife." We need that message. Millions are just as double-minded as Lot's wife. They find no time to pray with their family. Like Lot's wife, many read magazines more than the Bible, and thus they have only a superficial form of religion. Like Lot's wife, they linger around the edges of sin—make no strong decision to go all the way in obedience to God.

"Those who seek to lessen the claims of God's holy law are striking directly at the foundation of the government of families and nations. Religious parents, failing to walk in His statutes, do not command their household to keep the way of the Lord. The law of God is not made the rule of life. The children, as they make homes of their own, feel under no obligation to teach their children what they themselves have never been taught. And this is why there are so many godless families." — *Reflecting Christ*, p. 194

We have no liberty to turn either to the right hand or to the left from God requirements (Deuteronomy 17:11, 20).

"Obedience Leads to Perfection. We cannot overestimate the value of simple faith and unquestioning obedience. It is by following in the path of obedience in simple faith that the character obtains perfection" (*Letter 119*, 1895). In these last days, people neglect God's requirements especially regarding:

Sabbath day, saying: "It is just a day, no relationship with salvation and resting on Sabbath."

Health reform (dress reform and food) saying,

"these are counsels, and their non-observance cannot prevent you entering heaven."

Tithe, marriage, etc: "we are free to do according to our choice, God will approve."

"Obedience to every word of God is another condition of success. Victories are not gained by ceremonies or display, but by simple obedience to the highest General, the Lord God of heaven. He who trusts in this Leader will never know defeat. Defeat comes in depending on human methods, human inventions, and placing the divine secondary. Obedience was the lesson that the Captain of the Lord's host sought to teach the vast armies of Israel—obedience in things in which they could see no success. When there is obedience to the voice of our Leader, Christ will conduct His battles in ways that will surprise the greatest powers of earth." — *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 6, p. 140

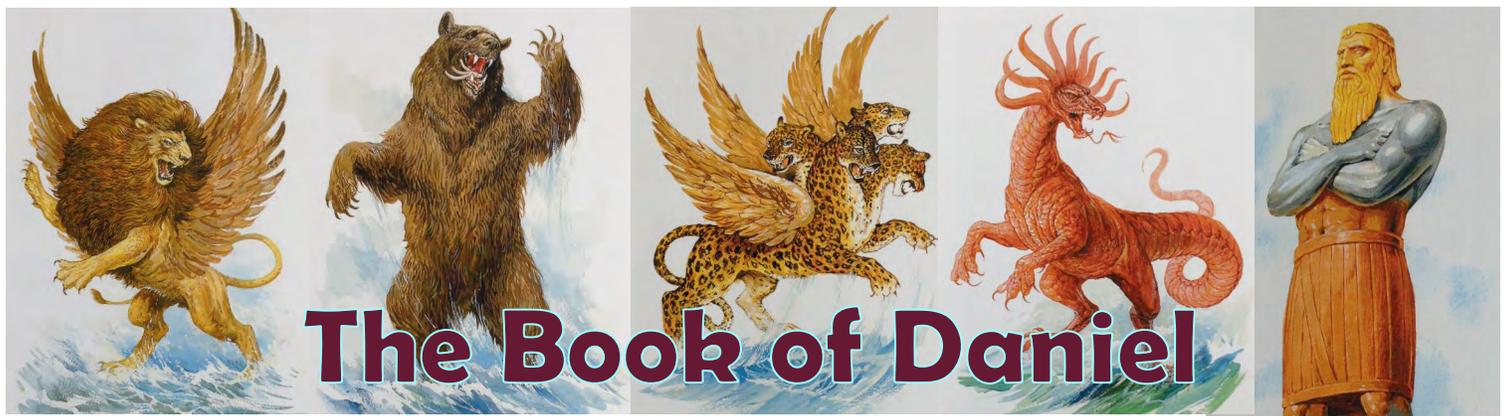
"It is the little foxes that spoil the vines; the little neglects, the little deficiencies, the little dishonesties, the little departures from principle, that blind the soul and separate it from God." — *The Review and Herald*, December 29, 1910

It is the little things of life that develop the spirit and determine the character. Those who neglect the little things will not be prepared to endure severe tests when they are brought to bear upon them. Remember that the character building is not finished till life ends. Every day a good or a bad brick is placed in the structure. You are either building crookedly or with the exactness and correctness that will make a beautiful temple for God. Therefore, in looking for great things to do, neglect not the little opportunities that come to you day by day. He who neglects the little things, and yet flatters himself that he is ready to do wonderful things for the Master, is in danger of failing altogether. Life is made up, not of great sacrifices and wonderful achievements, but of little things. Amen.



He who neglects the little things, and yet flatters himself that he is ready to do wonderful things for the Master, is in danger of failing altogether. Life is made up, not of great sacrifices and wonderful achievements, but of little things. Amen.

Victor Shumbusho,
Congo



Why study the book of Daniel? There are several reasons why someone should study the book of Daniel. I personally believe that there is a great blessing bestowed upon the sincere, faithful, and persevering searcher for the pearls that God put in His book, the Bible.

First of all, the Bible tells us that Jesus Himself studied Daniel, and foretold the time that Daniel prophesied “the abomination of desolation.” These words are recorded in the book of Mark 13:14, “But when ye shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not, (let him that readeth understand,) then let them that be in Judaea flee to the mountains.” And also in Matthew 24:15, “When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand).” Secondly, Daniel foretold events that would happen up until the end of the world. The prophetic book of Revelation is based on the principles found in the book of Daniel. These two books are complementary and companion books, they fit together. Thirdly, you and I will be blessed by the Lord in a special way as written in Revelation 1:3. “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” Not only that, but if we make a full surrender to Jesus, He will make us wise, “And they that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament; and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever.” Daniel 12:3

The book of Daniel is for our time, as foretold in Daniel 12. “And one said to the man clothed in linen, which was upon the waters of the river, How long shall it be to the end of these wonders? And I heard, but I understood not: then said I, O my Lord, what shall be the end of these things? And he said, Go thy way, Daniel: for the words are closed up and sealed till the time of the end. But go thou thy way till the end be: for thou shalt rest, and stand in thy lot at the end of the days.” Daniel 12:6, 8–9, 13. The “time of the end” and the “end of time” are two different things. Many people are confused regarding these periods. The first is making reference to the

end time events; to be more specific this is the time after 1798 A.D. up until our day. The second is the end of all things, no more grace for the unrepentant sinner. Jesus is coming for the second time to take His faithful believers to Heaven. That is the end of time. Keep in mind this important issue.

We are not alone when we study the book of Daniel. As we study Daniel, God Himself will reveal amazing truths for us. In fact, as we study the book of Daniel, we will discover that the book of Daniel is not just a historical document. It is not merely a document with dates and facts. But as we study, we will see the Christ of Daniel in all the pages, and we will notice Him especially near to the problems and the challenges of our own lives.

The book of Daniel is divided into two segments, namely historic and prophetic, or prophecies and stories. The stories reveal “how” and the prophecies reveal “when”. What is the purpose of prophecy? Is it that we can boast about our knowledge? Other people do not know what we know. Is this the reason God gave us prophecy and understanding? Of course not.

One purpose for the prophecies in Daniel is to enable God’s people to prepare for the future. Knowing what is coming keeps us clearly aware and enables us to understand the future. Another reason is, the more you study prophecy and see its fulfillment, the more it builds your confidence in the Bible. “Believe in the LORD your God, so shall ye be established; believe His prophets, so shall ye prosper.” 2 Chronicles 20:20, last part. So, according to this, it strengthens our faith and perseverance in our walk with God. Peter said in his first epistle “For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.” 2 Peter 1:21. Think of what God is saying here. Prophecy is not man-made or a church invention; it is the will of God for us, in order for us to know His plans. “Surely the LORD God will do nothing, but He revealeth His secret unto His servants the prophets.” Amos 3:7. God does not want anyone to be taken by surprise; He



wants to let people know what will happen. God is not like man saying, "I got you." No, He gives us knowledge and time to take our stand.

Jesus gave another specific reason, "Howbeit when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come." John 16:13. Do you want to know the truth? Do you want to know the future? Do you want to prepare for Jesus' coming? I hope you can sincerely answer with all your heart—yes, Lord, we want that, please help us.

The book of Daniel was written by the prophet Daniel himself. There are some people who say that Daniel was not a prophet. In the past many scholars believed Daniel was not a prophet at all. But the scholars who once were critical have their mouths closed today. Why? Because the prophecies of Daniel have been confirmed historically. The prophecies of Daniel were accurate. Today, with an abundance of historical evidence that Daniel's prophecies came true, other scholars say, "Oh, Daniel was not a prophet, because his prophecies were too accurate. He must have written them after the events took place." But what does Jesus say in Matthew 24:15? Do not miss it. Daniel, the what? "The prophet!" If Jesus says that Daniel is a prophet, I believe that Daniel is a prophet. Since the book was written by the prophet Daniel, it would have had to have been written while he lived, in the sixth century B.C. Daniel was taken captive to Babylon in 606–605 B.C. Hence, the book of Daniel must have been written sometime during and after those years.

The name Daniel comes from two words; "Dan" and "el." The tribe of Dan was the tribe of judges. And the "el" on the end comes from the name for God, Elohim. So Daniel means "the God of justice and judgment." When we think of a judge today, we think of one who condemns us, but that was not the Old Testament concept of judgment. The judge is the one who sets all things right. The judge is the one who vindicates. The judge is the one who exonerates. So the book of Daniel is about the God of judgment and justice—the God of the universe who will ultimately set all things right. Kingdoms rise and fall, but God sitting upon His throne holds the destinies of the nations in His hand, and He will set all things right. In the controversy between good and evil, in the panorama between right and wrong, in the battle for the throne of the universe, the God of judgment and justice will set all things right. That is what "Daniel" means.

Much of the books of Daniel and Revelation are written in symbolic language. In order to correctly interpret the prophecies, one must understand the Biblical meaning of

the symbols, because once the symbols are understood, the prophecies make sense. This does not mean that every time these words appear in Scripture they have symbolic meaning. We should make that differentiation when we talk about the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. I would like to bring to your attention to a few general principles of Biblical interpretation. As every thinking person knows, it is the context that determines the meaning of words. Words are only tools, and they can be used in many different ways, but understanding the meaning behind those words is what matters. Sometimes we do not understand what people are saying, because we do not listen very well. Before they finish saying what they have in mind, we begin to formulate in our mind something else. In other words, we may assume the person is saying something he or she does not mean at all. We can do the same with the Bible sometimes. We assume it is teaching some things that it is not teaching. That is why people misinterpret what God is teaching in His Word.

General principles of Bible interpretation

Principle #1. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. "For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:11, 14

Principle #2. The Bible is Christ-centered. "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Genesis 3:15. "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me." John 5:39

Principle #3. The Bible interprets itself. "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, He expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning Himself." Luke 24:27

Principle #4. Context matters. It is very important. Remember the old saying; "a text without context is a pre-text."

With these things in our mind let us make a deeper study of these very important Bible prophecies regarding the final events in this world's history.

God bless you!

Nicholas Anca



Where is Heaven?

Have you ever wondered what heaven is like? Have you wondered where heaven is? Have you ever been asked by co-worker or a friend where heaven is? How do you respond or what would you say?

In the world today, there are many thoughts and arguments on what heaven is and whether or not it actually exists. The idea and concepts of evolution have outgrown the idea of heaven around the globe. Heaven is not a matter of speculation. Heaven is a real place. Every time the Lord's Prayer is repeated we acknowledge God is in heaven, for we say, "Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name." Matthew 6:9

Heaven is where God's throne can be found. Psalm 103:19 tells to us that "the LORD hath prepared His throne in the heavens; and His kingdom ruleth over all." In order for God to be able to see and rule over everything, He would need to reside in the most high of heaven. Job marveled at the height of the heaven and the height of the stars where God is and He is watching His people. "Is not God in the height of heaven? and behold the height of the stars, how high they are!" Job 22:12

One can only dream and try to image the great distance between earth and heaven. Man has had the opportunity to travel to the moon and that journey is a very long trip. Heaven is at a much longer distance and it makes you wonder if God can hear our prayers as they ascend to heaven. God is so great that He can hear us.

"If My people, which are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven,

and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." 2 Chronicles 7:14

God will hear our prayers when we humble ourselves to Him and follow His law.

Will the righteous ever go to heaven? Yes, they most certainly will. I believe it is a true desire that we all want to see, meet, and be in God's presence. In John 14:1-3, Jesus tells us that in His Father's house there are mansions. Not townhouses, not semi-detached homes, or apartments; but mansions that He is preparing for us. He says, "And If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto Myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3

When will the righteous have the opportunity to go to heaven? We all are anxious to go to heaven and patiently wait for His second coming. "For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord." 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17

There are people today that believe that the righteous that have died in Christ are in heaven now. However, it is not possible. Paul makes this point clear that they are asleep. "But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which

are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep." 1 Thessalonians 4:13–15. Some have questioned what Paul meant when said, "Them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring with Him." The Greek reads, "For since we believe in Jesus died and rose; so also [we believe] that God, through Jesus will lead forth with Him those who fell asleep." Paul explains that just as Christ was raised from the dead, God will call the sleeping righteous from their graves and will take them with Him to heaven.

Paul further explains his idea, "Knowing that He which raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise up us also by Jesus, and shall present us with You." 2 Corinthians 4:14. This comes to show that the righteous dead will only be raised and made alive at the coming of Jesus.

Heaven is a place that we all dream to be in one day. However, the reality is that not everyone will make it. "Open ye the gates, that the righteous nation which keepeth the truth may enter in." Isaiah 26:2. And what is this truth? Jesus tells us that "Thy word is truth." John 17:17. It is very important that we follow very closely what the Bible tells us to do. Only if we are to follow His commandments, can we gain entry through the pearly gates.

Before we are granted the opportunity to enter heaven, a change is going to occur in our bodies. "Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the

last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality." 1 Corinthians 15:51–53. When the redeemed are given immortality at the coming of the Lord, they will never die.

All the descriptions we find in the Bible about heaven are truly amazing. However, we are left with a question. Are you getting ready for Christ's second coming? Are you preparing yourself for heaven? In order to enter heaven, you must have your name recorded in the book of life. "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:27. If your name is not written in the book of life, then it is clear what happens to us. "And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." Revelation 20:15

Today, we have the great opportunity to have our names written in the book of life, but how? The Apostle John clearly laid it out for us. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." John 1:9

Amen

Edwin Alfaro



NORTH AMERICAN YOUTH CONFERENCES 2016

"Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity." 1 Timothy 4:12

TORONTO, CANADA. July 31-August 3. If you are between the ages of 13 to 32, like camping, canoeing and communing with nature, come join us for some time away from the city and experience the handiwork of our Creator. There will be some interesting workshops and outdoor activity in the rugged beauty of Killbear Provincial Park, 3 hours north of Toronto. Cost: \$100. For more information email: osner777@hotmail.com or call (+1) 514-521-7272

CEDARTOWN, U.S.A. JULY 17-23. An International Youth and Family Conference will be held in Cedartown USA. Presentations will be given by brethren who have carried the gospel message around the world, touching the hearts of many young people and families. Time will be devoted to topics of particular interest to various age groups. There will also be public outreach, praise, fellowship, recreation and much more. For more information email: youth@sda1844.org or youngreformers.us@gmail.com or call (+1) 770-748-0077 or (+1) 678-246-9085



Who Will be in Heaven?

“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My father which is in heaven.” Matthew 7:21

Let us look at several groups of people who will be in heaven. First, we have the prophets of the Old Testament. Our first example is found in Genesis 5:24, “And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.” Enoch is the first recorded human being to enter heaven. His experience was to give hope to his people. The inhabitants then, as now, were doubtful of a reward for those who lived a faithful life. Why did Enoch go to heaven? How did he earn his place there?

“He educated his mind and heart to ever feel that he was in the presence of God, and when in perplexity his prayers would ascend to God to keep him. He refused to take any course that would offend his God. He kept the Lord continually before Him. He would pray, ‘Teach me Thy way, that I may not err. What is Thy pleasure concerning me? What shall I do to honour thee, my God?’ Thus he was constantly shaping his way and course in accordance with God’s commandments, and he had perfect confidence and trust in his heavenly Father, that He would help him. He had no thought or will of his own. It was all submerged in the will of his Father.” —*Last Day Events*, p. 71

Let us take a look at our next example. “So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD. And He buried him in a valley in the land of Moab, over against Beth-peor: but no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.” Deuteronomy 34:5–6

“And it came to pass about an eight days after these sayings, He took Peter and John and James, and went up into a

mountain to pray. And as He prayed, the fashion of His countenance was altered, and His raiment was white and glistering. And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” Luke 9:28–30

Moses is our second Old Testament prophet who arose and went to heaven. Of course there is very much written about Moses in the Old Testament. His life story, his humility learned in the desert, and the mighty works he did in God’s power. Why was Moses taken into heaven? “By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh’s daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward.” Hebrews 11:24–26

Here we see a correlation between Moses and Enoch and all those who wish to be saved. That is “choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin.”

If we read Luke 9:30 again, we will find our last example from the Old Testament. “And, behold, there talked with Him two men, which were Moses and Elias.” Here we see our next example, Elijah. “And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” 2 Kings 2:11

“Those who are to prepare the way for the second coming of Jesus are represented by faithful Elijah, as John came in the spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for Christ’s first advent. The work of John the Baptist, and the work of those who in the last days go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to arouse the people from their apathy, are in many respects the same. His work is a type of the work that must be done in this age. Christ is to come the second time to judge the world in righteousness.” —*Maranatha*, p. 22

These three examples of Old Testament prophets who arose, and were taken to heaven were to be an example for the people in their time period. But also for those throughout the ages, even down to our age. As the *Bible Study Handbook* says, “These three Old Testament persons were taken to heaven doubtlessly to give encouragement to God’s people that there would truly be a reward for the faithful.”

Aside from those in the Old Testament, there are others who have gone to heaven to stay. “Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks

rent; And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, And came out of the graves after His resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many. Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God." Matthew 27:50–54. The Spirit of Prophecy tells us that these saints were to be in heaven with Jesus, "Those who came forth from the grave at Christ's resurrection were raised to everlasting life. They ascended with Him as trophies of His victory over death, and the grave. . . . I have brought them from the grave as the first fruits of My power, to be with Me, where I am, nevermore to see death or experience sorrow." –*The Desire of Ages*, p. 786

This must have been so strange to see! Let us see who John the beloved disciple saw in his vision of heaven. "And immediately I was in the spirit: and, behold, a throne was set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. And He that sat was to look upon like a jasper and a sardine stone: and there was a rainbow round about the throne, in sight like unto an emerald. And round about the throne were four and twenty seats: and upon the seats I saw four and twenty elders sitting, clothed in white raiment; and they had on their heads crowns of gold. . . . And when those beasts give glory and honour and thanks to Him that sat on the throne, who liveth for ever and ever, The four and twenty elders fall down before Him that sat on the throne, and worship Him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying, Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power." Revelation 4:2–4, 9–11

In these Bible texts we have learned of those already dwelling in heaven. What of those living at the time of Jesus' second coming? Or of those who are dead in Christ? "And I heard the number of them which were sealed: and there were sealed an hundred and forty and four thousand of all the tribes of the children of Israel. Of the tribe of Juda were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Reuben were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Gad were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Aser were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Nephthalim were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Manasses were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Simeon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Levi were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Issachar were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Zabulon were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Joseph were sealed twelve thousand. Of the tribe of Benjamin were sealed twelve thousand. After this I beheld, and, lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands. . . . And one of the elders answered, saying unto me, What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? And I said

unto him, Sir, thou knowest. And he said to me, These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb." Revelation 7:4–9, 13–14

There are two distinct groups here—the 144,000 and the great multitude which no man could number. Both groups are made up of all different types of people. One group is made up of the living when Christ comes, including those that have died faithfully under the third angel's message and were sealed, and were raised in the partial resurrection to see Jesus coming in the clouds. "Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea. . . that they may rest from their labours and their works do follow them." Revelation 14:13. The other group is made up of people from different decades or even centuries before. These dead in Christ are resurrected at His coming.

Let us look at two other distinct groups that will be in heaven. The Bible does not expand on or mention these groups in detail, but they are written about in the Spirit of Prophecy. "As the little infants come forth immortal from their dusty, they immediately wing their way to their mothers' arms. They meet again nevermore to part. But many of the little ones have no mother there. . . . The angels receive the motherless infants and conduct them to the tree of life. Jesus places the golden ring of light, the crown upon their little heads." –*Selected Messages*, bk. 2, p. 260

These babies include those innocent ones slaughtered in the days of Moses and Jesus, but also sadly those whose mothers were not saved. With this thought, there is another group that Ellen White mentions who are clothed differently than the other heavenly beings. "As we were traveling along, we met a company. . . . I noticed red as a border on their garments. . . . As we greeted them, I asked Jesus who they were. He said they were martyrs that had been slain for Him." This also includes "an innumerable company of little ones; they also had a hem of red on their garments." –*Early Writings*, p. 18

Now let us look at some of the attributes of those who will dwell in heaven with God. "LORD, who shall abide in Thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in Thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart." Psalm 15:1–2. "He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and He shall be My son. And there shall in no wise enter into it any thing that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life." Revelation 21:7, 27. "Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus." Revelation 14:12

With these words in mind, let us continue to strive towards heaven to be part of the 144,000 and live in paradise with God forever. Amen. *Elaine Romero*

GMO's: A Modern Dilemma

Part 2

Last month we introduced the topic of Genetically Modified Organisms (GMO's), and looked at their use specifically in plants. When bits of DNA from another species is introduced into a plant, these GMO plants now have a new DNA sequence, which, by definition, actually creates a new species of plant, similar in most ways to the original; however, containing new genes that were not present in the original plant. How does this change in DNA affect us when we eat the newly modified food? Have any studies been done on the health effects of GMO's?

Before we talk about the results of some of the tests done on GMO foods, let us see how prevalent GMO crops are, around the world, and the response of different countries to GMO products. Some countries accept GMO crops readily, other countries limit their use, and other countries ban them all together. Acceptance or the ban of GMO products throughout the world has to do with the fact that no one seems to agree on their safety. Even the scientific community has been polarized on the safety of GMO foods, with some scientists feeling that GMO crops are no different than any other crop, and other scientists feeling that GMO crops cause significant harm to humans.

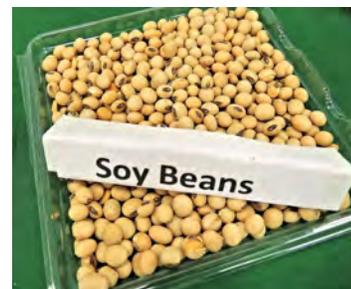
As we learned last month, most soybeans, corn, cotton, sugar beets, and canola in North America are grown from GMO seeds. Alfalfa and Kentucky bluegrass, which is fed to livestock, are also GMO products. While this may seem like a very short list, the by-products of these crops result in a far longer shopping list. GMO's are used in thousands of processed foods, ranging from infant formula to bread, tofu, and tomato sauce. Many of the GMO food products are in food eaten by those consuming a vegan diet. Meanwhile, GMO-containing feed is widely given to animals that produce milk, eggs and meat, which means GMO's are also getting into products like ice cream, mayonnaise, cheese, and even veggie burgers in the form of whey protein. While most Reformers avoid dairy products, or products made from animal sources, those who are not vegan are consuming foods that potentially come from livestock that have

eaten GMO feed. Even non-food items such as hygiene products often contain GMO ingredients. According to a 2005 estimate, 75% of all processed foods in the U.S. contain at least one genetically modified ingredient. In the latest statistics from Canada, more than 80% of all processed foods contain one or more GMO. Now the list does not seem so small, does it?

Over 80% of all GMO crops are specifically engineered to tolerate one or more herbicides (weed killers). This allows farmers the ability to spread herbicides over their fields, killing only the weeds and sparing the crop. Herbicide-tolerant soybeans are the most widely grown GMO crop, going from 17% percent of US soybean acreage in 1997 to 93% in 2013.

Specifically, "GM Roundup Ready" (RR) soy is the most widely grown GMO crop. It is engineered to tolerate being sprayed with Roundup herbicide, containing the chemical glyphosate. The majority of GM RR soy goes into animal feed in livestock feedlots in North and South America, Europe and other industrialized countries. People who eat dairy and beef products thus consume higher amounts of RR soy. For those of us who use soybeans, often in the form of tofu, as a source of protein instead of using animal products, we may also be consuming large volumes of GMO foods. Soy allergies jumped 50% in the U.K. just after GM soy was introduced. The concern is that RR soy contains amino acids known to be identical to known allergens. All soybeans contain an ingredient known as trypsin inhibitor, which is also a known allergen, but Roundup Ready soybeans contain as much as seven times more than non-GMO soy.

There is no mandatory labeling of genetically engineered



foods in Canada despite intensive public campaigning and 20 years of polling that consistently show over 80% of Canadians want these labels. Instead, a national standard for voluntary labeling was established—but this is voluntary and no company has yet chosen to label their products as containing genetically engineered ingredients! In the United States, also, there is no mandatory labelling of foods containing GMO's. Argentina, the world's top third GMO manufacturer also does not require GMO labelling.

In the United States, GMO foods do not need to be identified as containing GMO because the claim is that GMO and non-GMO foods are identical, therefore labelling to identify GMO foods is unnecessary. 233 million acres of GMO crops are grown in the USA. Many processed foods contain GMO crops and the amount of GMO food grown in the USA keeps growing. In surveys done amongst Americans, many are not happy with GMO foods. Nine out of ten Americans would like foods labelled as GMO or non-GMO, to provide them with a choice as to whether to eat GMO foods or not. However, as the percentage of processed foods which contain GMO products is so high, this would create a marketing nightmare for the manufacturers of processed foods. Although, labelling would force the food manufacturers to consider returning to foods not made with GMO products if the people avoid GMO-containing products.

The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) does not have a mandatory GMO food safety assessment process and has never approved as safe or unsafe, any GMO food that is currently on the market. It does not carry out or commission safety tests on GM foods. Instead, the FDA operates a voluntary pre-market review programme, in which it looks at whatever data the manufacturer chooses to provide. This is yet another reason why GMO foods are not trusted. Testing is only required to be done by the companies who produce the GMO product. And, often these tests contradict the results of tests done by independent labs, which have no financial stake in the product. But, the government does not take into account this independent testing when approving a food product. Government agencies in the USA argue against any labeling of GMO foods on the grounds that this "...would imply that GMO's are different". Big agricultural companies like Monsanto have raised millions of dollars to fight against labeling because they know it would negatively affect sales.

Let us look at how some of the other countries address GMO foods. Brazil is the second-largest GMO producing country in the world. However, in food sold in their country, a "transgenic" labeling (easily identified as a large "T" inside a yellow triangle), is required for foods containing GMO's.

Next let us consider the stand that the European Union (EU) has taken on GMO foods. Since the time that GMO crops

began to be manufactured, GMO-containing foods had to be labelled as such. As a result, consumers stopped buying GMO foods once they were identified as GMO. GMO-manufacturing companies did not want to sell in Europe, as they were now not making money. As of October 3, 2015, 19 of 28 EU nations banned GMO products from being grown in their countries or being imported from other countries. However, all 28 nations agree that all food (including processed food) or feed which contains greater than 0.9% of approved GMO's must be labelled, so the consumer knows exactly what they are getting and consuming. As of 2010, the EU treats all genetically modified crops (GMO crops), along with irradiated food as "new food". Therefore, they are subject to extensive, case-by-case, science-based food evaluation by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA).

While marketing and importing GMO's, and food and feed produced with GMO's, are regulated at the EU level, the cultivation of GMO's is an area left to the EU Members. Many livestock in Europe are eating GMO feed, mostly soybeans. EU Members have the right to prohibit or restrict the sale or cultivation of approved GMO's based on adverse effects on health and the environment. When placing on the market a product for food and feed produced from GMOs, operators must forward to those who will receive them, the following: Each food ingredient produced from GMOs, each of the feed materials or additives produced from GMO's, and if there is no list of ingredients, there must be an indication that the product is produced from GMOs.

The European Union has a concern with the lack of testing that is done in the USA on GMO foods. It is often claimed that "trillions of GMO meals" have been eaten in the USA with no ill effects. However, no epidemiological studies (comparisons between those who ingest GMO's and those who do not) in human populations have been carried out to establish whether there are any health effects associated with GMO food consumption. Because GMO foods are not labelled in North America, it is scientifically impossible to trace, let alone study, patterns of GMO consumption and their impact. Therefore, the EU's stance is that claims that GM foods are safe for human health based on the experience of North American populations have no scientific basis.

The European Network of Scientists for Social and Environmental Responsibility released a statement regarding their stance on GMO foods. "As scientists, physicians, academics, and experts from disciplines relevant to the scientific, legal, social and safety assessment aspects of genetically modified organisms (GMOs), we strongly reject claims by GM seed developers and some scientists, commentators, and journalists that there is a 'scientific consensus' on GMO safety and that the debate on this topic is 'over.'

". . . the claimed consensus on GMO safety does not exist.

The claim that it does exist is misleading and misrepresents the currently available scientific evidence and the broad diversity of opinion among scientists on this issue. Moreover, the claim encourages a climate of complacency that could lead to a lack of regulatory and scientific rigour and appropriate caution, potentially endangering the health of humans, animals, and the environment. . . . We endorse the need for further independent scientific inquiry and informed public discussion on GM product safety and urge GM proponents to do the same. . . . Claims that there is a consensus among scientific and governmental bodies that GM foods are safe, or that they are no more risky than non-GM foods, are false.”

Drought, inadequate water resources and poor soils, along with other economic and social pressures, have made food shortages a problem in many parts of Africa. From 2002, GMO crops have been offered as food aid. Apart from South Africa, genetically modified food is viewed with a lot of suspicion all across Africa with vicious debate across the continent on its benefits and pitfalls. Faced by rising food prices and drought a number of African countries have over the recent years allowed growing and importation of GMO food under strict regulation. South Africa was the continent’s sole cultivator of GMO maize, cotton and soybeans until 2008, when Egypt began growing GMO maize, and Burkina Faso started growing GM cotton. Other countries such as Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Malawi, Mali, Zimbabwe, Nigeria and Ghana have since allowed the importation of GMO’s.

Up until 2010, India’s government opposed GMO crops but is now opening its doors to Monsanto and other international agriculture giants, despite widespread suffering and even suicide among farmers that feel pressured into buying their products. Many farmers in India do not have the means to afford GMO seeds.

With vast funding and a big team, China was ready to bring to market an insect-resistant GMO rice it developed on its own a decade ago. But the government has chosen so far not to commercialise its GMO expertise as the technology remains controversial around the world and has triggered fierce debate at home. Public opinion remains unfavourable for the technology, and even now, the prospect for commercialisation is unclear.

Why do governments say that GMO crops are necessary? More crops are needed to feed the world. The world will not have enough food if we do not use GMO’s. GMO’s produce higher crop yields, reduce farm costs, and increase farm profit. There is also an expected improvement in health and the environment. However, studies show none of these benefits have taken place with GMO foods.

The only benefit so far is that the producers of GMO seeds and crops have grown very rich. Forty percent of the world’s GMO crops are grown in the USA, where Monsanto controls 80 percent of the GM corn market, and 93 per-

cent of the GM soy market. Forty percent of USA cropland, or 151.4 million acres, are planted in Monsanto’s crops. Monsanto owns 1,676 seed, plant and other similar patents. Worldwide, 282 million acres are planted in Monsanto’s GM crops.

Many of the GMO’s are created to be resistant to herbicides. However, if we look at corn, scientists genetically modified sweet corn so that it produces its own poison (Bt) which kills harmful insects. Developed in 1996, the genetically modified corn is called Bt-corn, because the insect-killing gene in the plant comes from the bacteria *Bacillus thuringiensis*. This product is also owned by Monsanto.

The benefit of Bt-corn is that the farmer no longer has to use insecticide to kill insects. The risks are that Bt-corn will



poison the insects over a longer period than the farmer who would spray the crops once or twice in a growing season. Insects are becoming resistant to the poison. A variety of insects are at risk of being killed, not just the ones that harm the crop. It might be predatory

insects that eat the harmful ones or, perhaps beneficial insects



such as honey bees and butterflies. There has been a significant reduction in the bee and butterfly population in North America, needed to pollinate our vegetables and fruits. 80% of the world’s food supply is directly or indirectly

affected by the honey bee population. Glyphosate has been shown to damage the health of bees. Some countries such as Mexico ban GMO crops to protect their honey industry.

Can Bt-corn be harmful to humans? Bt proteins only naturally occur in soil bacteria. By introducing the modified toxin gene into the plants, the structure of the toxin is modified. Independent experiments now show that genetically modified corn containing the genes for Bt is toxic to humans. They impact the ability of human cells to survive. Many genetically engineered plants contain up to six Bt toxins at the same time. No investigation by governments of the combination effects of these toxins and residues from spraying, or their potential risks for human health have been done.

With every new emerging technology, there are potential risks. There is the danger of unintentionally introducing allergens and other anti-nutrition factors into foods when introducing DNA from other sources. There is the likelihood of transgenes escaping from cultivated crops into wild relatives, and thus changing their DNA also. The potential for

pests to evolve resistance to the toxins produced by GMO crops has already been shown to happen. There is a risk that the newly-introduced DNA that has been used to modify foods can also affect non-targeted organisms, including humans. **MANY OF THESE RISKS ARE STILL UNKNOWN.**

According to some studies, individuals who consumed GMO's have experienced the following side effects: Increase in allergies, increase in antibiotic resistance, problems with endocrine system (thyroid problems, diabetes), disorders of the reproductive system, increase in aging symptoms, and cancerous tumor growths.

There are very few studies on how GMO's may impact our bodies down the road. It is too early to test their long-term safety as most GMO foods have only been ingested for the last 5–15 years. People have not been eating GMO foods for long enough yet to determine health risks with long-term use of these products.

In another study, pigs fed a GMO diet developed an inflamed gut. Pigs have a similar digestive system to humans. Inflammation in the GMO-fed pigs was more than two times as much as the pigs who were fed an organic diet.

A 10-year study in Norway has found GMO's may cause obesity, digestive problems, and damage to major organs including liver, kidneys, pancreas and genitals. Glyphosate is linked to non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. The increased rates of autism have occurred since the introduction of GMO foods, have people questioning whether GMO's could be implicated in the rise.

There has been a large increase in many human diseases related to the gut in the last 20 years: Crohn's disease, inflammatory bowel disease, acid reflex, gluten intolerance, celiac disease, leaky gut, and irritable bowel syndrome. No research is available to determine the cause of the increase; however, GMO foods could be a factor: The questions that need to be asked and answered: Could GMO foods be preventing healing of the intestinal tract, leading to disease? Could GMO foods be altering our gut microflora/bacteria to cause increased problems?

New evidence also points to Glyphosate, the widely used herbicide on GMO crops, as the culprit in the rise of gluten intolerance, celiac disease and irritable bowel syndrome. The increase in gastro-intestinal tract disorders coincided with the increase in GMO foods and glyphosate use. Is it cause and effect or coincidence?

Studies suggest that Bt-toxin, glyphosate, and other components of GMO's are linked to five conditions that may either initiate or exacerbate gluten-related disorders: Intestinal permeability, imbalanced gut bacteria, immune activation

and allergies, impaired digestion, and damage to the intestinal wall.

The condition known as Leaky Gut occurs when gaps form between intestinal cells and large particles from the digestive tract enter the bloodstream, potentially triggering immune or allergic reactions. The Bt-toxin produced by genetically modified corn kills insects by punching holes in their digestive tracts. Human studies confirmed that it punctures holes in human cells as well.

Gluten-sensitive individuals, and especially those with celiac disease, also commonly have an imbalance in their gut flora. Many people do not develop reactivity to gluten until later in life, which supports the notion that it can be triggered by environmental factors. Eating GMO's soaked with glyphosate may play a role in the onset of gluten-related disorders. Decreased digestive enzymes can create undigested food particles, contribute to the overgrowth of harmful bacteria, and promote symptoms of gluten-related disorders. A common result of gluten sensitivity is damage to the lining of the intestinal tract. Both Bt-toxin and

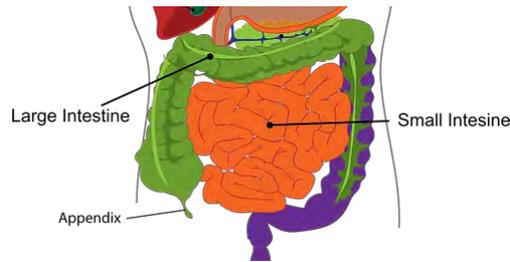
glyphosate have produced structural damage to microvilli in animal studies. Whether GMOs are indeed a causative factor in the escalating trend of gluten sensitivity or merely an obstacle to a cure is yet to be determined.

Those who maintain that GMO's are harmless to the human body, claim

that any residues of GMO foods, including the modified DNA, pass through the human body, and do not stay in the body for any length of time. To date, no American scientist has investigated the potential levels of toxic residues in the human body of GMO foods. A study in Norway proved that GMO genes are indeed transferred through the intestinal wall into the blood. During their study they found "pieces of genetically modified DNA in large enough segments to be identified in blood, muscle tissue and liver." A study done in Europe indicates that a large percentage of the population have GMO residues in their body. What could be the effects of these DNA residues on the human body?

Genetically modified (GM) or transgenic crops have been grown for human and animal consumption since the 1990s. There are currently over 200 different GM crops with various traits approved for human and animal consumption in many countries. Despite this, studies examining the effects of GMO crops on animal and human health are relatively scarce, and among the studies that have been done, many conflict each other.

NEXT MONTH: GMO'S IN THE FUTURE AND HOW TO AVOID GMO FOODS





CHILDREN'S CORNER

Unusual Missionaries

Grandma Maria was the first member of the Colon family to become a Seventh-day Adventist Christian. She loved Jesus very much and it did not take long for people in her neighborhood to realize that fact.

Grandma lived in a big house in Puerto Rico. The house was always a bustle of activity. In the basement, Grandpa operated a furniture factory. Upstairs, life was very busy too. Several of Grandma's children were now grownups and lived in the house. They had their children, which of course were Grandma's grandchildren. And then there were all the neighborhood kids who would come and visit. The delicious smells from the kitchen were always an attraction for those who passed by the big house, and Grandma was always there to invite them in for a glass of water or a meal. Grandpa would often be seen loading the factory truck with furniture to be delivered to the various stores in town.

Grandma was the only Adventist Christian in the family. That was not easy. When family worship time came, she always invited the members of the household to join her for singing, Bible reading, and prayer. Sometimes there were those who would join her, but most of the time Grandma found herself alone on the back porch with God and her two parrots. Their names were Pepe and Suzie. How she enjoyed having family worship! She would sing songs and read the Bible aloud, and sometimes would even preach to her parrots when there was no one else around for her to talk with.

Soon Pepe and Suzie began to learn to sing some of Grandma's favorite hymns. Her favorite hymn was Santo, Santo, Santo. (Holy, Holy, Holy). Every time Grandma would start to sing that hymn, Pepe and Suzie would begin to sway back and forth with their necks stretched out, singing the song with all their might. Grandma also repeated certain words and phrases from sermons she had heard. Her parrots learned those, too. It was not long before one or the other of the parrots would shout, "Preparate pecador, que Cristo viene!" ("Prepare sinner, the Lord is coming!").

Pepe and Suzie were kept in a cage at the top of the steps that came up from the basement to Grandma's back porch.

In Grandpa's basement furniture factory there was one worker, named Carlos, who was very lazy. Carlos would saw a board and then he would take out a cigarette to smoke while he rested for a while. Every time Carlos' corner of the factory got quiet, Pepe and Suzie would call out his name, "Carlos!" Then they would add, "Get to work!" ("Travaja!") in a scolding voice. This would make Carlos very angry. He got so angry that one evening, as he climbed the stairs from the factory, he opened the latch of the parrot cage and left it open.

Early the next morning while it was still dark, one of Grandma's neighbors woke up to the sound of voices just outside her window. "Santo, Santo, Santo . . ." ("Holy, holy, holy . . .") "Prepare sinner, the Lord is coming!" The neighbor lady ran to her window and peered out into the darkness. Again came the song and the warning cry, "Prepare sinner, the Lord is coming!" With that she hurried out to the street only to find others who were asking each other, "Did you hear what I heard?"

Grandma heard the commotion and joined the group. She happily announced that her parrots must be up in those trees.

Soon Pepe and Suzie were back in their cage, leaving Grandma to explain to her neighbors how it happened that her parrots learned to sing and preach! Some of Grandma's neighbors said they wished they knew more about the Bible, so Grandma offered to give them Bible studies. Several of them gave their hearts to Jesus and were baptized.

We all know that Pepe and Suzie were just repeating words and sounds they had heard Grandma say in family worship. They did not really understand what it all meant. But we know about the love of Jesus from the Bible. Jesus is our friend, and we can tell others of His love. If Pepe and Suzie could witness for Jesus by just repeating sounds, how much more we could do by intelligently sharing our love for Jesus with others!

"And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest. And some of the Pharisees from among the multitude said unto Him, Master, rebuke Thy disciples. And He answered and said unto them, I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out." Luke 19:37-40

"I will sift the house of Israel among all nations, like as corn is sifted in a sieve, yet shall not the least grain fall upon the earth." Amos 9:9. God has His children who will be saved, whether we participate in the work or not. If we do not, He will find other means to spread the gospel.

Hewa Bora, CONGO



Hewa Bora is a new church that was organized on March 27, 2016. Before this time it was a group of believers; a branch Sabbath School. This branch Sabbath school was opened because some members had to travel a very long distance to attend the Bel Air Church. As families did not want to travel

such long distances with children on Sabbath, they decided to start worshiping in private homes, after informing church and Field leaders. After some time, it was decided to organize a church in this area. The Field president organized that local church with 31 baptized members now.



Liberia



Australian Field Conference April 2016



Overcoming

To him that overcometh,
A mighty help is pledged,
He wields a sword of purest mould,
By use of cycles edged.
And prophets and confessors,
A matchless valiant band,
Have vanquished earth, and stormed the skies,
With that triumphant brand.

To him that overcometh,
O promise dearest dear!
The Lord Himself who died for him
Will evermore be near.
Here, dust upon His garments,
There, robes that royal be,
For "On My throne," the King that said,
"Mine own shall sit with Me."

To him that overcometh,
O word divinely strong!
It weaves itself through weary hours
Like some rejoicing song.
For his the hidden manna,
And his the name unknown,
Which Christ the Lord that day of days
Will tell to him alone.

To him that overcometh,
O word divinely strong,
The victor's palm, the fadeless wreath,
The grand immortal song.
And his the hidden manna,
And his the polished stone,
Within whose whiteness shines the name
Revealed to him alone.

To him that overcometh—
Ah, what of bitter strife
Before he win the battle's gage
And snatch the crown of life!
What whirl of crossing weapons,
What gleam of flashing eyes,
What stern debate with haughty foes,
Must be before the prize.

To him that overcometh,
Shall trials aye befall,
The World, the Flesh, the Devil,
He needs must face them all.
Sweet sirens of temptation
May lure with silver strain,
And cope he must with subtle foes,
And blanch 'neath fiery pain.