

YBREAK SERIES



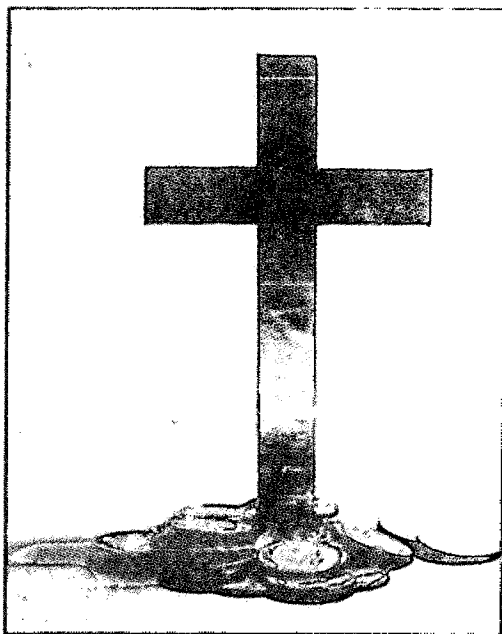
Oct.-Dec. 1980

Adult Sabbath School Lessons

Happy Are Ye!



Are you giving everything but yourself?



Good investments make good sense. Nicodemus knew that. But still he searched for something more. "Be born again" Jesus had said. The sight of Jesus on the cross finalized the new birth in Nicodemus' life. And in the years which followed, he gave his entire wealth to establish the young church. And considered it his best investment ever.

When the Sabbath School offering is received this week, before you give, re-examine your priorities in light of the Cross. When Nicodemus did, he invested his whole life. Can you think of a better investment?

Open Heart

Let God's love show through your giving.

GENERAL CONFERENCE OF SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTISTS

Trans-Africa Division

To Sabbath School Members Around the World

Dear Fellow Believers:

The Trans-Africa Division Family wishes to thank all Sabbath School members for the liberal support given in the 1978 Special Project Offering to our Division which was for the erection of an evangelistic center in the large city of Kinshasa, Zaire. Now we have an experienced and capable worker located in this metropolis and further plans are in the development stage.

For our project this quarter, we would like to share with you a dream we have had for several years: that of building 500 rural chapels throughout the Division! This is an ambitious project! Here is the way we believe it can be done: our unions and fields will select congregations which are most in need of chapels. Through a co-operative plan of shared expenses the local congregations will prepare and burn kilns of bricks and provide the labor for construction. Your funds will be combined with our available resources to add corrugated iron roofs, cement floors, doors and windows for these chapels.

You see in some areas, 90 percent of our congregations meet in mud and thatch buildings. Other congregations meet under trees or out in the open. We have found, as many of you have, that permanent church homes do wonders to help stabilize and strengthen our congregations.

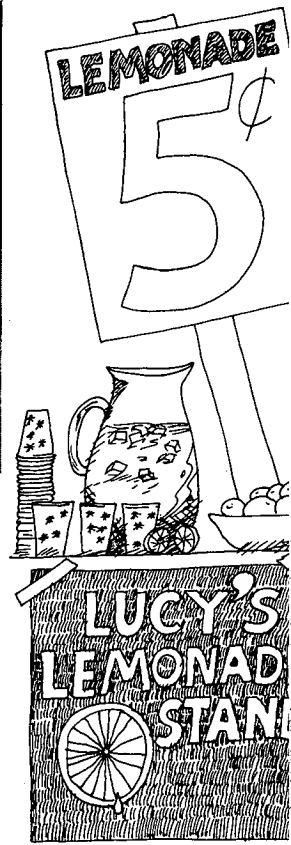
In your mind's eye, visualize these happy groups of people throughout the countries of our Division, rolling up their sleeves and launching their brick-making work, seeing the walls of the chapels go up, the metal roofs added, then the doors and window glasses fitted in. Then visualize the day of the first meeting in their new church homes! Multiplied thousands of voices will be raised in praise to God and in appreciation to their brethren in all the world for helping them build clean, modest little chapels.

We have shared our dream with you. On behalf of this Division we wish to say a hearty "THANK YOU" for helping your brothers and sisters in Africa realize its fulfillment.

Very cordially yours,

Merle L. Mills

Merle L Mills, President



This is Lucy Henderson's lemonade stand. Lucy sells lemonade here four days a week, after school, for 5¢ a glass. Her mother donates the lemonade. Lucy usually sells fifteen glasses of lemonade a day. So her weekly income is \$3.00.

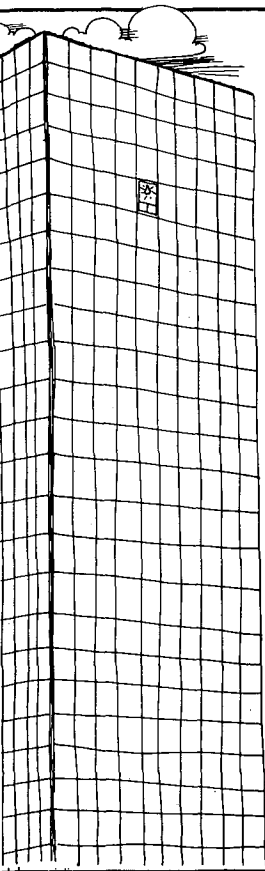
On Sabbath, Lucy puts a quarter and a nickel into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and drops it in the offering plate. That 10% of Lucy's income helps support the world ministry of the church. Lucy is happy to return her tithe to the Lord.

We all know how but how much should

Lucy and her daddy both pay tithe on an equal basis: 10% of income. But how much should Lucy and her daddy give in offerings?

Sometimes members are encouraged to give \$2.00. Now to Lucy, \$2.00 is more than half her weekly income. To Lucy's daddy, \$2.00 is mere pocket change. Lucy worries because \$2.00 seems so much. Her daddy feels \$2.00 for him is really not enough!

Wouldn't it be better if we planned our offerings on a percentage basis, just like tithe? Many are doing just



This is Lucy Henderson's daddy's building. Lucy's daddy works in an office on the 32nd floor from eight to five each weekday. Mr. Henderson's weekly income is substantially higher than Lucy's.

On Sabbath, Mr. Henderson puts a check into an envelope, marks it "Tithe" and puts it in the offering plate. That 10% of his income helps support the world ministry of the church. Mr. Henderson is happy to return his tithe to the Lord.

much tithe to pay, we give in offerings?

t. The fact is, if every church member gave as an offering 2-3% of income, all world budget financial needs, from the support of missions to educational institutions, would be adequately met. Giving as God has blessed is always ideal.

Proportionate financial support. It's an idea as old as tithing.



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HAPPY ARE YE!

Introduction

The Christians of the last days are called to live in a world that is more and more complex and more and more corrupt. At the same time, despite increasing iniquity and the growing coldness of most Christians, God requires that His people "shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

It is fitting then to define in some detail the spiritual life that Jesus taught characterizes the citizens of His kingdom. We expect the coming of Jesus in our day, and we must be fit for it. Ellen White notes that "Enoch's life and character, which were so holy that he was translated to heaven without seeing death, represent what the lives and characters of all must be, if, like Enoch, they are to be translated when Christ shall come."—*Our High Calling*, p. 278.

The characteristics of the citizens of the kingdom are clearly outlined in the first part of the Sermon on the Mount, usually called the Beatitudes. Here Jesus superbly portrays the spirit that, beginning here on earth, must imbue all those who hope, one day, to live in the kingdom of heaven.

"Here He [Jesus] specified who should be the subjects of His heavenly kingdom. He did not speak one word to flatter the men of the highest authority, the worldly dignitaries. But He presents before all the traits of character which must be possessed by the peculiar people who will compose the royal family in the kingdom of heaven. He specifies those who shall become heirs of God and joint-heirs with Himself. He proclaims publicly His choice of subjects, and assigns them their place in His service as united with Himself. Those who possess the character specified, will share with Him in the blessing and the glory and the honor that will ever come to Him."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1084.

For this reason the Beatitudes will serve as the basis of our study this quarter. The first lesson is introductory to the Beatitudes and is about the kingdom of heaven of which we are called to be citizens. With the second lesson a study of the Beatitudes of Jesus is begun and continues through lesson 12. These lessons (2 through 12) correspond to the Bible passages that Ellen White has included in the chapter "The Beatitudes" in the book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. Lesson 13 is drawn from Jesus' illustration of the two gates given near the close of the Sermon on the Mount. This lesson presents Jesus' appeal to enter "in at the strait gate" (Matt. 7:13), which represents in part the principles taught in the Beatitudes.

May the careful study of these lessons awaken the desire of each one to grow more and more like Jesus, thus glorifying God and contributing to the hastening of Christ's kingdom of glory.



I. The Kingdom of Heaven

“Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?” (James 2:5).

In the Bible the phrases “kingdom of heaven” or “kingdom of God” refer more to a kind or quality or condition of people than to any one geographical area, political entity, class, or race. The kingdom of heaven occurs wherever there are individuals who freely and imaginatively live out the value system of God. “For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them” (Matt. 18:20).

Now God has always had a people to keep the ideals of His kingdom alive on this earth. In the Old Testament it was the patriarchs and then the Hebrew nation. Since the first advent it has been Christianity.

Unfortunately, the majority of men and women in every age has rejected or at least ignored God. From time to time this has even been true of His own representatives. God’s chosen people have misinterpreted and misused the truths entrusted to them. They have at times lost sight of God’s gracious character and in turn become exclusive and narrow.

To help us draw a lesson from our spiritual ancestors, Ellen White said: “It was the privilege of the Jewish nation to represent the character of God as it had been revealed to Moses. In answer to the prayer of Moses, ‘Show me Thy glory,’ the Lord promised, ‘I will make all My goodness pass before thee.’ Ex. 33:18, 19. ‘And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and

gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin.’ Ex. 34:6, 7. This was the fruit that God desired from His people.—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 285, 286.

“The Jewish people . . . forgot God, and lost sight of their high privilege as His representatives. The blessings they had received brought no blessing to the world. All their advantages were appropriated for their own glorification. They robbed God of the service He required of them, and they robbed their fellow men of religious guidance and a holy example. . . .

“ . . . Their covetousness and greed caused them to be despised even by the heathen. Thus the Gentile world was given occasion to misinterpret the character of God and the laws of His kingdom.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 291-293.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church believes it has been entrusted with special last-day truth about God. How best to share its insight into the kingdom of heaven is our subject this week.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

- 1. How to Read the Sermon on the Mount**
(Matt. 5:1)
- 2. Recognizing Our Responsibility**
(Matt. 5:17-20)
- 3. The Kingdom of God Is Here**
(Luke 17:20, 21)
- 4. Dimensions of the Kingdom—1**
(John 1:11)
- 5. Dimensions of the Kingdom—2**
(Matt. 13:33)
- 6. Two Sermons on the Mount**
(Ex. 20:19)

Part 1
HOW TO READ
THE SERMON
ON THE MOUNT

In what context should we study the Sermon on the Mount?

"Seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him" (Matt. 5:1).

It's always helpful to consider the context of any scriptural passage. However, there are special cases where it is almost a must that we consider the audience and circumstances for which a certain portion of the Bible was written. This is true in the case of the Sermon on the Mount. At the very outset in her book *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, Ellen White offers the following suggestion: "Let us in imagination go back to that scene, and, as we sit with the disciples on the mountainside, enter into the thoughts and feelings that filled their hearts. Understanding what the words of Jesus meant to those who heard them, we may discern in them a new vividness and beauty, and may also gather for ourselves their deeper lessons."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 1.

Who was the intended audience for what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount? Matt. 5:1.

Jesus' ministry had been in progress for some time when He decided that the disciples should begin to bear heavier evangelistic responsibilities. He had prayed all night for wisdom to say precisely what they needed to hear in order to overcome their inherited misconceptions of His work and role as the Messiah. The disciples were the intended audience; but, as always, Jesus was happy to share the truth with anyone who was willing to listen.

What lesson did Jesus want to teach His disciples when He gave the Beatitudes? Matt. 5:20.

It was not unusual for a Jewish teacher to expound upon the law in order to refine its application to fit the needs of a specific time and place. So if Jesus followed this Jewish method of contrasting the old with the new in the latter part of Matthew 5, that would not have aroused any suspicion. But content was a different matter.

The disciples were Jews, and they shared their countrymen's belief that the Messiah's sole purpose would be to reestablish the kingdom of Judah. Their understanding of Jesus' mission was clouded by these false expectations. They needed a corrective.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are we in need of this corrective today?

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, pp. 1-5; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 27-30, 577.

Part 2
RECOGNIZING
OUR RESPON-
SIBILITY

How should today's church member respond to the Sermon on the Mount?

"Whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19). (See also verses 17, 18, 20.)

God had given His people two gifts: (a) a knowledge of Himself, and (b) a knowledge of the ideals He had in mind for created beings. The chosen people had memorized the ideals but had lost sight of the God who stood behind them. Hence the law became a matter for prideful achievement. Religious individuals were inclined to draw attention to themselves rather than to God. While God's friends are supposed to be living evidence for the quality of heaven's values, they are above all responsible for keeping a true knowledge of God alive in society. As we read Hosea 4 and Romans 1, the greatest need of this world is a knowledge of what kind of person God is.

In what way does God depend upon His earthly friends in sustaining the values of the kingdom of heaven? Matt. 5:17-19.

"The Saviour came to glorify the Father by the demonstration of His love. . . . The honor of God, the honor of Christ, is involved in the perfection of the character of His people."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 671.

When our spiritual ancestors forgot God, the law became an end in itself. It became burdensome; joyful and willing obedience was replaced by legalistic and mechanical obedience.

What is the message of those who would uphold the kingdom of heaven today? Matt. 5:20.

"It is the darkness of misapprehension of God that is enshrouding the world. Men are losing their knowledge of His character. It has been misunderstood and misinterpreted. At this time a message from God is to be proclaimed, a message illuminating in its influence and saving in its power. His character is to be made known."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 415.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do we concentrate on personal achievement, to the point of crowding out a desire to share with our neighbors our knowledge of the kind of person God is?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Talents" (Multiplied by Use), pp. 353-355; *Testimonies*, vol. 5, pp. 737-742; *Testimonies to Ministers*, pp. 192, 193.

**Part 3
THE KINGDOM
OF GOD
IS HERE**

What is the relation between the church and the kingdom of God?

“The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is within you” (Luke 17:20, 21).

The phrases “kingdom of heaven” and “kingdom of God” are virtually interchangeable: they refer to the presence of God’s values and His offer of salvation. There were moments in Old Testament history when God’s values and His offer of salvation shone brightly, and there were others when these were hardly visible. However, it was the life of Jesus that gave a full illumination of what it means to be a member of the kingdom of God. Since the time of Christ the Christian church has tried to keep this illumination vivid, with some success and some failure.

How visible is the kingdom of heaven in the world today? Luke 17:20.

“The kingdom of God comes not with outward show. It comes through the gentleness of the inspiration of His word, through the inward working of His Spirit, the fellowship of the soul with Him who is its life. The greatest manifestation of its power is seen in human nature brought to the perfection of the character of Christ.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 36.

This passage in Luke indicates that members of God’s kingdom on earth are difficult to identify by mere external means. They may be members of the Seventh-day Adventist Church; they may be in other religious communities. Or like the centurion who came to Jesus, they may show no outward allegiance to any religion. Eventually all of God’s friends will come together as a remnant, but in the meantime what does their being scattered throughout all communions and peoples imply?

Why did many of Jesus’ countrymen not realize the presence of the kingdom of heaven? Luke 17:21.

“That which led the Jews to reject the Saviour’s work was the highest evidence of His divine character. . . . The highest evidence that He came from God is that His life revealed the character of God. He did the works and spoke the words of God. Such a life is the greatest of all miracles.”—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 406, 407.

THINK IT THROUGH

When we hear the phrase “kingdom of heaven,” do we tend to think of a specific church or institution, or do we think of an ongoing witness to the life of Christ?

FURTHER STUDY

The Ministry of Healing, pp. 419, 423, 425, 469, 470.

**Part 4
DIMENSIONS
OF THE
KINGDOM—1**

Why do you think the majority of God's chosen people reject Jesus' description of the kingdom of heaven?

"He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11).

Jesus' offer of membership in the kingdom of God was rejected by most of His countrymen. They challenged His right to offer membership in the kingdom of God, because His description of the kingdom differed so widely from theirs. Ellen White says: "The Jews looked for the kingdom of God to be established in the same way as the kingdoms of the world. To promote righteousness they resorted to external measures."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 77. They had completely inverted the value system of God, which placed service as the most prestigious of virtues.

What did God hope that the Israelites would achieve? Luke 13:18, 19.

"Their obedience to the law of God would make them marvels of prosperity before the nations of the world. . . .

" . . . As in obedience to His natural laws the earth should produce its treasures, so in obedience to His moral law the hearts of the people were to reflect the attributes of His character. Even the heathen would recognize the superiority of those who served and worshiped the living God."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 288, 289.

What does it mean to be a faithful member of God's kingdom? Matt. 6:10.

"Faith is trusting God—believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good."—*Education*, p. 253.

Jesus did not reject the law and the inspired guidelines His countrymen cherished. What He did reject was the picture of God they had come to entertain. It is a law that people become like the God they worship. Israel formed their understanding of God after earthly kings. They had long since forgotten God's reticence even to permit them a human king and had molded their religious insights after the principles that moved worldly governments.

THINK IT THROUGH

Read *The Desire of Ages*, p. 550, and consider to what extent even Christians have adopted worldly values for rating success.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 284-296; *The Desire of Ages*, p. 407; *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 314.

**Part 5
DIMENSIONS
OF THE
KINGDOM—2**

What does God expect of His modern-day representatives?

“Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened” (Matt. 13:33).

The kingdom of heaven was not withdrawn from the earth when Jesus ascended to the throne of His heavenly Father. Through the working of His Spirit in the lives of His earthly friends, the true principles of God’s kingdom were to be kept attractive and highly visible until He should come again.

In what way is religious truth like leaven? Matt. 13:33.

“As the leaven, when mingled with the meal, works from within outward, so it is by the renewing of the heart that the grace of God works to transform the life. . . . There are many who try to reform by correcting this or that bad habit, and they hope in this way to become Christians, but they are beginning in the wrong place. Our first work is with the heart. . . .

“ . . . True obedience is the outworking of a principle within. . . . The essence of all righteousness is loyalty to our Redeemer.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 97, 98.

Quite simply, our spiritual ancestors lost sight of their Redeemer. Their motives for obedience became pride and a desire for status of various kinds.

As a church member, what is your role in sustaining the kingdom of heaven? Ps. 67:1-3.

“Through His people Christ is to manifest His character and the principles of His kingdom.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 296.

“We are to praise God by tangible service, by doing all in our power to advance the glory of His name. God imparts His gifts to us that we also may give, and thus make known His character to the world.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 300.

THINK IT THROUGH

In a stunning rebuke, Ellen White suggests: “The sin of the world today is the sin that brought destruction upon Israel. Ingratitude to God, the neglect of opportunities and blessings, the selfish appropriation of God’s gifts. . . . They are bringing ruin upon the world today.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 302. Could this possibly apply to me?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ’s Object Lessons, “Like Unto Leaven,” pp. 101, 102; “The Lord’s Vineyard” (The Church of Today), pp. 296-306.

**Part 6
TWO SERMONS
ON THE MOUNT**

How do you explain the change in atmosphere between the giving of the law on Sinai and Jesus' Sermon on the Mount?

"They said unto Moses, Speak thou with us, and we will hear: but let not God speak with us, lest we die" (Ex. 20:19).

There is a striking contrast between the thunderous events recorded in Exodus 20:18-21 and those—at least initially—quiet, personal moments set down in Matthew 5. It's almost a movement from earthquake and fire to the still small voice. Two great information-giving occasions, but two distinct styles.

How did God communicate with Elijah on the mountain? 1 Kings 19:11, 12.

If Eden gives us an ideal picture of God/man relationships, then walking and talking with God as with a friend is the preferred means of communication. This is underlined by the fact that all through Ellen White's writings the emphasis is on thoughtful and reasonable apprehension of truth. But God meets people where He finds them. He adapts His means of communication to their specific situation.

"An important lesson for every minister of Christ to learn is that of adapting his labors to the condition of those whom he seeks to benefit. Tenderness, patience, decision, and firmness are alike needful; but these are to be exercised with proper discrimination. To deal wisely with different classes of minds, under varied circumstances and conditions, is a work requiring wisdom and judgment enlightened and sanctified by the Spirit of God."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 385, 386.

How would you have accepted the contrast between Sinai and the Mount of Blessing? (See Matt. 5:21-26.)

Had we been Jews at the time of Christ's first advent, would we have accepted Christ, given the prevailing preconceived notions that the Messiah should work in an atmosphere of thunder and lightning? Would we have understood that the reception of truth is progressive, that God refines His presentation of it as people themselves become more refined? Note this from Ellen White:

"The Word of God presents special truths for every age. . . . God is leading out His people step by step. Truth is progressive."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 2, p. 1000.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do we make it easy for God to approach us?

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels on Sabbath School Work, p. 34.



2. The Poor in Spirit

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3).

In the next 11 lessons we will study in detail each trait of Christian character that Jesus enumerated in the Beatitudes. "A study of Christ's wonderful sermon on the mount will teach the believer what must be the characteristics of those whom the Lord calls 'blessed.'

"I thank the Lord that such plain directions are given to believers. If

we had no other instruction than is contained in these few words, here is sufficient, so that none need become bewildered. But we have a whole Bible full of precious instruction. None need be in darkness and uncertainty. Those who will seek by faith and prayer and earnest study of the Scriptures to obtain the virtues here brought to view, will easily be distinguished from those who walk not in the light."—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 1083, 1084.

"The beatitudes were His [Christ's] greeting to the whole human family. Looking upon the vast throng gathered to listen to the Sermon on the Mount, He seemed for the moment to have forgotten that He was not in heaven, and He used the familiar salutation of the world of light. From His lips flowed blessings as the gushing forth of a long-sealed fountain.

"Turning from the ambitious, self-satisfied favorites of this world, He declared that those were blessed who, however great their need, would receive His light and love. To the poor in spirit, the sorrowing, the persecuted, He stretched out His arms, saying, 'Come unto Me, . . . and I will give you rest.'"—*Education*, pp. 79, 80.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Object of the Beatitudes**
(Matt. 5:3-11)
2. **Blessed Are the Poor**
(Luke 6:20; Matt. 5:3)
3. **Good News to the Poor**
(Luke 4:18, 19)
4. **Those Invited to the Feast**
(Luke 14:21)
5. **Jesus, Our Example**
(2 Cor. 8:9)
6. **The Promise of the Kingdom**
(Matt. 5:3; James 2:5)

**Part 1
OBJECT
OF THE
BEATITUDES**

What word did Jesus use to reveal His object in pronouncing the Beatitudes?

"Blessed are" (Matt. 5:3-11).

"In the opening words of the Sermon on the Mount, Christ addresses Himself to the supreme desire of every human heart—happiness. This desire was implanted in man by the Creator Himself, and was originally ordained to lead him to find true happiness through cooperation with the God who created him. Sin is involved when men attempt to achieve happiness as an end in itself, by a short cut that by-passes obedience to the divine requirements.

"Thus at the commencement of His inaugural address as King of the kingdom of divine grace Christ proclaims that the main objective of the kingdom is to restore the lost happiness of Eden to the hearts of men, and that those who choose to enter in by the 'strait' gate and the 'narrow' way (Matt. 7:13, 14) will find true happiness. They will find inward peace and joy, true and lasting satisfaction for heart and soul that come only when 'the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,' is present to keep their 'hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:7)." —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 324.

According to Matthew, how many beatitudes did Jesus pronounce? Matt. 5:3-12. Compare with Luke 6:20-26.

"The word *makarios* [happy, blessed] appears nine times in vs. 3-11. But vs. 10, 11 refer to the same aspect of Christian experience, and are therefore to be considered one beatitude, thus leaving eight rather than nine beatitudes. Luke gives only four beatitudes, the first, fourth, second, and eighth of Matthew, in that order (Luke 6:20-23), but he adds four corresponding woes (vs. 24-26)." —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 324.

THINK IT THROUGH

Should we attribute a symbolic meaning to the Beatitudes given in the book of Matthew?

If has been said that the Beatitudes are to the spiritual life what the octave is to music.

We should not imagine that the Beatitudes place candidates for the kingdom of God in eight distinct categories, not that there are eight different roads leading to that end. The Beatitudes, like the fruit of the Spirit, are all part of the whole; they go together. All the graces will be possessed by the candidate for the kingdom of God.

FURTHER STUDY

S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 5, pp. 323, 324, 1084, 1085.

Part 2
BLESSED ARE
THE POOR

Who are the poor mentioned in the first beatitude?

"Blessed are you poor (Luke 6:20, RSV).

"Blessed are the poor in spirit" (Matt. 5:3).

By specifying that this is a matter of spiritual poverty, Jesus submits that to have right to the kingdom of God, it is not enough merely to be poor in earthly possessions. This poverty of spirit—consciousness of spiritual deficiency—alludes to a certain honesty and humility in assessing one's spiritual possessions. Without it the materially poor can themselves be attached to riches, desiring passionately to possess them, even though they do not actually enjoy them. Then the poor, like the rich, enslaved to a desire for possessions, are not "poor in spirit."

"Happy are they, He said, who recognize their spiritual poverty, and feel their need of redemption. The gospel is to be preached to the poor. Not to the spiritually proud, those who claim to be rich and in need of nothing, is it revealed, but to those who are humble and contrite. One fountain only has been opened for sin, a fountain for the poor in spirit."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 299, 300.

Why does God choose the poor rather than the rich to inherit the kingdom? James 2:5.

In reality God is not partial to special groups. He does not exclude anyone. If the Messianic promises are addressed especially to the disinherited, to the poor of the world, it is because by circumstance they are more inclined to turn to God and to look to Him for all things. It is their inner inclinations that render the poor more open to the gospel, not poverty itself. On the other hand, history bears witness that the poor of every age and of every country are the first to respond to God's call. (See 1 Cor. 1:26-29.) Jesus pointed out this fact in the parable of the marriage supper.

THINK IT THROUGH

What characteristic of the rich forms an obstacle to answering Christ's call?

The obstacle is not money itself; rather it is a selfish attachment to money, the greedy quest for it, selfish possession of worldly wealth, limitless confidence in riches, the poor man's envy of the rich, the rich man's avarice. After declaring, "How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God!" Jesus clarified His statement by adding, "How hard is it for them that trust riches to enter into the kingdom of God!" (Mark 10:23, 24).

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:2, 3), pp. 6-9.

**Part 3
GOOD NEWS
TO THE POOR**

What terms used by the prophet Isaiah to foretell the work of the Messiah did Jesus borrow to announce His mission?

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted" (Luke 4:18, 19).

"Christ came to preach the gospel to the poor. He reached the people where they were. He brought plain, simple truth to their comprehension."—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*. vol. 5, pp. 1119, 1120.

"Christ came to this earth to walk and work among the poor and suffering. They received the greatest share of His attention. And today, in the person of His children, He visits the poor and needy, relieving woe and alleviating suffering."—*Testimonies*, vol. 7, p. 226.

The poor occupied an important place in our Lord's teachings, and the early church knew how to put these teachings into practice.

What proof of His Messiahship did Jesus send to John the Baptist? Matt. 11:2-5.

Miracles and the preaching of the good news to the poor were the signs that Jesus gave to John's envoys, who had been sent to ascertain if Jesus was indeed the Messiah announced by the prophets and expected by Israel.

The poor spoken of in the Bible were not necessarily destitute. The word was especially used to designate the peasantry, who were ravaged as much by the ruling Jews as by the occupying power, particularly after the exile.

The poor in Israel are mentioned in certain of the psalms. (See Pss. 40:17; 69:33; 109:31.) The prophets were their defenders; it was to them that they announced the Messianic kingdom. They are the ones of whom it was said that they awaited "the consolation of Israel" and "redemption in Jerusalem" (Luke 2:25, 38). Although they were mistaken about the nature of His kingdom, God announced the Messiah's advent to them first: the shepherds, Simeon, Anna, Joseph and Mary were of their number—of them who were able to offer only the sacrifices of the poor in the temple. (See Luke 2:21-24.) It was also to the poor in Israel that Jesus first preached the good news of salvation.

THINK IT THROUGH

Following the example set by the early church, are we ready to provide for the material and spiritual needs of those less fortunate than we? (See Acts 2:44, 45; 11:28-30.)

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 7, pp. 226-228.

**Part 4
THOSE
INVITED TO
THE FEAST**

What lesson did Jesus wish to teach in the parable of the marriage supper?

“Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind” (Luke 14:21).

“The Jews commonly supposed that persons suffering either financially or physically were in ill favor with God, and thus these classes were often despised and neglected by their fellow men. . . . God, presumably, had cast them off, and society therefore considered them outcasts also. In this parable Jesus denies that such persons are despised by God, and declares that they should not be despised by their fellow men, even when their sufferings may be due to their own misdeeds or unwise course of action. The poverty stricken and physically defective here seem to represent primarily those who are morally and spiritually bankrupt. They have no good works of their own to offer God in exchange for the blessings of salvation.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 809.

What example did Jesus give us that illustrates perfectly who are the “poor in spirit”? Luke 18:9-14.

“In the days of Christ the religious leaders of the people felt that they were rich in spiritual treasure. The prayer of the Pharisee, ‘God, I thank Thee, that I am not as the rest of men’ (Luke 18:11, R.V.), expressed the feeling of his class and, to a great degree, of the whole nation. But in the throng that surrounded Jesus there were some who had a sense of their spiritual poverty. . . . In these souls, Christ’s words of greeting awakened hope; they saw that their lives were under the benediction of God.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 6, 7.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I able to judge myself, to know the feelings of my own heart?

“‘The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?’ Jer. 17:9. The lips may express a poverty of soul that the heart does not acknowledge. While speaking to God of poverty of spirit, the heart may be swelling with the conceit of its own superior humility and exalted righteousness. In one way only can a true knowledge of self be obtained. We must behold Christ. It is ignorance of Him that makes men so uplifted in their own righteousness. When we contemplate His purity and excellence, we shall see our own weakness and poverty and defects as they really are.”—*Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 159.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ’s Object Lessons, “Two Worshipers,” pp. 150-163.

Part 5
JESUS,
OUR EXAMPLE

How did Christ's life exemplify His teachings on the subject of poverty?

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9).

"After Christ had condescended to leave His high command, step down from an infinite height and assume humanity, He could have taken upon Him any condition of humanity He might choose. But greatness and rank were nothing to Him, and He selected the lowest and most humble walk of life. The place of His birth was Bethlehem, and on one side His parentage was poor, but God, the owner of the world, was His Father.

"No trace of luxury, ease, selfish gratification, or indulgence was brought into His life, which was a continual round of self-denial and self-sacrifice. In accordance with His humble birth, He had apparently no greatness or riches, in order that the humblest believer need not say Christ never knew the stress of pinching poverty. Had He possessed the semblance of outward show, of riches, of grandeur, the poorest class of humanity would have shunned His society; therefore He chose the lowly condition of the far greater number of the people."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, pp. 903, 904.

Where do we find the perfect example of humility? Phil. 2:5-8.

"For Paul, all spiritual life centers in Christ, and when he wishes to inculcate lessons of unity and humility, he can find no better method than to present, in outline form, the story of his Master's career, as the supreme exemplification of the virtues he desires the Philippians to possess. . . . Christ left a state of inexpressible glory, took upon Himself the most humble form of humanity, and performed the most lowly of offices, that men might be saved. Christians are to frame their lives according to this great example."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 154.

THINK IT THROUGH

What should we do to remain humble?

"In order to preserve humility, it would be well to remember how we appear in the sight of a holy God, who reads every secret of the soul, and how we should appear in the sight of our fellow men if they all knew us as well as God knows us. For this reason, to humble us, we are directed to confess our faults, and improve this opportunity to subdue our pride."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 211.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 477.

**Part 6
THE PROMISE
OF THE KINGDOM**

What magnificent promise is made to them who feel spiritually poor?

"Their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:3). (See also James 2:5.)

"This kingdom is not, as Christ's hearers had hoped, a temporal and earthly dominion. Christ was opening to men the spiritual kingdom of His love, His grace, His righteousness. The ensign of the Messiah's reign is distinguished by the likeness of the Son of man. His subjects are the poor in spirit, the meek, the persecuted for righteousness' sake. The kingdom of heaven is theirs. Though not yet fully accomplished, the work is begun in them which will make them 'meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light.' Colossians 1:12."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 8.

From what kind of poverty do Laodicean Christians suffer? Rev. 3:17, 18.

"It is difficult for those who feel secure in their attainments, and who believe themselves to be rich in spiritual knowledge, to receive the message which declares that they are deceived and in need of every spiritual grace. The unsanctified heart is 'deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked.' I was shown that many are flattering themselves that they are good Christians, who have not a ray of light from Jesus. They have not a living experience for themselves in the divine life. They need a deep and thorough work of self-abasement before God before they will feel their true need of earnest, persevering effort to secure the precious graces of the Spirit."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 253.

THINK IT THROUGH

Lord, anoint my eyes that I may see!

"Jesus had presented the cup of blessing to those who felt that they were 'rich, and increased with goods' (Revelation 3:17), and had need of nothing, and they had turned with scorn from the gracious gift. He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ. . . . Those who know that they cannot possibly save themselves, or of themselves do any righteous action, are the ones who appreciate the help that Christ can bestow. They are the poor in spirit, whom He declares to be blessed."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 3, pp. 252-256.



3. The Mourners

**"Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4).
"Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh" (Luke 6:21).**

Jesus presents God's answer to the problem of human suffering in the second beatitude. Not by discussing whether God is its author nor by explaining why He permits it in our lives and in our world, but simply by promising us a sure consolation.

Actually Jesus was not satisfied merely to give us an encouraging word. He came "to fulfil what was spoken by the prophet Isaiah, 'He took our infirmities and bore our diseases'" (Matt. 8:17, RSV). "A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief" (Isa. 53:3), "He himself bore

our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24, RSV).

And furthermore, "Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered" (Heb. 5:8, RSV), proving by example the sanctifying worth of the trials God permits. In this life one will never fully understand the role that suffering plays in the perfecting of character. "Faith, patience, forbearance, heavenly-mindedness, trust in your wise, heavenly Father, are the perfect blossoms which mature amidst clouds and disappointments and bereavements."—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 934.

"By themselves, suffering and tribulation have no power to make men Christlike. In fact, they make many men morose and bitter. But God sanctifies tribulation, and those who find in Him grace and strength to endure have solved one of the great problems of life. . . . In the providence of God, tribulation and sorrow can lead us closer to Him. Should men not therefore praise Him for tribulation and let it be a steppingstone to the kingdom of God?"—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 828.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Promise of Consolation and Joy**
(Matt. 5:4; Luke 6:21)
2. **Partakers of His Holiness**
(Jer. 6:19)
3. **Two Kinds of Sorrow**
(2 Cor. 7:10)
4. **Christ's Sorrow**
(Luke 19:41; Matt. 26:36-38)
5. **Grace to Suffer for Christ**
(Phil. 1:29, 30)
6. **Consolation and Hope**
(2 Cor. 1:3-5)

Part 1
PROMISE OF
CONSOLATION
AND JOY

What significance should be given to the mourning and tears mentioned in the second beatitude?

"Blessed are those who mourn" (Matt. 5:4, RSV).

"Blessed are you that weep now" (Luke 6:21, RSV).

The close relationship between the first and second beatitudes should be considered. No one will deny the literal meaning of the second beatitude. Our Lord demonstrated it, and, moreover, He devoted the best of His ministry to the afflicted, the sick, the unfortunate.

But this beatitude, like the first, finds full meaning when it is applied to the spiritual life. "The mourning here brought to view is true heart sorrow for sin."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 9.

"The profound spiritual poverty of the 'poor in spirit' . . . is matched by the deep mourning of the persons described in v. 4. In fact, it is a deep sense of spiritual need that leads men to 'mourn' for the imperfection they see in their own lives. . . . Christ here refers to those who, in poverty of spirit, long to reach the standard of perfection (cf. Isa. 6:5; Rom. 7:24). There is a message of comfort here also for those who mourn because of disappointment, bereavement, or other sorrow."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 325.

How is our Lord's promise to the afflicted realized both today and in the future? Matt. 5:4; Luke 6:21.

As the poor and the underprivileged of this world place their confidence in God's promises, there is and there will be consolation for them. The hope of a better world comforts them now; it is already a consolation for them, a source of joy. The parable of the rich man and Lazarus teaches us that he who places his confidence in God and patiently endures suffering in this world will know the joy and happiness of God's children in the ages to come. (See Luke 16:19-31.) But there is more!

"As God meets the sense of spiritual need with the riches of the grace of heaven . . . , so He meets the mourning over sin with the comfort of sins forgiven. Except there be first a sense of need, there will not be mourning for what one lacks—in this case, righteousness of character. Mourning for sin is thus the second requirement made of those who present themselves as candidates for the kingdom of heaven, and follows naturally in sequence after the first step."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 325.

THINK IT THROUGH

What other Bible texts teach the same truth as that of the second beatitude? (See Jer. 31:13; Ps. 126:5, 6.)

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 300.

**Part 2
PARTAKERS OF
HIS HOLINESS**

What does the Bible teach concerning the afflictions of men?

"Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto my words, nor to my law, but rejected it" (Jer. 6:19).

"No truth does the Bible more clearly teach than that what we do is the result of what we are. To a great degree the experiences of life are the fruition of our own thoughts and deeds.

" 'The curse causeless shall not come.' Proverbs 26:2. . . .

"Terrible is this truth, and deeply should it be impressed. Every deed reacts upon the doer. Never a human being but may recognize, in the evils that curse his life, fruitage of his own sowing. Yet even thus we are not without hope."—*Education*, p. 146.

What is God's purpose in permitting afflictions? And what is their immediate effect on us? Heb. 12:10, 11.

God does not cause our misfortunes, but He does use them to lead us back to Him, to teach, to correct, to educate, to sanctify us. "Through affliction God reveals to us the plague spots in our characters, that by His grace we may overcome our faults. Unknown chapters in regard to ourselves are opened to us, and the test comes, whether we will accept the reproof and the counsel of God. When brought into trial, we are not to fret and complain. We should not rebel, or worry ourselves out of the hand of Christ. We are to humble the soul before God. The ways of the Lord are obscure to him who desires to see things in a light pleasing to himself. They appear dark and joyless to our human nature. But God's ways are ways of mercy and the end is salvation."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

THINK IT THROUGH

How do you understand trials?

"The trials of life are God's workmen, to remove the impurities and roughness from our character. Their hewing, squaring, and chiseling, their burnishing and polishing, is a painful process; it is hard to be pressed down to the grinding wheel. But the stone is brought forth prepared to fill its place in the heavenly temple. Upon no useless material does the Master bestow such careful, thorough work. Only His precious stones are polished after the similitude of a palace."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 10.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:4), pp. 9-13.

Part 3
TWO KINDS
OF SORROW

What is the difference between godly sorrow and the sorrow of the world?

"Godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death" (2 Cor. 7:10).

"In 'godly sorrow' there is recognition and admission that one has wronged God and his fellow men, adequate effort to right the wrong, and a reorientation of the life with the purpose of avoiding a repetition of the same mistakes. . . .

" . . . Worldly sorrow consists of regret for the consequences of the sin rather than for the sin itself, and at being discredited before the world and worldly friends (1 Sam. 15:30). Worldly sorrow plays only upon the surface of the problem. It mounts no higher than the man himself, and his own feelings. It leads to future regret and to deeper distress. It fills the mind with discontent, the heart with resentment and chagrin. It embitters and shortens life. A person who truly repents will never regret having done so."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 884.

What biblical examples best illustrate the two kinds of sorrow? Matt. 27:3-5; Luke 22:60-62.

"Perhaps the supreme illustration of the difference between true and false sorrow for sin lies in the contrast between Peter and Judas during the trial of Jesus. Both felt bitter remorse, but with the one there was true sorrow for sin, which led to a new life in Christ; with the other there was only sorrow for the consequences, which led to utter despair and then suicide."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 884.

The original Greek makes a clear distinction between the repentance of Peter, which was produced by godly sorrow, and that of Judas. In the first example, the word *metanoia*, which is used, denotes a change of mind, of goals, of direction—that is, conversion. In the case of Judas, the word *metamelomai*, which is employed, means regret, mere remorse.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have you experienced godly sorrow?

"Real sorrow for sin is the result of the working of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals the ingratitude of the heart that has slighted and grieved the Saviour, and brings us in contrition to the foot of the cross. By every sin Jesus is wounded afresh; and as we look upon Him whom we have pierced, we mourn for the sins that have brought anguish upon Him. Such mourning will lead to the renunciation of sin."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 300.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 88-93.

Part 4
CHRIST'S
SORROW

What was the reason for Christ's sorrow?

"When he drew near and saw the city he wept over it" (Luke 19:41, RSV).

"Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane . . . he began to be sorrowful and troubled. Then he said to them, 'My soul is very sorrowful, even to death'" (Matt. 26:36-38, RSV). (Compare Heb. 5:7, 8.)

Not all affliction and sadness are necessarily the direct consequence of sin. The sufferings of Job, like those of Jesus, prove this. Christ's sadness was indeed caused by sin, but not His own. Jesus suffered because of the sins of others and of the world. He was profoundly saddened by the callousness of the Pharisees (Mark 3:5); He cried over Jerusalem, because of the indifference of her children to the salvation God was offering them, which they finally rejected.

"It was the sight of Jerusalem that pierced the heart of Jesus—Jerusalem that had rejected the Son of God and scorned His love, that refused to be convinced by His mighty miracles, and was about to take His life. He saw what she was in her guilt of rejecting her Redeemer, and what she might have been had she accepted Him who alone could heal her wound. He had come to save her; how could He give her up?"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 576.

The sadness experienced by Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane was caused by His dread of the death that brings about complete separation from God. "Upon Him who knew no sin must be laid the iniquity of us all. So dreadful does sin appear to Him, so great is the weight of guilt which He must bear, that He is tempted to fear it will shut Him out forever from His Father's love. Feeling how terrible is the wrath of God against transgression, He exclaims, 'My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.'"—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 685.

What consoled Jesus in His sufferings? Heb. 12:2; Isa. 53:10, 11.

"He [Jesus] knew that He would live to see the results 'of the travail of his soul,' and was 'satisfied' (Isa. 53:11). To share eternity with the ransomed of all ages and the unfallen beings of other worlds was a prospect that brought utter joy to our Lord."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 482.

THINK IT THROUGH

"Looking to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. . . . Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted" (Heb. 12:2, 3, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 685-690.

Part 5
GRACE TO
SUFFER FOR
CHRIST

What special grace is promised to the believer in regard to suffering?

“Unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; having the same conflict which ye saw in me” (Phil. 1:29, 30).

“Of all the gifts that heaven can bestow upon men, fellowship with Christ in His sufferings is the most weighty trust and the highest honor. Not Enoch, who was translated to heaven, not Elijah, who ascended in a chariot of fire, was greater or more honored than John the Baptist, who perished alone in the dungeon.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 478.

“Faithful Christians, from apostolic times onward, have been glad to suffer for the Master’s sake (Acts 5:41; 1 Peter 3:14; 4:12-14). Those who face the trials of the last days must possess that same true sense of values. Severe as were the tests of Peter and his associates, they were little compared with those of the last great times of trouble. Only one thoroughly persuaded that it is the highest of honors and the greatest of blessings to be permitted to suffer for Christ’s sake will persevere through times when the unrestrained fury of Satan is unleashed.”—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 150.

How should a Christian consider participation in Christ’s sufferings? 1 Peter 4:12-16; Col. 1:24.

Following Christ’s example, the Christian should patiently, victoriously endure the trials of the present life, when their goal is the advancement of God’s work on earth. It is therefore an honor and a source of joy to share the sufferings of Christ for His body, which is His church. Like Jesus, who did it “for the joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2), His disciple will do it in anticipation of the joy and gladness that are reserved for the day when Jesus shall appear in His glory. (See 1 Peter 4:13.)

THINK IT THROUGH

A thought to ponder daily: What does sharing in the work of Christ mean to you?

“Blessed are they also who weep with Jesus in sympathy with the world sorrow and in sorrow for its sin. In such mourning there is intermingled no thought of self. . . . All who are followers of Christ will share in this experience. As they partake of His love they will enter into His travail for the saving of the lost. They share in the sufferings of Christ, and they will share also in the glory that shall be revealed. One with Him in His work, drinking with Him the cup of sorrow, they are partakers also of His joy.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 12, 13.

FURTHER STUDY

Early Writings, pp. 46-48.

Part 6
CONSOLATION
AND HOPE

What assurance should be ours in all our trials? And, in turn, what ministry has been entrusted to us?

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction, so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as we share abundantly in Christ's sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too" (2 Cor. 1:3-5, RSV).

These words renew the assurance given by Jesus in the second beatitude—consolation for the Christian in each of his trials. Through Jesus, God provided "the consolation of Israel" (Luke 2:25). By His Spirit He still makes provision for "all our affliction" (2 Cor. 1:4, RSV).

Moreover, he who knows this comfort through experience with his God is, in turn, able to sympathize with a suffering brother and, in God's name, to minister consolation to him.

What relationship did Paul establish between affliction and hope? Rom. 5:3-5.

"Patient endurance of tribulation tests, confirms, and refines the Christian's faith. Out of this comes ever more confident hope. It is the believer's initial hope of sharing in the glory of God (see v. 2) that nerves him to endure in the first place. And as he continues to endure, he gains a steady, calm assurance. Hope and faith grow as they are tested and exercised. . . . The experience of Job illustrates how the severe discipline of character can strengthen the faith and hope of a sincere believer."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 525.

What marvelous comfort is offered to those who await the restoration of all things? Rev. 7:17; 21:4.

"This earth is the place of preparation for heaven. The time spent here is the Christian's winter. Here the chilly winds of affliction blow upon us, and the waves of trouble roll against us. But in the near future, when Christ comes, sorrow and sighing will be forever ended. Then will be the Christian's summer. All trials will be over, and there will be no more sickness or death. 'God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death; neither sorrow, nor crying . . . for the former things are passed away.'"—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 988.

THINK IT THROUGH

How should we evaluate suffering and trial? (See Rom. 8:18; 2 Cor. 4:17, 18.)



4. The Meek

“Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth” (Matt. 5:5).

“Throughout the Beatitudes there is an advancing line of Christian experience. Those who have felt their need of Christ, those who have mourned because of sin and have sat with Christ in the school of affliction, will learn meekness from the divine Teacher.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 13, 14.

In all the Scriptures God speaks with special affection of those who

are gentle in character. Tenderly He encourages them with precious promises and then presents them to us as our ensamples. After the meek gain the victory over self, they take possession of the kingdom which God has prepared for them.

Let us join Ellen White, a great pioneer of the remnant church, in her entreaty: “Give me immortal worth. Let me grasp the golden chain that is let down from heaven to earth, and let it draw me up to God and glory. This is my ambition; this is my aim. . . . Let me be clothed with that meek and quiet spirit which is in the sight of God of great price. And I recommend it to you, young gentlemen and ladies, for it is more precious in His sight than the gold of Ophir. It is this which makes a man more precious than fine gold, even a man than the golden wedge of Ophir.”—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 593.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Need of a Definition**
(Matt. 5:5)
2. **Jesus, Model of Meekness**
(Matt. 11:28, 29)
3. **From Violence to Meekness**
(Num. 12:3)
4. **A Priceless Virtue**
(1 Peter 3:3, 4)
5. **To Be Christlike**
(Phil. 2:5; Col. 3:12; Eph. 4:1, 2)
6. **Seek Meekness**
(Phil. 4:5)

**Part 1
NEED OF A
DEFINITION****In the third beatitude what spiritual virtue is held in high esteem?****"Blessed are the meek" (Matt. 5:5).**

The Hebrew word *anaw* and its Greek equivalent *praus* are not always translated in the same way. Modern languages give the word *meek* an implied meaning of "mousy," "tame," "timid," "docile"; so today meekness often suggests weakness or a lack of strength of character. To understand this beatitude we should note the meaning of the word *meek*.

"A distillation of inspired definition would seem to characterize meekness as an absence of self-seeking and a presence of self-forgetfulness. It is 'government of self' (*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 348), 'a calm and trustful spirit,' 'lowliness of heart' (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301), 'the ornament of God's own choice' (*The Sanctified Life*, p. 16). Meekness, then, is an inward calm and peace of mind that shows itself in outward gracious, courteous, kind, and friendly behavior. It has been termed 'an attitude of mind and heart that prepares the way for sanctification.'"—J. M. Lien, *Review and Herald*, August 16, 1973.

**How should we interpret the promise made to the meek?
Matt. 5:5.**

Through the psalmist God promised the earth to the meek (Ps. 37:11). Daniel said it is "the kingdom under the whole heaven" that "shall be given to the people of the saints of the most High" (Dan. 7:27). But the earth promised by Jesus is above all the earth restored, "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13).

Another interpretation, however, should not be excluded. Is not self-control the first victory gained by the meek? As gentleness of character naturally conquers hearts, it works itself into another's favor more effectively than does force or talent. That is why gentleness must characterize the peaceful conquerors whom Jesus sends into the world to prepare it for His kingdom.

THINK IT THROUGH**According to this definition of gentleness, what is the first weakness every Christian must overcome?**

"Human nature is ever struggling for expression, ready for contest; but he who learns of Christ is emptied of self, of pride, of love of supremacy, and there is silence in the soul. Self is yielded to the disposal of the Holy Spirit."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 15.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:5), pp. 13-18.

Part 2
JESUS,
MODEL OF
MEEKNESS

From whom can we learn meekness best?

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls" (Matt. 11:28, 29).

Jesus not only teaches truth; He *is* truth. Whatever He teaches, He lived; what He asks His hearers to become, He Himself is. That is why He can invite men to come to Him, the One who is "meek and lowly in heart." The source of His gentleness and His humility is in Himself, in His heart, a heart filled with devotion and compassion for mankind (Matt. 9:36).

"We are to enter the school of Christ, to learn from Him meekness and lowliness. Redemption is that process by which the soul is trained for heaven. This training means a knowledge of Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 330.

What event in the life of Christ, announced by the prophet Zechariah, especially illustrates His gentleness and His humility? Matt. 21:4, 5.

"Through all the lowly experiences of life He consented to pass, walking among the children of men, not as a king, to demand homage, but as one whose mission it was to serve others. There was in His manner no taint of bigotry, no cold austerity. The world's Redeemer had a greater than angelic nature, yet united with His divine majesty were meekness and humility that attracted all to Himself."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 14.

"In this one triumphant scene [triumphal ride into Jerusalem] of His earthly life, the Saviour might have appeared escorted by heavenly angels, and heralded by the trump of God; but such a demonstration would have been contrary to the purpose of His mission, contrary to the law which had governed His life. He remained true to the humble lot He had accepted. The burden of humanity He must bear until His life was given for the life of the world."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 571.

THINK IT THROUGH

What was the principal object of Jesus' teaching? What should be our chief concern?

"He [Jesus] said nothing to gratify curiosity or to stimulate selfish ambition. He did not deal in abstract theories, but in that which is essential to the development of character; that which will enlarge man's capacity for knowing God, and increase his power to do good. He spoke of those truths that relate to the conduct of life and that unite man with eternity."—*Education*, p. 81.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 328-332.

**Part 3
FROM
VIOLENCE
TO MEEKNESS**

What do we know about Moses as a young man? And what do the Scriptures testify concerning him in later life? Num. 12:3.

“Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and in deeds” (Acts 7:22).

Moses was not naturally a meek man. (See Ex. 2:11-14.) Convinced that he was to be the liberator of the Israelites, he sought to obtain their liberation by force of arms.

“In the military schools of Egypt, Moses was taught the law of force, and so strong a hold did this teaching have upon his character that it required forty years of quiet and communion with God and nature to fit him for the leadership of Israel by the law of love.”—*Education*, p. 65.

“There were other lessons that, amid the solitude of the mountains, Moses was to receive. In the school of self-denial and hardship he was to learn patience, to temper his passions.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 247.

What testimony did the apostle Paul bear concerning the transformation of his character? 1 Tim. 1:12, 13; Acts 8:3; 26:9-11; 2 Tim. 3:10.

Note, first, some of the expressions that Paul used to describe his character before conversion: “blasphemer,” “persecutor,” “injurious,” “extremely zealous.” “I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to destroy it” (Gal. 1:13, RSV). In the book of Acts, Luke points out the same brutality: “Saul was ravaging the church, and entering house after house, he dragged off men and women and committed them to prison” (8:3, RSV). In his discourse before King Agrippa, Paul declared: “I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth . . . ; I . . . shut up many of the saints in prison, . . . and I punished them often in all the synagogues and tried to make them blaspheme; and in raging fury against them, I persecuted them” (Acts 26:9-11, RSV).

Several years later this same Paul, who had become an imitator of Christ, wrote: “When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; when slandered, we try to conciliate” (1 Cor. 4:12, 13, RSV). Then, as he faced death, Paul again said of himself, and charged his closest co-worker to bear him witness: “You have observed my teaching, my conduct, my aim in life, my faith, my patience, my love” (2 Tim. 3:10, RSV).

THINK IT THROUGH

Although the transformation of life is not so spectacular as that of Moses or Paul, the goal before you is the same. “I urge you, then, be imitators of me” (1 Cor. 4:16, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 245-248; *The Acts of the Apostles*, pp. 119-121.

**Part 4
A PRICE-
LESS VIRTUE****What did the apostle Peter write of meekness?**

"Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price" (1 Peter 3:3, 4).

"Meekness is the inward adorning, which God estimates as of great price. The apostle speaks of this as more excellent and valuable than gold or pearls or costly array. While the outward adorning beautifies only the mortal body, the ornament of meekness adorns the soul and connects finite man with the infinite God. This is the ornament of God's own choice. He who garnished the heavens with the orbs of light has by the same Spirit promised that 'he will beautify the meek with salvation' (Ps. 149:4). Angels of heaven will register as best adorned those who put on the Lord Jesus Christ and walk with Him in meekness and lowliness of mind."—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 16.

What recommendation does Paul make to every man of God concerning the fruit of the Spirit, of which meekness is a part? Gal. 5:22, 23; 1 Tim. 6:11.

"Meekness in the school of Christ is one of the marked fruits of the Spirit. It is a grace wrought by the Holy Spirit as a sanctifier, and enables its possessor at all times to control a rash and impetuous temper. When the grace of meekness is cherished by those who are naturally sour or hasty in disposition, they will put forth the most earnest efforts to subdue their unhappy temper. Every day they will gain self-control, until that which is unlovely and unlike Jesus is conquered."—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 15.

THINK IT THROUGH

To what length should we go to acquire this virtue, which is of such great value in God's eyes?

"The most precious fruit of sanctification is the grace of meekness. When this grace presides in the soul, the disposition is molded by its influence. There is a continual waiting upon God and a submission of the will to His. The understanding grasps every divine truth, and the will bows to every divine precept, without doubting or murmuring. True meekness softens and subdues the heart and gives the mind a fitness for the engrafted word. It brings the thoughts into obedience to Jesus Christ."—*The Sanctified Life*, pp. 14, 15.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 4, p. 348.

**Part 5
TO BE
CHRISTLIKE**

In what words did Paul exhort us to be meek and humble like Jesus?

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

"Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience" (Col. 3:12, RSV).

"I therefore . . . beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all lowliness and meekness" (Eph. 4:1, 2, RSV).

"To man is granted the privilege of becoming an heir of God and a joint heir with Christ. To those who have been thus exalted, are unfolded the unsearchable riches of Christ, which are of a thousandfold more value than the wealth of the world. Thus, through the merits of Jesus Christ, finite man is elevated to fellowship with God and with His dear Son."—*The Sanctified Life*, p. 17.

How is gentleness manifest in the life of a child of God?

1. By receiving "with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls" (James 1:21, RSV).

2. By his treatment of others: "shewing all meekness unto all men" (Titus 3:2).

3. By his manner of petitioning his fellowmen: "Now I Paul myself beseech you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1).

4. By his manner of instructing souls in the truth: "Exhort with great patience and instruction" (2 Tim. 4:2, NASB).

5. By the way he corrects his adversaries: "Correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant that they will repent and come to know the truth" (2 Tim. 2:25, RSV).

THINK IT THROUGH

In order to do God's work, it is necessary to be Christlike in spirit and to act with the same graciousness that He manifested at all times.

"The value of our work does not consist in making a loud noise in the world, in being zealous, eager, and active in our own strength. The value of our work is in proportion to the impartation of the Holy Spirit. The value of our work comes through trust in God, which brings holier qualities of mind, so that in patience we may possess our souls. . . . The cause of God is best advanced by those who are meek and lowly in heart."—*Evangelism*, p. 631.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 354.

Part 6
SEEK
MEEKNESS

How is the Christian most effective in making Christ known to the world?

"Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand"
(Phil. 4:5, RSV).

Throughout all ages the true strength of Christianity has been in the love that men manifest one toward another. Not only love for those who love us, or for our neighbor, but also for our enemies. (See Matt. 5:43-46.) "How they love one another!" was the testimony that people bore concerning the first Christians. It is also what the world should be able to say of the church entrusted with the proclamation of God's last message for a doomed world.

"Those who claim to believe in Christ are to represent Christ in deeds of kindness and mercy. Such will never know until the day of judgment what good they have done in seeking to follow the example of the Saviour."—*Welfare Ministry*, p. 86.

"If we would humble ourselves before God, and be kind and courteous and tenderhearted and pitiful, there would be one hundred conversions to the truth where now there is only one."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 189.

What exhortation did Zephaniah address especially to those who were then living on the eve of God's day of wrath? Zeph. 2:1-3.

"It is not sinners who are here addressed, but all the meek of the earth, who have wrought His judgments or kept His commandments. There is work for everyone, and if all will obey, we shall see sweet union in the ranks of Sabbathkeepers."—*Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 426.

"You need to learn of Jesus, who is meek and lowly of heart, and then you will obtain rest. . . . You need to humble your heart before God, and seek meekness and righteousness, that you may be hid in the day of the Lord's fierce anger."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 222.

THINK IT THROUGH

What do you consider to be the strongest evidence of Christian nobility?

"The highest evidence of nobility in a Christian is self-control. He who under abuse or cruelty fails to maintain a calm and trustful spirit robs God of His right to reveal in him His own perfection of character. Lowliness of heart is the strength that gives victory to the followers of Christ; it is the token of their connection with the courts above."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 301.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 622, 623.



5. Those That Hunger and Thirst

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matt. 5:6, RSV).

With each beatitude the character of a true disciple of Christ is portrayed more clearly. Each, in turn, sheds light upon a different facet of Christian character.

Rare is the man who does not hunger and thirst after righteousness. In the evil world in which we live the unsatisfied are legion. Many are they who, consciously or unconsciously, feel

the inner emptiness of human misery and suffer from a kind of soul sickness. Surely the hungering and thirsting after righteousness has never been greater than it is today.

In speaking of the signs that are to take place just before the coming of our Lord in glory, the prophet Amos foretold a spiritual famine: “not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord” (Amos 8:11, RSV). And, despite the Master’s promise, the prophet specified further: “In that day the fair virgins and the young men shall faint for thirst” (verse 13, RSV), because they have not drunk at the only Source able to quench their thirst.

It is not enough to hunger and thirst after righteousness in order to be filled. One still must go to Him who has been “made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption” (1 Cor. 1:30). Being the only Righteous One, He alone is able to invite men to come and drink at the Source of the water of life freely (Rev. 22:17).

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Hungering and Thirsting for Righteousness**
(Matt. 5:6)
2. **The Righteousness of God**
(Matt. 6:33)
3. **Christ Our Righteousness**
(Rom. 3:21-24)
4. **Justified by Grace**
(Luke 15:3-7)
5. **Justification Taught in Parables**
(Luke 15:11-32)
6. **Righteousness and the Kingdom of Heaven**
(Matt. 5:20)

**Part 1
HUNGERING AND
THIRSTING FOR
RIGHTEOUSNESS**

What is the meaning of the word "righteousness" as used in the fourth beatitude?

"Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness" (Matt. 5:6).

"In every instance of its use in the NT (94 times) *dikaiousunē* is translated 'righteousness.' Among the Greeks 'righteousness' consisted in conformity to accepted customs. To the Jews it was essentially a matter of conformity to the requirements of the law as interpreted by Jewish tradition. (See Gal. 2:16-21.) But for Christ's followers, righteousness took on a broader meaning. Instead of going about to establish their own righteousness, Christians were called to submit 'themselves unto the righteousness of God' (Rom. 10:3). They sought for the righteousness 'which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith' (Phil. 3:9)." —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 326.

What assurance does Jesus give to all who hunger and thirst for righteousness? Matt. 5:6.

This metaphor was especially meaningful to Christ's hearers, most of whom had experienced hunger and thirst at one time or another. Moreover, no word could have been more pleasing to their ears than the promise of righteousness at a time when Israel was awaiting the advent of the Messiah with the hope that He would deliver them from their yoke of bondage, establish righteousness, and administer law over all people.

"Only those who long for righteousness with the eager anxiety of a man starving for lack of food or famishing for want of water, will find it. No earthly source can satisfy the hunger and thirst of the soul, whether it be material riches, profound philosophies, the satisfaction of physical appetites, or honor and power. After experimenting with all of these things, Solomon concluded that 'all is vanity.'" —*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 326.

THINK IT THROUGH

Under what condition can we appropriate the Master's promise to those who hunger and thirst for righteousness?

"The sense of unworthiness will lead the heart to hunger and thirst for righteousness, and this desire will not be disappointed. Those who make room in their hearts for Jesus will realize His love. All who long to bear the likeness of the character of God shall be satisfied." —*The Desire of Ages*, p. 302.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:6), pp. 18-21.

Part 2
THE RIGH-
TEOUSNESS
OF GOD

What righteousness does Jesus invite us to seek above all other things?

"Seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

The righteousness of God should be the constant concern of the Christian. There are pagans who seek only the commonplace needs of daily life; that is, they are blind to the true reality of life, ignorant of God and of His redemptive act. He who hungers and thirsts after righteousness will never be satisfied until he finds true righteousness, the righteousness of God in the person of Jesus Christ.

"The righteousness of God is embodied in Christ. We receive righteousness by receiving Him.

"Not by painful struggles or wearisome toil, not by gift or sacrifice, is righteousness obtained; but it is freely given to every soul who hungers and thirsts to receive it. . . . 'This is His name whereby He shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.' Jeremiah 23:6."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 18.

According to the prophet Daniel, what type of righteousness would the Messiah bring to earth? Dan. 9:24.

"Men will learn of the reconciliation for iniquity and of the everlasting righteousness which the Messiah has brought in through His sacrifice. The cross of Calvary is the great center. This truth acted upon will make Christ's sacrifice effectual. This is that which Gabriel revealed to Daniel in answer to fervent prayer. It was of this that Moses and Elijah and Christ talked at His transfiguration. By the humiliation of the cross He was to bring everlasting deliverance to all who would walk after Him, giving positive evidence that they are separated from the world."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, pp. 1172, 1173.

THINK IT THROUGH

The truth of "everlasting righteousness" is also the heart (center) of "the everlasting gospel."

"The message of Christ's righteousness is to sound from one end of the earth to the other to prepare the way of the Lord. This is the glory of God, which closes the work of the third angel."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 19.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 265, 266.

Part 3
CHRIST OUR
RIGHTEOUSNESS

How does the believer receive the righteousness of God?

"Now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from law, although the law and the prophets bear witness to it, the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction; since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, they are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:21-24, RSV).

"When in love and gratitude the believer in Jesus commits himself without reservation to the mercy and will of God, the righteousness of justification is imputed to him. And as he continues daily in this experience of trust, surrender, and fellowship, his faith increases, enabling him to receive more and more of the imparted righteousness of sanctification."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 502.

What is the goal of righteousness by faith? Rom. 6:18, 19.

"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit. . . . When Christ reigns in the soul, there is purity, freedom from sin. The glory, the fullness, the completeness of the gospel plan is fulfilled in the life."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 419, 420.

"God sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, so that men might be enabled fully to comply with the righteous requirements of His holy law. To bring man's life into harmony with the divine will is the purpose of the plan of salvation. God did not give His Son in order to change or abolish His law, or to release men from the necessity of perfect obedience. The law has always stood as an expression of the unchangeable will and character of God. Fallen man has been unable to obey its requirements, and the law has possessed no power to strengthen him to obey. But now Christ has come to make it possible for man to render perfect obedience."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 562.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I understand the difference between imputed and imparted righteousness?

"The righteousness by which we are justified is imputed; the righteousness by which we are sanctified is imparted. The first is our title to heaven, the second is our fitness for heaven."—*Messages to Young People*, p. 35.

FURTHER STUDY

Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, art. "This Is Justification by Faith," vol. 6, pp. 1070, 1071.

**Part 4
JUSTIFIED
BY GRACE**

In the parable of the lost sheep, who is the seeker? What does this teach about salvation? Luke 15:3-7.

The parable of the lost sheep teaches clearly that God calls after man while he is still lost and that all Heaven rejoices when a single sinner repents. Jesus affirmed this truth when He said, "The Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10).

The lost man, like the lost sheep, can never find his way to God of himself, neither by his intelligence or through force of will. That is why, while we are still His enemies, God reconciles us to Himself "by the death of his Son" (Rom. 5:10). "In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 4:9, 10).

What is the central truth of the parable of the Pharisee and the publican? of the great debtor? Luke 18:9-14; Matt. 18:23-35.

The parable of the Pharisee and the publican aptly illustrates the fact that justification is possible only through faith and not by works. Full of self-righteousness, the Pharisee was not among those who hunger and thirst for the righteousness of God. His numerous works, so he thought, were sufficient for him. The publican, on the contrary, counted only on God's mercy when he prayed, "God be merciful to me a sinner" (Luke 18:13). In conclusion Jesus affirmed: "This man went down to his house justified rather than the other" (verse 14).

The parable of the great debtor teaches that salvation is free. Like that servant, the sinner is incapable of repaying his debt to God. Having called upon God's patience, like the king in the parable, our Lord is "moved with compassion" and has forgiven his debt (Matt. 18:27).

THINK IT THROUGH

We are not saved by good works but for good works.

"By grace you have been saved through faith; and this is not your own doing, it is the gift of God—not because of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:8-10, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "This Man Receiveth Sinners" (The Lost Sheep), pp. 186-192.

**Part 5
JUSTIFICATION
TAUGHT IN
PARABLES**

How does the parable of the prodigal son illustrate both the fourth beatitude and the doctrine of imputed righteousness? Luke 15:11-32.

Jesus never employed the expressions "justification by faith" or "imputed" and "imparted righteousness." Instead of theological expressions, which are always abstract and sometimes obscure, Jesus used concrete, living lessons that everyone could understand. In this way the parable of the prodigal son wonderfully illustrates the doctrine of imputed righteousness. The prodigal son experienced physical and spiritual hunger as a consequence of his foolish behavior, and this led him to repentance. He also experienced the joy of having his father satisfy his needs with blessings and kindness. How well this account depicts the sinner's dependence upon God for both his title to heaven and his fitness for it.

By the "best robe" is symbolized God's imputing of Christ's righteousness to man in response to his faith in God's pardon of his sins.

In what way does the parable of the marriage feast teach the doctrine of imparted righteousness? Matt. 22:1-14.

"The parable of the wedding garment opens before us a lesson of the highest consequence. By the marriage is represented the union of humanity with divinity; the wedding garment represents the character which all must possess who shall be accounted fit guests for the wedding."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 307.

"By His perfect obedience He [Christ] has made it possible for every human being to obey God's commandments. When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; we live His life. This is what it means to be clothed with the garment of His righteousness. Then as the Lord looks upon us He sees, not the fig-leaf garment, not the nakedness and deformity of sin, but His own robe of righteousness, which is perfect obedience to the law of Jehovah."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 312.

THINK IT THROUGH

Both imputed and imparted righteousness are acts of God's grace.

"We have nothing in ourselves of which to boast. We have no ground for self-exaltation. Our only ground of hope is in the righteousness of Christ imputed to us, and in that wrought by His Spirit working in and through us."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 63.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Lost and Is Found," pp. 198-211.

**Part 6
RIGHTEOUSNESS
AND THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN**

What solemn warning did Jesus give His disciples to put them on guard against a false interpretation of the righteousness of God?

"I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20, RSV).

Jesus did not abolish His law, nor did He release His disciples from the obligation to observe it. Instead, He enlarged upon its requirements. Christians, generally speaking, believe that Christianity is an easing of Judaism. They are pleased to set a religion of love and pardon up over a religion of stern justice; they even go so far as to speak of the Jewish law as being in opposition to Christian grace, as if salvation by grace releases a person from obedience to God's law.

Far from making void the law, faith establishes it (Rom. 3:31), and grace makes its observance possible (Rom. 8:4), not simply according to the letter of the law, but in its spirit. This is possible because God writes His law in the heart (Heb. 8:10). He requires more than formal observance of its requirements. The scribes and Pharisees viewed the demands of the law as resting upon acts and deeds, but Jesus' requirements plumb the very secret intents of the heart. Our Lord requires more, not less, from those who are candidates for His kingdom.

What characterizes the kingdom of heaven, according to the promises found in the Word of God? 2 Peter 3:13.

Righteousness will not be fully realized until the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. Then will be manifest "the righteous judgment of God; who will render to every man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:5, 6).

In that day those who hunger for the righteousness of God will be fully satisfied. They will be ushered into "a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness" (2 Peter 3:13). "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" (Rev. 21:27).

THINK IT THROUGH

For what reason did God give us the Scriptures with their commands and promises?

"All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work" (2 Tim. 3:16, 17, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 584-586.



6. The Merciful

“Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy” (Matt. 5:7).

The preceding beatitude (Matt. 5:6) referred to the moral character of an individual. It affirmed that a soul hungering and thirsting to see right prevail would be abundantly filled.

The fifth beatitude, the subject of this week's lesson study, confronts the Christian with his obligation toward his neighbor, because it is

impossible to be merciful without sharing with another what God Himself has in mercy given him. He who has been filled must in turn nourish those who hunger and thirst in this world in which we live. “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matt. 10:8) is the Lord's mandate to His disciples.

Jesus Himself is our great Example, the supreme manifestation of divine mercy. “See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are” (1 John 3:1, RSV). “In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and set his Son to be the expiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10, RSV).

This love embraces all humanity. “In making all mankind prisoners to disobedience, God's purpose was to show mercy to all mankind” (Rom. 11:32, NEB). God's mercy knows no limit except the callousness of the sinner's heart. The promise is certain; every man who, following our Lord's example, shows himself merciful will obtain mercy.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The merciful**
(Matt. 5:7)
2. **God Is Merciful**
(Ex. 34:6, 7)
3. **Jesus, Merciful High Priest**
(John 3:16)
4. **In the Likeness of Our Heavenly Father**
(Luke 6:36)
5. **Forgiven As We Forgive**
(Matt. 6:12, 14, 15)
6. **In the Day of Judgment**
(James 2:12, 13)

Part 1
THE MERCIFUL

In the fifth beatitude who are described as being recipients of God's blessing?

"Blessed are the merciful" (Matt. 5:7).

Current language identifies mercy with compassion or pardon. To give this word all the richness of meaning given it in the Bible, one must add the ideas of active kindness, graciousness, tender pity, and, above all, fidelity. Actually, for the Bible writers, mercy is the coming together of two currents of thought—compassion and faithfulness: God's compassion toward men—His people—and fidelity to Himself and to His alliance.

The merciful, then, are those who follow the example of their heavenly Father and show compassion toward their neighbor, whoever he might be, and who are faithful in their obligations toward God.

How must we understand the promise that Jesus made to the merciful? Matt. 5:7; 7:12.

God promises that whoever is merciful will obtain mercy himself. Jesus also illustrated this principle in several of His parables.

This promise is sure in that which concerns God's attitude toward us. The child of God can experience it every day of his life. But in small measure this principle is also verified in men's relationships with one another.

"The principle of the golden rule (ch. 7:12) applies both to our treatment of others and to the kind of treatment they accord us in return. The cruel, hardhearted, mean-spirited man rarely receives kind and merciful treatment at the hand of his fellow man. But how often those who are kind and considerate of the needs and feelings of others find that the world often repays them in kind."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 327.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it mean to be merciful in our everyday life?

"God imparts His blessing to us that we may impart to others. When we ask him for our daily bread, He looks into our hearts to see if we will share the same with those more needy than ourselves. When we pray, 'God be merciful to me a sinner,' He watches to see if we will manifest compassion toward those with whom we associate. This is true evidence of our connection with God, that we are merciful even as our Father in heaven is merciful."—*Testimonies*, vol. 6, pp. 283, 284.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:7), pp. 21-24.

Part 2
GOD IS
MERCIFUL

In what terms does God reveal the very essence of His character to us?

"The Lord passed before him, and proclaimed, 'The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin' (Ex. 34:6, 7, RSV).

Moses had already received a revelation of divine transcendence, when God appeared to him in the burning bush. At that time God revealed His name: "I AM THAT I AM" (Ex. 3:14). At the time of this second manifestation God revealed to Moses—and through him to all His children—the very essence of His character, infinitely "merciful and gracious." All the words used in this disclosure tend to underline the infinite goodness of God toward sinful man. The circumstances under which this revelation was made further emphasize His merciful character. It was as if it were God's response to the infidelity of the children of Israel, who had just made a golden calf to worship, and to the righteous anger of Moses (Ex. 32, 33).

In reality God had already revealed this trait of character when He wrote His law on the tables of stone that Moses had just broken. There He stated (in the third commandment), "I the Lord thy God am a jealous God, . . . shewing mercy unto thousands of them that love me, and keep my commandments" (Ex. 20:5, 6).

Note these Bible texts which show that the authors took pleasure in emphasizing the merciful character of God: Neh. 9:17, 31; Ps. 86:15; Joel 2:13; James 5:11.

Actually the whole Bible repeats again and again the thought, "Father of mercies," as the apostle Paul called Him. (See 2 Cor. 1:3.) The authors of the psalms were particularly happy to sing of the unfathomable mercy of God, unto which they never ceased to appeal. They discerned it everywhere, operating throughout all the history of the children of Israel. Even in His acts they discovered that "the Lord is merciful and gracious" (Ps. 103:7, 8).

Not only is God "rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us" (Eph. 2:4), as the apostle Paul wrote, but the prophet Micah states, He even "delighteth in mercy" (Micah 7:18). (Compare Matt. 12:7.)

THINK IT THROUGH

To what degree does your personal experience allow you to declare with the psalmist: "All the paths of the Lord are steadfast love and faithfulness, for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies" (Ps. 25:10, RSV)?

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "God's Love for Man," pp. 9-15.

Part 3
JESUS,
MERCIFUL
HIGH PRIEST

What is the preeminent manifestation of God's infinite mercy?

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

"None but the Son of God could accomplish our redemption; for only He who was in the bosom of the Father could declare Him. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it manifest. Nothing less than the infinite sacrifice made by Christ in behalf of fallen man could express the Father's love to lost humanity."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 14.

How did Jesus give evidence of God's mercy in His life and teaching? Luke 4:18, 19; 19:10; Matt. 5:44.

"This was His work. He went about doing good and healing all that were oppressed by Satan. There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick. His work gave evidence of His divine anointing. Love, mercy, and compassion were revealed in every act of His life."—*Steps to Christ*, pp. 11, 12.

What was conferred on Jesus in preparation for His high priesthood in the heavenly sanctuary? Why? Heb. 2:17, 18; 4:14-16.

"Jesus consented to take human nature, that He might know how to pity, and how to plead with His Father in behalf of sinful, erring mortals. He volunteered to become man's Advocate, and He humiliated Himself to become acquainted with the temptations wherewith man was beset, that He might succor those who should be tempted, and be a tender and faithful high priest."—*Testimonies*, vol. 3, p. 93.

THINK IT THROUGH

Many Christians believe that Christ's sacrifice made God more favorable toward man. What do you think?

"This great sacrifice was not made in order to create in the Father's heart a love for man, not to make Him willing to save. No, no! 'God so loved the world, that He gave His only-begotten Son.' John 3:16. The Father loves us, not because of the great propitiation, but He provided the propitiation because He loves us. Christ was the medium through which He could pour out His infinite love upon a fallen world. 'God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself.' 2 Corinthians 5:19."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 13.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 350, 351.

**Part 4
IN THE LIKE-
NESS OF OUR
HEAVENLY
FATHER**

In what way does Jesus invite us to imitate our heavenly Father?

"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful" (Luke 6:36).

In its parallel passage in Matthew's Gospel, this verse reads: "Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect" (Matt. 5:48). In other words, the perfection to which Jesus calls His disciples is expressed in the mercy that they show, after the example set by God, not only to those who love them; but also to their enemies, those who hate and persecute them. (See Matt. 5:43-47; Luke 6:27-35.)

The character of God which has been revealed to us is our standard for life. We are invited to become more and more like Him. "Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children" (Eph. 4:32 through 5:1).

"God is Himself the source of all mercy. His name is 'merciful and gracious.' Exodus 34:6. . . .

"The merciful are 'partakers of the divine nature,' and in them the compassionate love of God finds expression. All whose hearts are in sympathy with the heart of Infinite Love will seek to reclaim and not to condemn."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

Exactly what is the lesson taught in the parable of the Good Samaritan? Luke 10:25-37.

This parable is a perfect illustration of God's mercy in dealing with man, as well as a vital demonstration of how the Christian should act toward his neighbor. In truth, the feelings of compassion shown to the Samaritan exactly express the holy emotion that made the Son of God come to earth to save humanity. They are also the sentiments that should impel every Christian toward his neighbor, whoever he be, every time an occasion of need arises.

THINK IT THROUGH

Toward whom must we be merciful? Is there ever any trace of discrimination when we consider this question?

"To the appeal of the erring, the tempted, the wretched victims of want and sin, the Christian does not ask, Are they worthy? but, How can I benefit them? In the most wretched, the most debased, he sees souls whom Christ died to save and for whom God has given to His children the ministry of reconciliation."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 22.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Who Is My Neighbor?" pp. 382-389.

**Part 5
FORGIVEN AS
WE FORGIVE**

How did Jesus explain the principle of reciprocity expressed in the fifth beatitude?

"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt. 6:12, 14, 15). (Compare 7:1, 2.)

"Jesus teaches that we can receive forgiveness from God only as we forgive others. . . .

" . . . He who is unforgiving cuts off the very channel through which alone he can receive mercy from God. We should not think that unless those who have injured us confess the wrong we are justified in withholding from them our forgiveness. It is their part, no doubt, to humble their hearts by repentance and confession . . . ; but as we hope to be pardoned for our offenses against God we are to pardon all who have done evil to us."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 113, 114.

Show how the parable of the great debtor is a commentary on the principle stated by Jesus. Matt. 18:23-35.

"The pardon granted by this king represents a divine forgiveness of all sin. Christ is represented by the king, who, moved with compassion, forgave the debt of his servant."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 244.

"But the great lesson of the parable lies in the contrast between God's compassion and man's hardheartedness; in the fact that God's forgiving mercy is to be the measure of our own. 'Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow-servant, even as I had pity on thee?'

"We are not forgiven *because* we forgive, but as we forgive. The ground of all forgiveness is found in the unmerited love of God, but by our attitude toward others we show whether we have made that love our own. Wherefore Christ says, 'With what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged.' Matt. 7:2."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 251.

THINK IT THROUGH

"Forgiveness has a broader meaning than many suppose. . . . God's forgiveness is not merely a judicial act by which He sets us free from condemnation. It is not only forgiveness for sin, but reclaiming from sin. It is the outflow of redeeming love that transforms the heart. David had the true conception of forgiveness when he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.' Psalm 51:10."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 114.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Measure of Forgiveness," pp. 243-251.

**Part 6
IN THE DAY
OF JUDGMENT**

What should be the rule of conduct for all who expect to triumph in the day of judgment?

“Speak, act, as those who are to be judged by the law of freedom; for the judgment will be merciless to the man who has shown no mercy—whereas the merciful life will triumph in the face of judgment” (James 2:12, 13, Moffatt).

The apostle James calls to mind the great and awesome scene of the heavenly judgment. The law of God, which he calls “the law of freedom,” will be the standard by which the character and life of men will be judged:

God will not make exception for persons, and “the judgment will be merciless to the man who has shown no mercy” (verse 13). “A good man sheweth favour” (Ps. 112:5), and “the merciful life will triumph” (James 2:13, Moffatt). Thus the promises which Jesus made in the fifth beatitude will be fully realized.

What basic principle will guide the Son of man when the nations are gathered before Him? Matt. 25:31-46.

The mercy of which Jesus speaks is an active principle expressed in acts of love toward one's neighbors. If this is not so, mercy is of little value. In this judgment scene acts of mercy are presented to us as being the test for admission to the kingdom. For this same reason James includes acts of mercy in his definition of “pure and undefiled” religion (James 1:27, RSV).

“When the nations are gathered before Him, there will be but two classes, and their eternal destiny will be determined by what they have done or have neglected to do for Him in the person of the poor and the suffering. . . .

“ . . . To those whom He sets upon His right hand He will say, ‘Come, ye blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world.’”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 637.

THINK IT THROUGH

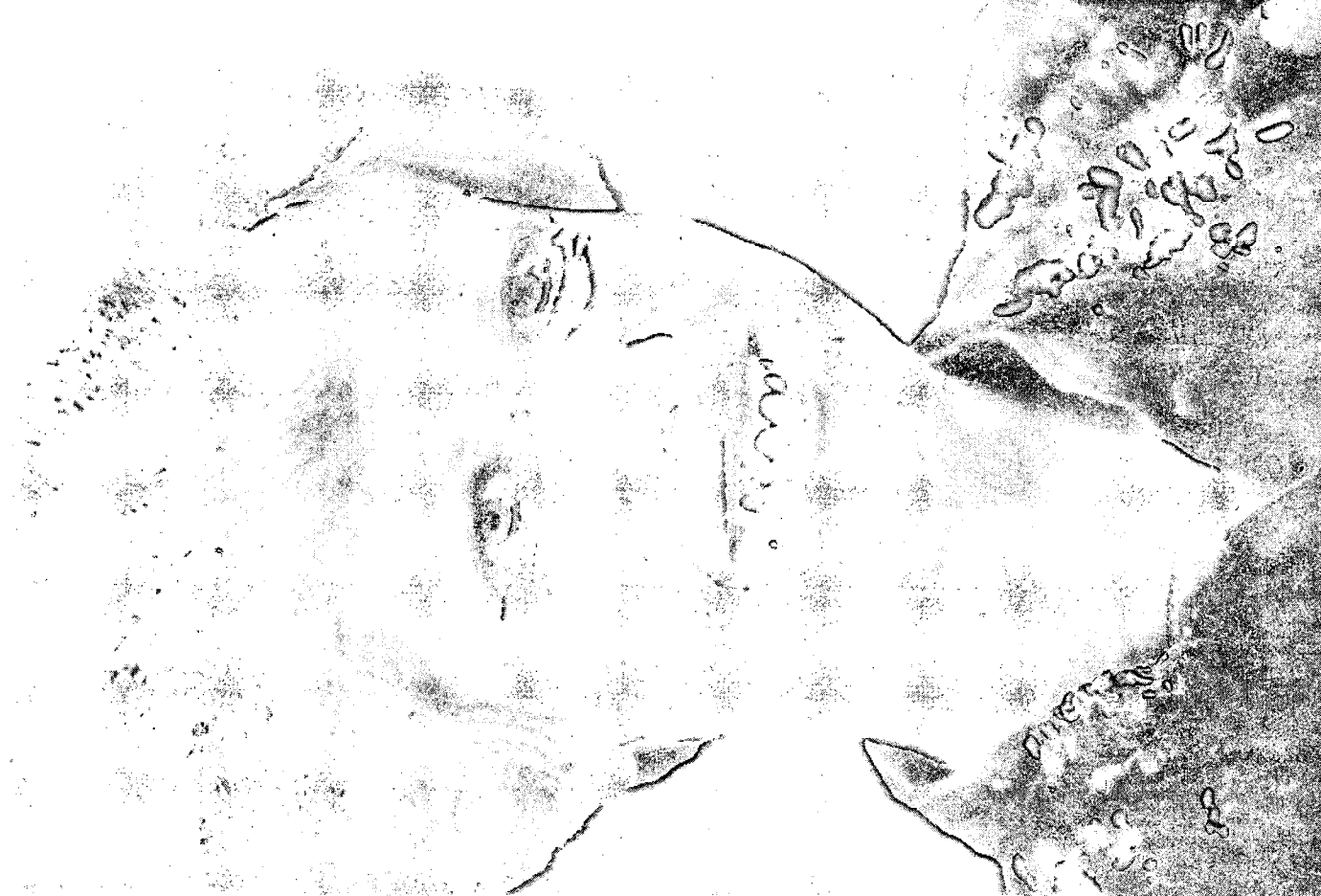
Is my religion only doctrine? To what extent is it translated into acts of mercy?

“The merciful ‘shall obtain mercy.’ . . . There is sweet peace for the compassionate spirit, a blessed satisfaction in the life of self-forgetful service for the good of others. . . .

“ . . . The Lord will not fail him in the hour of suffering and need. . . . And in the hour of final need the merciful shall find refuge in the mercy of the compassionate Saviour and shall be received into everlasting habitations.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 23, 24.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 637-641.



7. The Pure in Heart

“Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matt. 5:8).

With the sixth beatitude Jesus leads us to the wellspring of our being, the heart. One author has called it “the inner sanctuary of the soul.” It is on the state of the heart that purity of thought, word, and action depend, “for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” On one occasion Jesus questioned His hearers, “How can ye, being evil, speak good things?” (Matt. 12:34).

In addressing the “pure in heart,” Jesus was obviously not referring to absolute moral purity, nor to irreproachable conduct. Taken in this way, this declaration would be completely foreign to the real meaning of the Beatitudes and to the essence of the gospel. Jesus confirmed this when He said, “I came not to call the righteous, but sinners” to repentance (Matt. 9:13, RSV).

Jesus calls sinners—people who are straightforward, simple, sincere, honest with themselves and with God. Here Jesus addresses these people and promises them a vision of God because of the purity of their intentions. Only one thing is important: to enter into a living and personal relationship with the Source of life—to be possessed by God for life. The pure in heart are those who search for God with all their heart, and to such God promises to reveal Himself.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Heart, a Key Word**
(Prov. 4:23)
2. **Man’s Heart Is Deceitful**
(Matt. 15:18-20)
3. **God Alone Knows the Heart**
(1 Kings 8:39; Heb. 4:13)
4. **O God, Create in Me a Clean Heart**
(Ps. 51:3, 4, 6, 10, 17)
5. **God’s Law Written in the Heart**
(Heb. 8:10)
6. **They Shall See God**
(Matt. 5:8)

Part 1
THE HEART
A KEY WORD

What is the meaning of the word "heart" as it is used in the Bible?

"Keep your heart with all vigilance; for from it flow the springs of life" (Prov. 4:23, RSV).

The word *heart* is used hundreds of times in the Bible, but only rarely—not to say "never"—does the word refer to the physical organ itself. Furthermore, in a figurative sense, the Bible authors give the word a much broader meaning than modern languages attribute to it. For us today the heart is usually linked with the emotions; in the Bible it designates the inward man, the intimate, hidden area of the being, as well as the center of emotions and the intellect.

It should be noted that Bible writers considered the heart to be the seat of the intellect and, more specifically, the center of the will. From the heart good and evil thoughts issue, and in the heart resolutions take shape that determine human destiny.

"When Jesus speaks of the new heart, He means the mind, the life, the whole being."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1164.

To what did Jesus refer when He spoke of purity of heart?

"Purity of heart, in the sense Christ used it, includes far more than sexual purity (MB 25); it includes all desirable character traits to the exclusion of all that are undesirable. To be 'pure in heart' is equivalent to being clothed with the robe of Christ's righteousness . . . , the 'fine linen' with which the saints are arrayed (Rev. 19:8; cf. ch. 3:18, 19)—perfection of character.

"It was not ceremonial purity that Jesus had in mind (Matt. 15:18-20; 23:25), but inward cleanness of heart. If the motives are pure, the life will be pure.

"Those with pure hearts have forsaken sin as a ruling principle in the life, and their lives are without reserve consecrated to God. . . . To be 'pure in heart' does not mean that one is absolutely sinless, but it does mean that his motives are right, that by the grace of Christ he has turned his back on past mistakes, and that he is pressing toward the mark of perfection in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-15)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 327.

THINK IT THROUGH

Since "the wisdom that is from above is first pure" (James 3:17), it alone can help us understand more fully what the Saviour wished to say when He spoke of "the pure in heart."

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:8), pp. 24-27.

Part 2
MAN'S HEART
IS EVIL

What role of prime importance did Jesus ascribe to the heart?

"What comes out of the mouth proceeds from the heart, and this defiles a man. For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, fornication, theft, false witness, slander. These are what defile a man" (Matt. 15:18-20, RSV). (Compare Mark 7:21-23.)

The source of evil is found within the heart of man, not without. Nothing is helped when only the outside is cleansed, as the Pharisees were accustomed to doing. "First cleanse the inside of the cup and of the plate," Jesus advised them, "that the outside also may be clean" (Matt. 23:26, RSV). Without real transformation of the heart, man cannot bear good fruit. At best he may appear righteous to men on the outside, but within he remains "full of hypocrisy and iniquity" (Matt. 23:28).

What explanation is given in the Bible of the heart's disposition to evil?

The fall of man in Eden took place at the heart level, at the seat of the intellect and of the will. Adam and Eve exercised their own wills instead of following God's bidding. Disobedience to the will of God changed the heart, the very source of man's being, the wellspring of all issues. That is why, since Eden, every activity of man bears the stain of his heart, that is, of his mind and will.

Since Eden the heart of man has been evil. It was because "the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen. 6:5, RSV) that God could not intervene in favor of the antediluvians. And God has warned that "as it was in the days of Noah, so will it be in the days of the Son of man" (Luke 17:26, RSV).

THINK IT THROUGH

How is what the Bible terms "hardness of heart" brought about?

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind, having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:17-19).

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 23-26.

**Part 3
GOD ALONE
KNOWS
THE HEART**

If "the inward mind and heart of a man are deep," as David affirms (Ps. 64:6, RSV), who can know it?

"Act, and render to each whose heart thou knowest, according to all his ways (for thou, thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)" (1 Kings 8:39, RSV).

"Before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do" (Heb. 4:13, RSV).

The heart of man is difficult to understand. Confusion of thought makes objective judgment of oneself impossible. Others can judge only on appearance, which often does not correspond to the true inner condition because of the natural duplicity of the heart.

If we think that we can deceive God by hiding anything from Him, we are only deceiving ourselves. He is able to read our most intimate secrets, and He also knows the source from which issue all our thoughts, words, and actions. Not only does God see the things that we are able to hide from men, but He also perceives things that we do not know are there. Even when "you . . . justify yourselves before men," Jesus stated, "God knows your hearts" (Luke 16:15, RSV). This is why only God is in a position to judge. "The Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart" (1 Sam. 16:7).

**Through what means does God reach the heart of man?
Heb. 4:12.**

One will never completely understand to what extent God depends on His Word, "the sword of the Spirit," "sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit . . . , and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (Eph. 6:17; Heb. 4:12, RSV), to dissipate the darkness of the heart and make the light shine in. We know that by the Word of God the Spirit takes possession of hearts and leads them into all truth.

In the measure that man is willing to listen to the Word of God, the Holy Spirit will open the ears (Isa. 50:5) and "the eyes of your hearts" (Eph. 1:18, RSV), "until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19).

"God's holy, educating Spirit is in His word. A light, a new and precious light, shines forth from every page. Truth is there revealed, and words and sentences are made bright and appropriate for the occasion, as the voice of God speaking to the soul."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 132.

**THINK IT THROUGH
FURTHER STUDY**

Read the prayer in Psalm 139:23, 24.

Christ's Object Lessons, "Things New and Old," p. 132.

Part 4
D GOD, CREATE
IN ME
A CLEAN HEART

In order for God to be able to purify the heart, what four conditions must be met, as outlined by David in Psalm 51?

"This passage in David's history is full of significance to the repenting sinner. It is one of the most forcible illustrations given us of the struggles and temptations of humanity, and of genuine repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 726.

1. *One must have the courage to recognize his sinful state.*

"I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me. Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight" (verses 3, 4).

Without recognition of one's sinful state, without sincere confession of one's transgressions, there can be no forgiveness. "David's repentance was sincere and deep. There was no effort to palliate his crime. No desire to escape the judgments threatened, inspired his prayer. . . . It was not for pardon only that he prayed, but for purity of heart."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 725.

2. *One must desire to receive truth with all one's heart.*

"Behold, thou desirest truth in the inward being; therefore teach me wisdom in my secret heart" (verse 6, RSV).

God uses truth to sanctify us; "thy word is truth" (John 17:17). On the one hand, by revealing our sins to us, God's Word permits us to see ourselves as we are (see James 1:23, 24); on the other hand, it shows us what we can become by His grace.

3. *One must ask God to create in him a new heart.*

"Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (verse 10).

God does not wish merely to tidy the heart; He desires to create a new one, as He promises in Ezekiel 36:26: "A new heart also will I give you."

4. *One must offer himself to God as a living sacrifice.*

"The sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (verse 17, RSV).

What counts in God's eyes is not the exterior aspects of holiness, but the inner dispositions of the heart and mind. When these are not what they should be, all the sacrifices and ceremonies, even prayer itself, are an abomination to God. (See Isa. 1:11-17.)

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 724-726.

**Part 5
GOD'S LAW
WRITTEN IN
THE HEART**

What marvelous promise does the Lord make with regard to the condition of the believer under the new covenant?

"This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Heb. 8:10).

"At Mt. Sinai the Lord wrote His laws on tables of stone (Deut. 4:13), and in a book (ch. 31:24, 26). He intended that these laws should also be written on the hearts of the people. But the Israelites were content to regard these statutes simply as an external code and their observance a matter of outward compliance. God did not intend that His laws should be thus regarded. He offered His people the experience of a new heart . . . but they were content with only an external religion. Under the new covenant men's hearts and minds are changed. . . . Men do right, not by their own strength, but because Christ dwells in the heart, living out His life in the believer. . . . They are born of the Spirit and bear the fruits of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). The change can be effected only by divine power. Only God can 'put' His law in the hearts of His followers, though, of course, not without man's consent and cooperation (Rev. 22:17 . . .)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 446.

What should characterize the life and activities of a genuine Christian? Deut. 4:29; 6:5; Col. 3:23.

God is not pleased with a divided heart, halfhearted service, occasional piety, diluted Christianity. God demands all or nothing. "I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth" (Rev. 3:15, 16).

THINK IT THROUGH

To give one's heart to God means simply to submit one's will to the will of God.

"You cannot change your heart, you cannot of yourself give to God its affections; but you can *choose* to serve Him. You can give Him your will; He will then work in you to will and to do according to His good pleasure. Thus your whole nature will be brought under the control of the Spirit of Christ; your affections will be centered upon Him, your thoughts will be in harmony with Him."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 47.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "The Test of Discipleship," pp. 57-65.

**Part 6
THEY SHALL
SEE GOD**

What promise is made to the pure in heart? How should this promise be understood?

"Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God" (Matt. 5:8).

"By faith we behold Him here and now. In our daily experience we discern His goodness and compassion in the manifestation of His providence. We recognize Him in the character of His Son. The Holy Spirit takes the truth concerning God and Him whom He hath sent, and opens it to the understanding and to the heart. The pure in heart see God in a new and endearing relation, as their Redeemer; and while they discern the purity and loveliness of His character, they long to reflect His image. They see Him as a Father longing to embrace a repenting son, and their hearts are filled with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

"The pure in heart discern the Creator in the works of His mighty hand, in the things of beauty that comprise the universe. In His written word they read in clearer lines the revelation of His mercy, His goodness, and His grace. . . . We discern the truth by becoming, ourselves, partakers of the divine nature.

"The pure in heart live as in the visible presence of God during the time He apportions them in this world."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 26, 27.

What are two happy results in this life of contemplating the glory of God? 2 Cor. 3:18.

"It is the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, which Jesus said He would send into the world, that changes our character into the image of Christ; and when this is accomplished, we reflect, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1097.

THINK IT THROUGH

How is it possible to contemplate the Lord's glory?

"Beholding Christ means studying His life as given in His Word. We are to dig for truth as for hidden treasure. We are to fix our eyes upon Christ. . . . By beholding we become changed, morally assimilated to the One who is perfect in character. By receiving His imputed righteousness, through the transforming power of the Holy Spirit, we become like Him. The image of Christ is cherished, and it captivates the whole being."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 1098.

FURTHER STUDY

Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6; pp. 1097-1099.



8. The Peacemakers

“Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God” (Matt. 5:9).

Interestingly, in considering the seventh beatitude, theologians in particular have asked themselves if it was not directed especially to Christ's disciples. Evidence denies this. For instance, the prologue to the Sermon on the Mount clearly states that Jesus addressed Himself to the multitudes.

Furthermore, in this discourse the Master pointed out the steps in man's only path of spiritual development. Here we find enumerated the principles that assure the moral growth of every human being—principles and laws with universal scope. All are called to receive this divine teaching, but only those who are prepared to realize it in their lives are the ones who fulfill the conditions outlined in the preceding beatitudes.

This truth is evident in the fact that performance of this beatitude is possible only as the provisions described in the preceding beatitudes are achieved. It is impossible to be an instrument of peace in the world, a “maker of peace” after the example of Jesus Himself, unless “the peace of God, which passeth all understanding,” fills “your hearts and minds” with the feelings that are in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:7).

Just as Christ came to the world as a peacemaker, to reconcile all who are in heaven and on earth, just so His disciples are called to become “makers of peace” among men. In doing this they will receive the glorious title “children of God,” which is reserved for those whom the Lord will one day usher into the kingdom of heaven.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Makers of Peace**
(Matt. 5:9)
2. **Children of Wrath**
(Eph. 2:3; Col. 1:21)
3. **The God of Peace**
(Rom. 15:33; 16:20; 1 Cor. 14:33)
4. **Christ Our Peace**
(Col. 1:19, 20; Eph. 2:14)
5. **The Fruits of Peace**
(Col. 2:13, 14; Rom. 8:2, 6; 12:18)
6. **Becoming Children of God**
(Matt. 5:43, 44)

**Part 1
MAKERS OF
PEACE**

What is the meaning of the word "peacemaker" as it was used by Jesus?

The word used in the original Greek is not found elsewhere in the Bible, although the verb "to make peace" is often used. Scholars have been unable to determine the Aramaic expression equivalent to this composite word. But as the Aramaic spoken in Palestine in Christ's time was akin to the Hebrew, doubtless Jesus employed a word with Semitic connotations.

"In order to appreciate what Christ meant when He spoke of 'peacemakers' it is helpful to take note of the meaning of peace in Semitic thinking and speech. The Hebrew equivalent of the Greek *eirene* is *shalom*, meaning 'completeness,' 'soundness,' 'prosperity,' 'condition of well-being.'"—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 328.

According to Jesus, what name will be given to those who are peacemakers? Matt. 5:9.

To be called "children of God" means, strictly speaking, to be "sons of God." God is the "God of peace" (Rom. 15:33); Jesus, the "Prince of Peace." It seems natural, then, that those who, in God's name, work for peace in this world should be called "children of God."

"To be a son of God means to resemble Him in character (1 John 3:2; cf. John 8:44). 'Peacemakers' are the 'sons of God' because they are at peace with Him themselves, and are devoted to the cause of leading their fellow men to be at peace with Him."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 328.

THINK IT THROUGH

Is it possible for men to bring about peace? If not, why not?

"The peace of Christ is born of truth. It is harmony with God. The world is at enmity with the law of God; sinners are at enmity with their Maker; and as a result they are at enmity with one another. But the psalmist declares, 'Great peace have they which love Thy law: and nothing shall offend them.' Ps. 119:165. Men cannot manufacture peace. Human plans for the purification and uplifting of individuals or of society will fail of producing peace, because they do not reach the heart. The only power that can create or perpetuate true peace is the grace of Christ. When this is implanted in the heart, it will cast out the evil passions that cause strife and dissension. 'Instead of the thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; and life's desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose.' Isa. 55:13; 35:1."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 302-305.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:9), pp. 27, 28.

**Part 2
CHILDREN
OF WRATH**

What does the Bible teach concerning relations between God and man?

"We all . . . were by nature the children of wrath, even as others" (Eph. 2:3).

"Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behavior" (Col. 1:21, NIV).

In yielding to temptation and being disobedient to God in Eden, man took his stand against the Creator of the universe, against God's established order, against the laws of life. At the same time he placed himself on the side of the "prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience" (Eph. 2:2).

As a natural consequence, relations between God and His earthly creatures were broken. After sin man first fled from God's presence out of fear, then because of a lack of interest in heavenly things, and finally out of hatred for the God they no longer knew or, worse, whose very name filled them with anger. And, speaking of the "children of disobedience," the apostle Paul adds, "among whom also we all . . . were by nature" (Eph. 2:3).

No one can say that he is an exception. We are all by nature "children of wrath," consciously or unconsciously, in a state of war against God, lined up under the banner of the "prince of this world." "Whosoever . . . will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God," because "the friendship of the world is enmity with God" (James 4:4).

How does man's rebellion against God manifest itself? Titus 3:3.

Enmity between God and man reveals itself on the spiritual level, with far-reaching consequences in man's life generally. By his thoughts and works man becomes a stranger and an enemy of God. By doing what he pleases rather than following God's will, he becomes "a son of disobedience," introducing into his own life—and into the world—disorder, envy, hatred, violence, strife, suffering, and death.

THINK IT THROUGH

In carefully examining the list of the "works of the flesh," as drawn up by the apostle Paul, are you confident that you have won the battle of life?

"Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension, party spirit, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gal. 5:19-21, RSV).

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 5, p. 244.

Part 3
THE GOD
OF PEACE

What title did Paul freely attribute to God?

"The God of peace be with you all" (Rom. 15:33).

"The God of peace shall bruise Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20).

"God is not the author of confusion, but of peace" (1 Cor. 14:33).

In the beginning of Israel's history Gideon built an altar unto the Lord, which he named "Jehovahshalom" (Judges 6:24)—"The Lord is peace" (RSV). Most of the Bible authors used this title in one way or another, either to call upon "the God of peace," or to greet one another, or to bless, or still to call to order and peace.

"God is not a being who either has in Himself or produces disorder, disunion, discord, or confusion. . . . He is the God of peace, and it is not to be taught that He could be pleased by a form of worship characterized by confusion of any kind. . . . Christianity tends to promote order (see 1 Cor. 14:40)."—S.D.A. *Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 792, 793.

Why is the title "God of peace" a just one? Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:8, 10.

Before the foundation of the world God conceived the plan by which He would establish peace, not only on earth with man, but also in heaven among the heavenly hosts. God arranged for the reestablishing of peace wherever there was war against Him in the universe.

God did not wait until we approached Him to heal the breach and make peace. It was He who took the initiative: "While we were yet sinners, . . . when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God" (Rom. 5:8-10). "All things are of God, who hath reconciled . . . the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" (2 Cor. 5:18, 19).

THINK IT THROUGH

The parable of the lost sheep aptly illustrates the fact that God took the initiative in the quest and the reconciliation.

"It was taught by the Jews that before God's love is extended to the sinner, he must first repent. In their view, repentance is a work by which men earn the favor of Heaven. . . . According to their ideas He should permit none to approach Him but those who had repented. But in the parable of the lost sheep, Christ teaches that salvation does not come through our seeking after God but through God's seeking after us."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 189.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Confession," pp. 37-39.

Part 4
CHRIST
OUR PEACE

Through what means did God bring about peace with man?

"In him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:19, 20, RSV).

"For he [Christ] is our peace" (Eph. 2:14).

Our reconciliation with God was effected through Jesus Christ. He in person was the instrument of our peace with God. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). God established "peace through the blood of his cross" (Col. 1:20). The redemptive work of Christ is completely contained in the word "peace."

"Christ came that He might give peace to us such as the world knows not and cannot offer (John 14:27). This 'peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep' our 'hearts and minds through Christ Jesus' (Phil. 4:7). When Christ enters the heart it is always with the words, 'Peace be unto you' (Luke 24:36)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 693.

Which of the Messiah's characteristics was announced by prophecy and acclaimed at the time of His advent? Isa. 9:6; Luke 2:14.

"Christ is the 'good will' of God incarnate. He is the 'Prince of Peace' (Isa. 9:6), the One who proclaimed, 'Peace I leave with you. . . . Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (John 14:27). As the result of His coming it is our privilege to 'have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ' (Rom. 5:1)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 700.

THINK IT THROUGH

Harmony with God, likeness to Him—what can you do to obtain it?

"It is peace that you need—Heaven's forgiveness and peace and love in the soul. Money cannot buy it, intellect cannot procure it, wisdom cannot attain to it; you can never hope, by your own efforts, to secure it. But God offers it to you as a gift, 'without money and without price.' Isaiah 55:1. It is yours if you will but reach out your hand and grasp it. The Lord says, 'Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.' Isaiah 1:18. 'A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you.' Ezekiel 36:26."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 49.

FURTHER STUDY

S.D.A. Bible Commentary, "We Have Peace," vol. 6, pp. 522, 523.

Part 5
THE FRUITS
OF PEACE

Experiencing the peace of Christ bears three kinds of fruit.
What are they?

1. Peace with God: "You, who were dead in trespasses . . . , God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross" (Col. 2:13, 14, RSV). (Compare Rom. 8:1.)

The prophet Isaiah had prophesied it in these words: "The chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (53:5). Reconciled, we no longer live in fear, and "the Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: . . . heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:16, 17).

2. Peace with oneself: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death. . . . For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace" (Rom. 8:2-6).

"To set the mind on the things of the Spirit, and to have the thoughts and desires governed solely by the Spirit of God, result in that healthful, life-giving harmony of all the functions of the soul that is a sure pledge and foretaste of the life to come. . . . The presence of the Holy Spirit brings love, joy, and peace in the life (Gal. 5:22), the beginning within us of the kingdom of God, which is 'righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. 14:17)."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, p. 563.

3. Peace with others: "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Rom. 12:18).

The peace of God—because it is perfect—manifests itself in our relations with one another. This is why preaching of the gospel of peace demands that we "live in peace" (2 Cor. 13:11), "follow . . . peace" (2 Tim. 2:22), and "strive for peace with all men" (Heb. 12:14, RSV).

THINK IT THROUGH

"The peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7).

"Whoever consents to renounce sin and open his heart to the love of Christ, becomes a partaker of this heavenly peace.

"There is no other ground of peace than this. The grace of Christ received into the heart, subdues enmity; it allays strife and fills the soul with love."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 27.

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels on Health, p. 403.

Part 6
BECOMING
CHILDREN
OF GOD

To be a "peacemaker," what extraordinary demand is made of Christians?

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you" (Matt. 5:43, 44).

"The children of God are those who are partakers of His nature. It is not earthly rank, nor birth, nor nationality, nor religious privilege, which proves that we are members of the family of God; it is love, a love that embraces all humanity. Even sinners whose hearts are not utterly closed to God's Spirit, will respond to kindness; while they may give hate for hate, they will also give love for love. But it is only the Spirit of God that gives love for hatred. To be kind to the unthankful and to the evil, to do good hoping for nothing again, is the insignia of the royalty of heaven, the sure token by which the children of the Highest reveal their high estate."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 75.

To what end should those who have received God's peace direct all their efforts? Rom. 14:19; James 3:18.

"Christ's followers are sent to the world with the message of peace. Whoever, by the quiet, unconscious influence of a holy life, shall reveal the love of Christ; whoever, by word or deed, shall lead another to renounce sin and yield his heart to God, is a peacemaker.

"And 'blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.' The spirit of peace is evidence of their connection with heaven. The sweet savor of Christ surrounds them. The fragrance of the life, the loveliness of the character, reveal to the world the fact that they are children of God. Men take knowledge of them that they have been with Jesus. 'Everyone that loveth is born of God.' 'If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His;' but 'as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.' 1 John 4:7; Romans 8:9, 14."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 28.

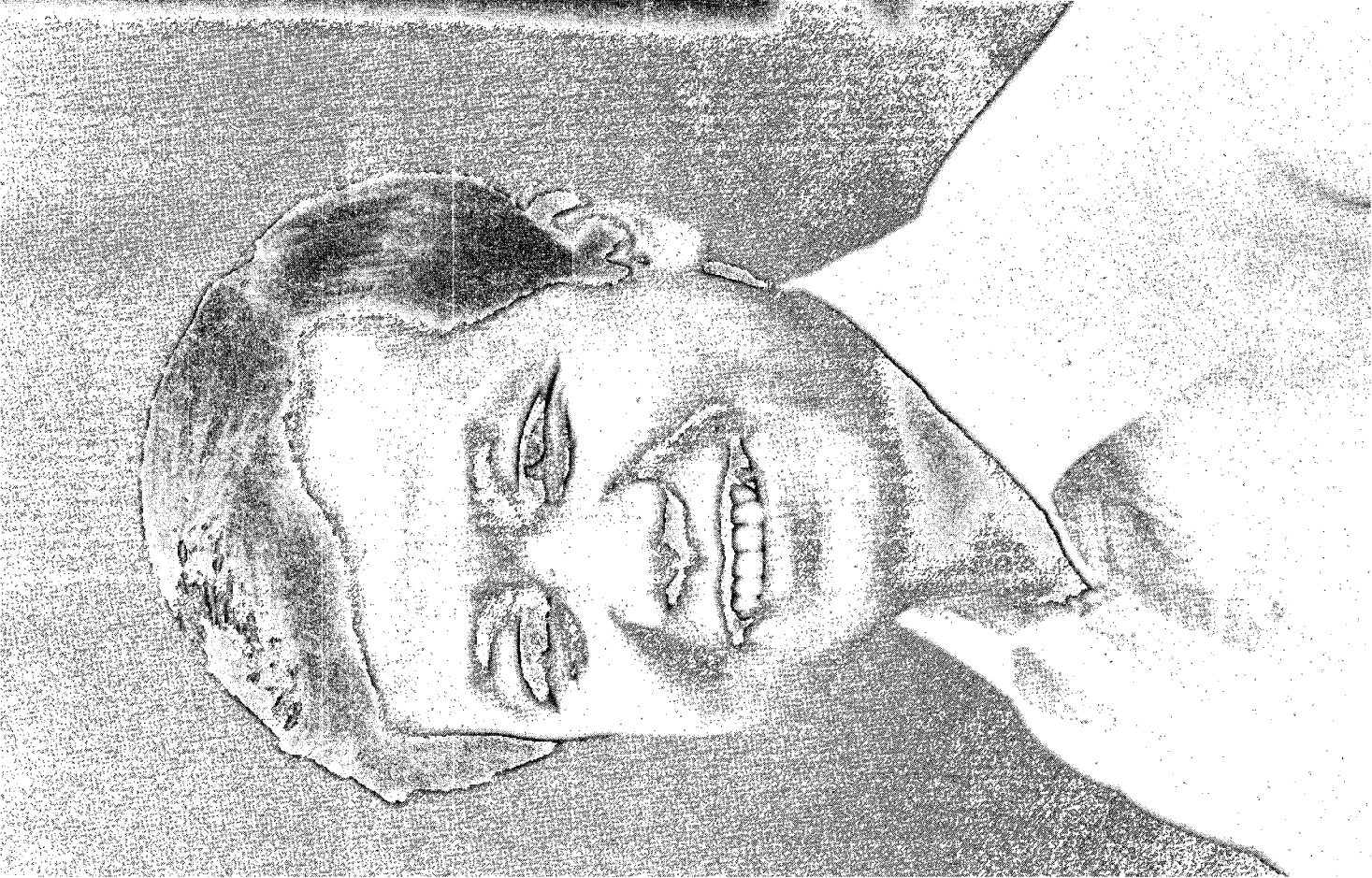
THINK IT THROUGH

According to the prophecy of the apostle Paul, what will happen when men "shall say, Peace and safety"?

"Then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape" (1 Thess. 5:3).

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Spirituality of the Law" (Matt. 5:44), pp. 73-75.



9. The Persecuted

“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness’ sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:10, RSV).

Unlike the preceding beatitudes, which outline the different stages of spiritual development of the inner man, the last beatitude deals with the experiences and duties that await the Christian.

“After explaining what constitutes true happiness, and how it may be obtained, Jesus more definitely

pointed out the duty of His disciples, as teachers chosen of God to lead others into the path of righteousness and eternal life. He knew that they would often suffer from disappointment and discouragement, that they would meet with decided opposition, that they would be insulted, and their testimony rejected. Well He knew that in the fulfillment of their mission, the humble men who listened so attentively to His words were to bear calumny, torture, imprisonment, and death.”—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 305.

“Through trials and persecution, the glory—character—of God is revealed in His chosen ones. The church of God, hated and persecuted by the world, are educated and disciplined in the school of Christ. They walk in narrow paths on earth; they are purified in the furnace of affliction. They follow Christ through sore conflicts; they endure self-denial and experience bitter disappointments; but their painful experience teaches them the guilt and woe of sin, and they look upon it with abhorrence. Being partakers of Christ’s sufferings, they are destined to be partakers of His glory.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 31.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Christ, Reason for Discord**
(Matt. 10:34-36)
2. **“They Will Also Persecute You”**
(John 15:18-20)
3. **Desire to Live a Godly Life**
(2 Tim. 3:12)
4. **Reproached for Christ’s Name**
(1 Peter 4:14-16)
5. **To Bear Testimony**
(Luke 21:13)
6. **“Their’s Is the Kingdom of Heaven”**
(Matt. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:5)

**Part 3
DESIRE TO
LIVE A
GODLY LIFE**

Why did the apostle Paul consider persecution almost inevitable in the life of the Christian?

“All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution” (2 Tim. 3:12).

“Between righteousness and sin, love and hatred, truth and falsehood, there is an irrepressible conflict. When one presents the love of Christ and the beauty of holiness, he is drawing away the subjects of Satan’s kingdom, and the prince of evil is aroused to resist it. Persecution and reproach await all who are imbued with the Spirit of Christ.”—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 29.

“The same enmity is manifested toward Christ’s followers as was manifested toward their Master. Whoever sees the repulsive character of sin, and in strength from above resists temptation, will assuredly arouse the wrath of Satan and his subjects. Hatred of the pure principles of truth, and reproach and persecution of its advocates, will exist as long as sin and sinners remain. The followers of Christ and the servants of Satan cannot harmonize. The offense of the cross has not ceased.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 507.

What did Paul consider was his duty in preparing the churches for persecution? Acts 14:22.

The declaration that appears here is a statement that Luke must have heard many times from Paul’s lips, and which he faithfully reported in the first person plural, although he had not yet been in Lystra, Iconium, or Antioch.

THINK IT THROUGH

“Why is it, then, that persecution seems in a great degree to slumber?”

This important question is asked by the author of *The Great Controversy* on page 48 of that book. Her response should make us think. It follows:

“The only reason is that the church has conformed to the world’s standard and therefore awakens no opposition. . . . It is only because of the spirit of compromise with sin, because the great truths of the word of God are so indifferently regarded, because there is so little vital godliness in the church, that Christianity is apparently so popular with the world. Let there be a revival of the faith and power of the early church, and the spirit of persecution will be revived, and the fires of persecution will be rekindled.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 48.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 305, 306.

Part 4
REPROACHED
FOR CHRIST'S
NAME

Only under what conditions can persecution be considered as a reason to rejoice?

"If you are reproached for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. . . . If one suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but under that name let him glorify God" (1 Peter 4:14-16, RSV).

As Jesus stated in the eighth beatitude, only he who is persecuted for righteousness' sake can know the joy that comes from above in spite of the trial. The satisfaction that the persecuted Christian enjoys comes to him because he is a partaker of "Christ's sufferings" (v. 13), because he knows that he is suffering as a Christian, and because he has proof that the "spirit of glory and of God rests" on him.

In apostolic times the name Christian was possibly first given to ridicule those who followed Christ. That is why the apostle Peter exhorts Christians not to be ashamed, but rather to glory. And that is exactly what happened. Christians of the first centuries brought glory to Christ by being persecuted for His sake.

What more is said concerning affliction for the sake of conscience as opposed to every other motive? 1 Peter 2:19-21; 4:15.

If it is a Christian grace to suffer unjustly for the sake of conscience, it is, on the contrary, a terrible disgrace—and a reproach for the cause of God—to suffer as a "murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters" (v. 15). As this is a matter of the Christian's relations with non-Christians, the meaning of the word "busybody" tells us that a Christian should not make himself conscience for another. It is enough that he conducts himself without reproach before God and man.

THINK IT THROUGH

Precisely what attitude should one have toward persecution? Should one flee from it or strive for it?

"None should disobey His [the Lord's] command in order to escape persecution. But let all consider the words of Christ: 'When they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another.' Matthew 10:23. If it can be avoided, do not put yourselves into the power of men who are worked by the spirit of antichrist. Everything that we can do should be done that those who are willing to suffer for the truth's sake may be saved from oppression and cruelty."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 230.

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 355.

**Part 5
TO BEAR
TESTIMONY**

How did Jesus explain persecutions to His disciples in the framework of God's work with man?

"This will be a time for you to bear testimony" (Luke 21:13, RSV). (Compare Mark 13:9.)

If it is wrong to seek persecution, it is certainly a greater mistake to believe that God brings it about for the good of His children and the progress of His work. God never causes evil, nor does He ever wish it for His children. But as, where sin abounds, grace much more abounds (Rom. 5:20); so, where persecution rages, God accords grace to endure and to triumph in order that testimony may be borne to truth.

What experiences in Paul's life illustrate the principle expressed by Jesus? Phil. 1:12-14; Acts 16:22-34.

"God means that truth shall be brought to the front and become the subject of examination and discussion, even through the contempt placed upon it. The minds of the people must be agitated; every controversy, every reproach, every effort to restrict liberty of conscience, is God's means of awakening minds that otherwise might slumber"—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 33.

The first persecution of the church at Jerusalem is a typical example of the way God uses the enemy's ambush to accomplish His purposes. (See Acts 8:1, 4; 11:19-21.)

"In vain were Satan's efforts to destroy the church of Christ by violence. The great controversy in which the disciples of Jesus yielded up their lives did not cease when these faithful standard-bearers fell at their post. By defeat they conquered. God's workmen were slain, but His work went steadily forward. The gospel continued to spread and the number of its adherents to increase. It penetrated into regions that were inaccessible even to the eagles of Rome. Said a Christian, expostulating with the heathen rulers who were urging forward the persecution: You may 'kill us, torture us, condemn us. . . . Your injustice is the proof that we are innocent. . . . The oftener we are mown down by you, the more in number we grow; the blood of Christians is seed.'—Tertullian, *Apology*."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 41, 42.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do you know any examples of the entering of the gospel into a country, a region, a city, or a family despite obstacles, or thanks to them?

Be ready to tell your story briefly, if you should have the opportunity.

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:11), pp. 31-35.

Part 6
"THEIR'S IS
THE KINGDOM
OF HEAVEN"

What marvelous promise does the eighth beatitude contain for those persecuted for righteousness' sake?

"Their's is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:10).

"This is evidence of the righteous judgment of God, that you may be made worthy of the kingdom of God, for which you are suffering" (2 Thess. 1:5, RSV).

"The same promise [is] made in v. 3 [of Matthew 5] to those who sense their spiritual need. 'If we suffer, we shall also reign with him' (2 Tim. 2:12; cf. Dan. 7:18, 27). Those who suffer most for Christ here are best able to appreciate what He suffered for them. It is appropriate that the first and last beatitudes should contain the assurance of membership in the kingdom."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 328.

How did the apostle Paul console the Thessalonians, who were suffering persecution and tribulation? 2 Thess. 1:4-7.

"In his second letter Paul sought to correct their misunderstanding of his teaching and to set before them his true position. He again expressed his confidence in their integrity, and his gratitude that their faith was strong, and that their love abounded for one another and for the cause of their Master. He told them that he presented them to other churches as an example of the patient, persevering faith that bravely withstands persecution and tribulation, and he carried their minds forward to the time of the second coming of Christ, when the people of God shall rest from all their cares and perplexities."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 264.

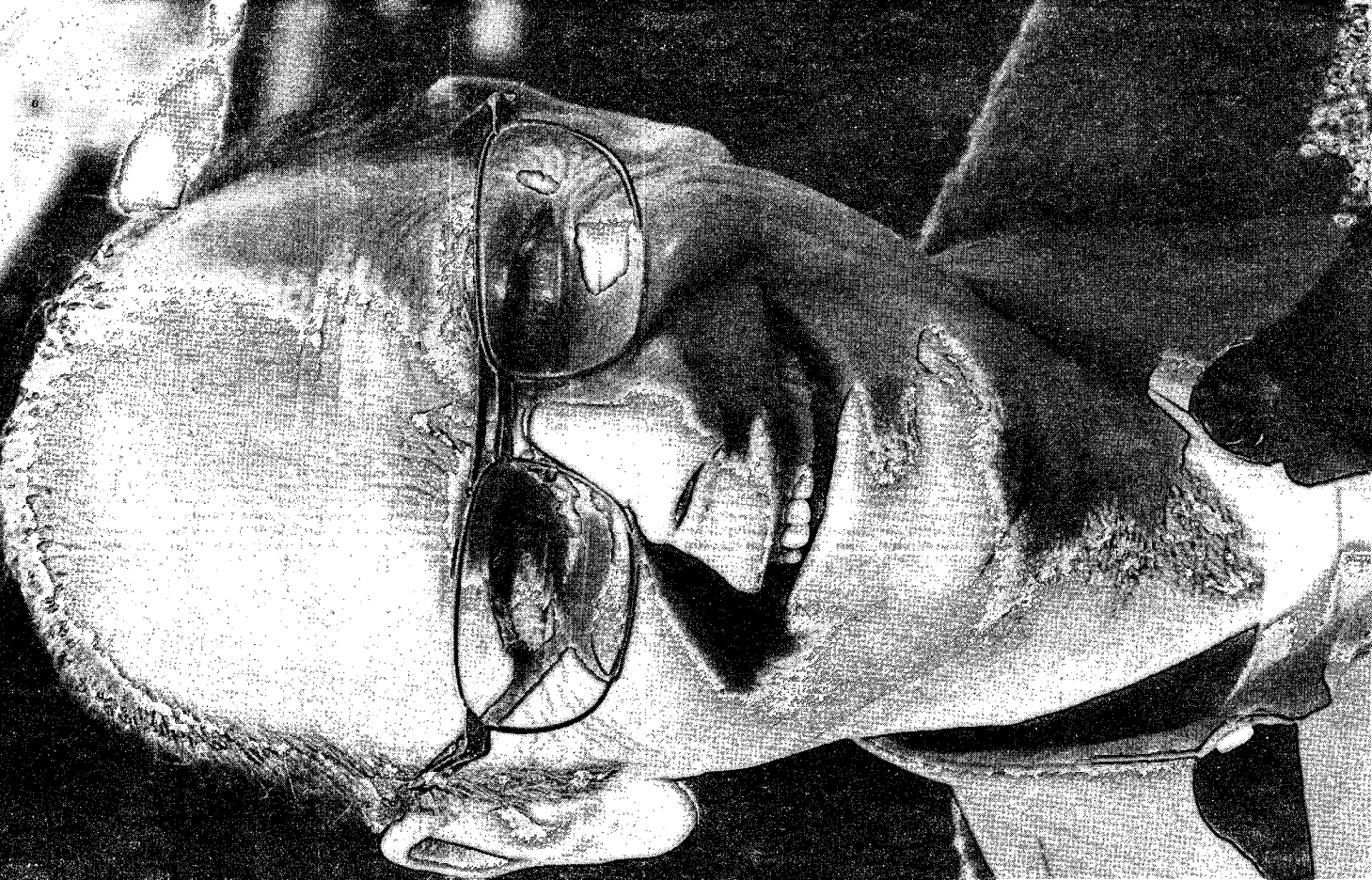
THINK IT THROUGH

Even though the promises of Jesus contained in the Beatitudes are already being partially fulfilled in this life, their perfect realization will not take place until the glorious advent of our Lord Jesus Christ.

"Look up, look up, and let your faith continually increase. Let this faith guide you along the narrow path that leads through the gates of the city of God into the great beyond, the wide, unbounded future of glory that is for the redeemed. 'Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.' James 5:7, 8."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, pp. 287, 288.

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 9, pp. 285-287.



10. "When Men Shall Revile You"

"Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you" (Matt. 5:12).

We will not consider the question of whether Matthew 5:11, 12 make up the ninth beatitude or if they are merely an extension of the eighth. We will try instead to understand their message a little more clearly.

From their content these words of Jesus seem to be a simple unfolding of the statement made in the last beatitude; by the verb forms, however, it appears that the Master was speaking directly to His

disciples, that He was no longer satisfied to speak in a general way to all the congregation assembled around Him. Supporting this deduction is the change from the impersonal third-person form of the verbs used in the preceding beatitudes to the more direct second-person form in these verses. Here the Master is no longer making a simple statement of blessing for those who meet the qualifications pointed out in the preceding beatitudes; instead He is addressing His disciples in a personal, direct way, inviting them to be happily counted worthy of suffering shame for His name and to rejoice in anticipation of the recompense awaiting them in heaven.

It is in this setting that we will study this invitation to rejoice. We will direct our thinking, on the one hand, to the age-old conflict between the forces of good and evil, and, on the other hand, to special consideration of the great final tribulation that soon will be the portion of witnesses to truth.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **Happy Are You**
(Matt. 5:11)
2. **The Parable of the Vineyard**
(Matt. 21:35, 38)
3. **Blinded by the God of This World**
(1 Tim. 1:13; 2 Cor. 4:4; John 16:2)
4. **They Will Possess the Everlasting Kingdom**
(Dan. 7:21, 22, 25)
5. **Preparation for the Time of Trouble**
(Dan. 12:1)
6. **The Redeemed Before the Throne of God**
(Rev. 7:13-15)

**Part 1
HAPPY
ARE YOU**

What attitude should the persecuted believer possess?

"Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake" (Matt. 5:11).

The true cause of the happiness of those whom Jesus declared "blessed" is not found in themselves. Rather it is in the Lord's promise to them. In each beatitude Jesus stated the reason for happiness in the second part of the declaration. The poor in spirit, they that mourn, those who hunger and thirst, the persecuted—all are blessed because Jesus is able to promise them the kingdom of heaven, consolation, satisfaction, the title "son of God," a vision of God.

Clearly, persecution itself cannot be a cause for rejoicing for those who suffer. The apostles did not glory in the furnace, trials, tribulations. Persecution was of no value as a meritorious experience. The happiness of the persecuted Christian has its source in Christ. He is happy who is reviled, persecuted, or falsely accused "for my sake," Jesus specified, or "for my name's sake" (Luke 21:12), "because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you" and because you suffer "as a Christian" (1 Peter 4:14, 16, RSV).

What are two reasons for rejoicing, according to Jesus? Matt. 5:12.

The Beatitudes have already outlined the recompense for suffering during the earthly phase of the Messianic kingdom. The Master now indicates the place of the reward: "Great is your reward in heaven." Only in the kingdom of heaven will the redeemed receive the reward that the Lord has prepared for them.

The second reason indicated here is found in the comparison made with the prophets. He who is persecuted, as were the prophets, can count on receiving the same recompense reserved for the prophets. "And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" (Heb. 11:39, 40).

THINK IT THROUGH

Is there better proof, for me as for others, that I am one of Christ's disciples?

"Far from causing grief, persecution should bring joy to the disciples of Christ, for it is an evidence that they are following in the steps of their Master."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 30.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, p. 477.

Part 2
THE PARABLE
OF THE
VINEYARD

What was the general attitude of men toward God's messengers in Christ's parable of the vineyard?

"The husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another."

"When the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance" (Matt. 21:35, 38). (See also verses 33-41.)

This parable proves the infinite patience and goodness of God toward men, at the same time that it points out man's ingratitude and cruelty. True, this parable was directed especially to the Israelites, but it also illustrates the general attitude of men toward God's messengers.

Stephen's literal application of this truth in his discourse resulted in his being stoned. He said, "Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered" (Acts 7:52, RSV).

What did Jesus say was the attitude of the scribes and Pharisees toward the prophets? Matt. 23:29-35.

"The gems of truth that fell from Christ's lips on that eventful day [when He pronounced woe on the scribes and Pharisees] were treasured in many hearts. For them new thoughts started into life, new aspirations were awakened, and a new history began. After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, these persons came to the front, and fulfilled their divine commission with a wisdom and zeal corresponding to the greatness of the work. . . . Mighty were the results flowing from the words of the Saviour to that wondering, awestruck crowd in the temple at Jerusalem."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 620.

THINK IT THROUGH

There is no more effective testimony in favor of truth than that of men and women ready to give their lives for it.

"When the noble and eloquent Stephen was stoned to death at the instigation of the Sanhedrin council, there was no loss to the cause of the gospel. The light of heaven that glorified his face, the divine compassion breathed in his dying prayer, were as a sharp arrow of conviction to the bigoted Sanhedrist who stood by, and Saul, the persecuting Pharisee, became a chosen vessel to bear the name of Christ before Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 33, 34.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "The Lord's Vineyard," pp. 296-300.

**Part 3
BLINDED BY
THE GOD OF
THIS WORLD**

What are some of the reasons mentioned in the Bible for which the messengers of God were persecuted?

"I did it ignorantly in unbelief" (1 Tim. 1:13).

"In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers; to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ" (2 Cor. 4:4, RSV).

"The hour is coming when whoever kills you will think he is offering service to God" (John 16:2, RSV).

Those persecuted for righteousness' sake have unanimously pleaded extenuating circumstances for their persecutors. Jesus set the example when on the cross He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). After openly accusing his audience of having "killed the Prince of life," Peter, for his part, added, "Now, brethren, I wot that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:15, 17).

Speaking from experience, the apostle Paul explained that if "the princes of this world" had known "the wisdom of God," "they would not have crucified the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:6-8). No one knew better than Paul how easily religious prejudice can lead to violence. "I myself was convinced that I ought to do many things in opposing the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (Acts 26:9, RSV).

Who is actually responsible for the constant war against God's people throughout history? Matt. 22:3-6; John 13:27; 2 Thess. 2:9; Eph. 6:11, 12.

Just as there is the mystery of godliness to designate the incomprehensible work of God on the heart of man, there is also a mystery of iniquity to indicate the work, no less mysterious, of him whom the Bible calls "the Devil" and "Satan." He is the antichrist, the great adversary of God's children. When he cannot defeat them by violence, he tries to seduce them through miracles.

THINK IT THROUGH

What is the difference, essentially, between God's work on men to make them His instruments and the work of Satan?

"God never forces the will or the conscience; but Satan's constant resort—to gain control of those whom he cannot otherwise seduce—is compulsion by cruelty. Through fear or force he endeavors to rule the conscience and to secure homage to himself. To accomplish this, he works through both religious and secular authorities, moving them to the enforcement of human laws in defiance of the law of God."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 591.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 516, 517.

**Part 4
THEY WILL
POSSESS THE
EVERLASTING
KINGDOM**

By what prophecy did God warn His people of the tribulations that they would have to surmount?

"I beheld, and the same horn made war with the saints, and prevailed against them; until the Ancient of days came, and judgment was given to the saints of the most High."

"He shall speak great words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time" (Dan. 7:21, 22, 25).

If, as the prophet Amos affirmed, "the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7), God would surely reveal the trouble that awaited His people throughout history. With mathematical precision God did unveil the 120 years of papal persecution to Daniel. Seven times this prophetic period is mentioned in the Bible (Dan. 7:25; 12:7; Rev. 11:2, 3; 12:6, 14; 13:5), each time in connection with the war that the powers of darkness would wage against God's people. In His prophetic discourse Jesus also alluded to this dramatic time in the history of the Christian church. (See Matt. 24:8-10.)

What assurance does prophecy give concerning the outcome of this war? Dan. 7:22, 27, 18.

"All earthly kings and governments will pass away, but the kingdom of the Most High will endure forever. The usurpation and misrule of the wicked may last for a time, but soon it will be at an end. Then this earth will be restored to its rightful Owner, who will share it with the saints. Those who have long been destitute and despised by men will soon be honored and exalted by God."—*S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 830.

THINK IT THROUGH

Why was the persecution of the 1260-year prophecy shortened?

"The persecution of the church did not continue throughout the entire period of the 1260 years. God in mercy to His people cut short the time of their fiery trial. In foretelling the 'great tribulation' to befall the church, the Saviour said: 'Except those days should be shortened; there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.' Matthew 24:22. Through the influence of the Reformation the persecution was brought to an end prior to 1798."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 266, 267.

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 346-348.

**Part 5
PREPARATION
FOR THE TIME
OF TROUBLE**

How did Daniel describe the crisis that will precede the end of all trials for God's people?

"At that time shall Michael stand up, the great prince which standeth for the children of thy people: and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time: and at that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book" (Dan. 12:1).

In the last days God's people should not be deceived concerning the future of the world and the coming crisis, which they must still undergo and come through victoriously. God has not left us in darkness regarding this subject. Not only has He given us the Bible prophecies intended especially for Christians in the end of time, but again through the spirit of prophecy He gave the remnant church a clear vision of final events.

"The world is stirred with the spirit of war. The prophecy of the eleventh chapter of Daniel has nearly reached its complete fulfillment. Soon the scenes of trouble spoken of in the prophecies will take place."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 14.

What reassuring promise did the Lord give His church concerning the great trial ahead? Rev. 3:10.

"When the testing time shall come, those who have made God's word their rule of life will be revealed. In summer there is no noticeable difference between evergreens and other trees; but when the blasts of winter come, the evergreens remain unchanged, while other trees are stripped of their foliage."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 602.

"None but those who have fortified the mind with the truths of the Bible will stand through the last great conflict."—*The Great Controversy*, pp. 593, 594.

THINK IT THROUGH

How can I find more time to study the Bible and the spirit of prophecy?

"We must love and obey the truth for this time. This will save us from accepting strong delusions. God has spoken to us through His word. He has spoken to us through the testimonies to the church and through the books that have helped to make plain our present duty and the position that we should now occupy. The warnings that have been given, line upon line, precept upon precept, should be heeded. If we disregard them, what excuse can we offer?"—*Testimonies*, vol. 8, p. 298.

FURTHER STUDY

Education, pp. 178-184.

Part 6
THE REDEEMED
BEFORE THE THRONE
OF GOD

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they? . . . 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. Therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple" (Rev. 7:13-15).

"The heirs of God have come from garrets, from hovels, from dungeons, from scaffolds, from mountains, from deserts, from the caves of the earth, from the caverns of the sea. On earth they were 'destitute, afflicted, tormented.' Millions went down to the grave loaded with infamy because they steadfastly refused to yield to the deceptive claims of Satan. By human tribunals they were adjudged the vilest of criminals. But now 'God is judge Himself.' Psalm 50:6. Now the decisions of earth are reversed. . . . They [God's people] are no longer feeble, afflicted, scattered, and oppressed. Henceforth they are to be ever with the Lord. They stand before the throne clad in richer robes than the most honored of the earth have ever worn. They are crowned with diadems more glorious than were ever placed upon the brow of earthly monarchs. The days of pain and weeping are forever ended."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 650.

What will be the theme of the song of the redeemed? Rev. 15:3, 4.

"The plan of redemption will not be fully understood, even when the ransomed see as they are seen and know as they are known. . . . Though the griefs and pains and temptations of earth are ended and the cause removed, the people of God will ever have a distinct, intelligent knowledge of what their salvation has cost."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 651.

THINK IT THROUGH

Now is the most favorable time to let God finish His work in us and to wash our robes and make them white in the blood of the Lamb.

"When Christ shall come, He will not change the character of any individual. Precious, probationary time is given to be improved in washing our robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb. To remove the stains of sin requires the work of a lifetime. Every day renewed efforts in restraining and denying self are needed. Every day there are new battles to fight and victories to be gained. Every day the soul should be called out in earnest pleading with God for the mighty victories of the cross."—*Testimonies*, vol. 4, p. 429.

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Without a Wedding Garment," pp. 310-312.



11. "Ye Are the Salt"

"Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men" (Matt. 5:13).

Jesus called His friends "the salt of the earth." There are three important points to note:

1. *Jesus stressed the fact that His followers were to use their truth-filled insights to help others, instead of flaunting them or letting them go unused.*

"Salt is valued for its preservative properties; and when God calls His children salt, He would teach them that His purpose in making them the subjects of His grace is that they may become agents in saving others. The object of God in choosing a people before all the world was not only that He might adopt them as His sons and daughters, but that through them the world might receive the grace that bringeth salvation."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 35.

2. *Jesus urged His followers to meet people and actively share their faith.*

"Salt must be mingled with the substance to which it is added; it must penetrate and infuse in order to preserve. So it is through personal contact and association that men are reached by the saving power of the gospel. They are not saved in masses, but as individuals. Personal influence is a power. We must come close to those whom we desire to

benefit."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36.

3. *By referring to His church as "the salt of the earth" Jesus was issuing a warning. Salt that has lost its savor hasn't much value, and is usually discarded and replaced.*

Ellen White tells us what salt that has lost its savor represents in the Christian life: "It represents the life of every soul from whom the power of the grace of God has departed and who has become cold and Christless. Whatever may be his profession, such a one is looked upon by men and angels as insipid and disagreeable. . . ."

" . . . If there is no actual service, no genuine love, no reality of experience, there is no power to help, no connection with heaven, no savor of Christ in the life. Unless the Holy Spirit can use us as agents through whom to communicate to the world the truth as it is in Jesus, we are as salt that has lost its savor and is entirely worthless."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 37.

A church that has been especially called to represent God to the world faces a constant danger of contemplating its privilege to the point of forgetting its great responsibility. This week's lesson is designed to renew our sense of responsibility to share the insights God has trusted to our care.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Imagery of Salt**
(Col. 4:6)
2. **The Problem of Faithfulness**
(Hosea 4:1)
3. **Salt Is Love—1**
(Matt. 5:44, 47)
4. **Salt Is Love—2**
(1 John 4:8)
5. **Salt "Proves" God's Existence**
(John 17:18)
6. **Jesus, Salt of the Earth**
(Luke 6:35)

Part 1
THE IMAGERY
OF SALT

What meaning does Paul give to the metaphor of salt?

"Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man" (Col. 4:6).

At the time of Christ's first advent, salt was used both to make food palatable and to preserve it. Christ's hearers must have been conscious of the role they should have been playing in making attractive and preserving the values of the kingdom of God in society. Jesus had just enunciated the operating principles of God's government in heaven as well as on earth. All those who claimed to be friends of God had the responsibility of living these principles as well as sharing them with their non-believing friends.

What lesson may we learn from the fact that salt must be added to food before it can be effective? How does Luke 14 support this idea?

Ellen White makes this comment about Jesus' style of evangelism: "His work was largely made up of personal interviews. He had a faithful regard for the one-soul audience. Through that one soul the message was often extended to thousands."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 229.

Jesus took a *real* risk in coming to the world as a man. Are we willing to take the real risks involved in getting close to individuals who haven't heard the truth about the kind of person God is and the kinds of values He stands for?

How does Jesus' use of the salt metaphor help us refine our ideas about missions and evangelism? (See Paul's description of his evangelism in 1 Corinthians 9:22.)

"In Christ's parable teaching the same principle is seen as in His own mission to the world. That we might become acquainted with His divine character and life, Christ took our nature and dwelt among us. . . . So it was in Christ's teaching: the unknown was illustrated by the known; divine truths by earthly things with which the people were most familiar."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 17.

Surely there is a lesson in God's great effort to meet men and women on a level that they could understand. The very idea of God becoming man should challenge us to make certain that our evangelistic outreach is understandable and attractive in today's world.

THINK IT THROUGH

What does it tell us about God that His Son, a perfect revelation of Him, made imaginative use of parables and metaphors to reach men and women?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "Teaching in Parables," pp. 17-27; *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, pp. 329, 330.

Part 2
THE PROBLEM
OF FAITH-
FULNESS

What lack in Israel brought God's rebuke?

"Hear the word of the Lord, ye children of Israel: for the Lord hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land" (Hosea 4:1).

How may we avoid becoming as savorless salt? From the beginning peoples who have been set aside to be special representatives of God have had a problem keeping God at the center of their faith.

What conditions in the Laodicean church are equivalent to savorless salt? Rev. 3:15-17.

In 1889 Ellen White wrote: "The message to the Laodicean church is applicable to our condition. How plainly is pictured the position of those who think they have all the truth, who take pride in their knowledge of the Word of God, while its sanctifying power has not been felt in their lives."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 961.

In 1898 Ellen White wrote: "Those who live for self are ranged under the head of the Laodicean church who are lukewarm, neither cold nor hot. The ardor of the first love has lapsed into a selfish egotism. . . . There may be a wonderful appearance for zeal and ceremonies, but this is the substance of their self-inflated religion."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, p. 962.

What would Ellen White write if she were alive today?

Why is the salt that has lost its savor worse than no salt at all? What do Hosea 4:4-6 and Matthew 23:1-3 teach about this principle?

"If Christians are such in name only, they are like the salt that has lost its savor. They have no influence for good in the world. Through their misrepresentation of God they are worse than unbelievers."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.

Very religious people can, through their "misrepresentations of God" (their refusal to believe that God is as gracious as Jesus) do great damage to the very truths they cherish. The practical solution is always to ask a question of any inspired literature—What does this say about God?

THINK IT THROUGH

The Laodicean message describes church members who have become selfish; how can we apply this in not only a material but a spiritual sense?

FURTHER STUDY

S.D.A. Bible Commentary, vol. 7, pp. 961, 962.

Part 3
SALT IS
LOVE—1

In what sense should believers be more loving than non-believers?

"I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you."

"If ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?" (Matt. 5:44, 47).

Ellen White identifies salt with love (*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36), but she goes on to define it as a special kind of love (see p. 38). It is the ability to love the unlovable; it is intelligent love—active and imaginative love.

How does Jesus' love make it possible to love the unlovable? 1 John 4:11, 12.

"Love is not simply an impulse, a transitory emotion, dependent upon circumstances; it is a living principle, a permanent power. . . . The children of God love one another, truly, sincerely, unaffectedly—'without partiality, and without hypocrisy.' . . . Our affection for one another springs from our common relation to God. We are one family, we love one another as He loved us. When compared with this true, sanctified, disciplined affection, the shallow courtesy of the world, the meaningless expressions of effusive friendship, are as chaff to the wheat."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 5, p. 1140.

What dimension of Christian love makes it so effective in this broken world? 1 Cor. 13:4-8.

"Love is power. Intellectual and moral strength are involved in this principle, and cannot be separated from it. The power of wealth has a tendency to corrupt and destroy; the power of force is strong to do hurt; but the excellence and value of pure love consist in its efficiency to do good, and to do nothing else than good. . . .

" . . . Wherever the power of intellect, of authority, or of force is employed, and love is not manifestly present, the affections and will of those whom we seek to reach assume a defensive, repelling position, and their strength of resistance is increased."—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, p. 135.

It is no wonder that Ellen White suggested that we read 1 Corinthians 13 on a daily basis.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I love the unlovable? Is my self-confidence based on worldly status or on the knowledge that I am accepted as a son or a daughter of God?

FURTHER STUDY

Testimonies, vol. 2, pp. 133-135.

**Part 4
SALT IS
LOVE—2**

What does our failure to be loving (the "salt of the earth") show about our relationship with God?

"He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8).

In part 3 of this lesson we considered Jesus' efforts at refining man's understanding of what it means to love his fellowman. Happily, our Lord also renewed the vertical definition of love, that is the love between an individual and God.

What efforts that duplicate his appeal to Eve does Satan make today to produce savorless salt in God's church? Gen. 3:4, 5.

"From the beginning it has been Satan's studied plan to cause men to forget God, that he might secure them to himself. Therefore he has sought to misrepresent the character of God, to lead men to cherish a false conception of Him. The Creator has been presented to their minds as clothed with the attributes of the prince of evil himself—as arbitrary, severe, and unforgiving—that He might be feared, shunned, and even hated by men. . . .

"Christ came to reveal God to the world as a God of love, a God of mercy, tenderness, and compassion."—*In Heavenly Places*, p. 8.

How would you relate Jesus' words to Philip (John 14:9) with the serpent's words to Eve (Gen. 3:4, 5)?

In a spirit of humility Jesus was constantly encouraging His disciples to think of God in terms of the example of His own everyday life. The disciples had difficulty accepting this. Simply put, the gospel says that God is as nice as Jesus. To be truly Christian is to make Jesus normative for all we think and say about God and heaven. "Had God the Father come to our world and dwelt among us, humbling Himself, veiling His glory, that humanity might look upon Him, the history that we have of the life of Christ would not have been changed. . . . In every act of Jesus, in every lesson of His instruction, we are to see and hear and recognize God. In sight, in hearing, in effect, it is the voice and movements of the Father."—*That I May Know Him*, p. 338.

THINK IT THROUGH

Has Jesus' life become normative for what I think about my heavenly Father?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, p. 22; *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:8), p. 25; "The Lord's Prayer" (Luke 11:4), p. 115.

**Part 5
SALT "PROVES"
GOD'S
EXISTENCE**

How does Christianity, devoutly lived, give evidence of God's existence?

"As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world" (John 17:18).

The late-in-life reconverted British journalist Malcolm Muggeridge once sat observing pilgrims file through the traditional birthplace of Christ in Bethlehem. He noticed the cameras, the garish sport shirts, the postcards and tourist bric-a-brac. But he also noticed the silence and the look upon the faces, and he contrasted this reverence with the great tragedies we read about in the newspapers every day and concluded that it took something divine to set something as magnificent as Christianity in motion, and it takes something divine to sustain it. Not conclusive proof, but certainly evidence of the existence of a loving God.

What should the reality of the Christian church say about God? John 17:21, 23.

"Christians who are purified through the truth will possess saving qualities that preserve the world from utter moral corruption."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 36.

What reaction can faithful Christians expect as they work to uphold the kingdom of heaven in this world? John 15:20.

It is true that the world loves sin and hates righteousness. And it is equally true that we are not to withdraw from the world in order to escape persecution. (See *The Desire of Ages*, p. 306.) But have we considered the problems the remnant will have with professedly religious people? Remember that Jesus died at the hands of fellow "believers." "The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of crimes committed by bigoted religionists. The Pharisees claimed to be children of Abraham, and boasted of their possession of the oracles of God; yet these advantages did not preserve them from selfishness, malignity, greed for gain, and the basest hypocrisy."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 309.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have we squared all our beliefs with the life of Christ, or do we cherish ideas that are not in harmony with the spirit of His life?

FURTHER STUDY

Selected Messages, bk. 2, p. 87; *Testimonies*, vol. 6, p. 54.

**Part 6
JESUS,
SALT OF
THE EARTH**

How may God serve as our example in presenting the truth?

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

The Sermon on the Mount, addressed primarily to the disciples, was to help them turn in a direction much different from the one they had traveled all their lives. It is a gentle, yet specific, summary of the values that pervade heaven. Instead of an outright attack on the disciples' ideas, Jesus was tactfully offering as an alternative the truth about God and about heaven and about the responsibilities of God's children.

What method did Jesus use when dealing with men seeking to trick Him? Luke 10:29-37.

Note the comment Ellen White makes about those to whom Jesus told the parable of the Good Samaritan: "He [Jesus] did not denounce the bigotry of those who were watching to condemn Him. But by a simple story He held up before His hearers such a picture of the outflowing of heaven-born love as touched all hearts, and drew from the lawyer a confession of the truth.

"The way to dispel darkness is to admit light. The best way to deal with error is to present truth. It is the revelation of God's love that makes manifest the deformity and sin of the heart centered in self."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 498.

How personal was the appeal of Christ's preaching? What do you think it was like to hear Jesus preach? Might Revelation 3:20 offer a clue?

By dwelling on the truth instead of giving consistent attention to error, Jesus won His way into many of the hearts of His hearers.

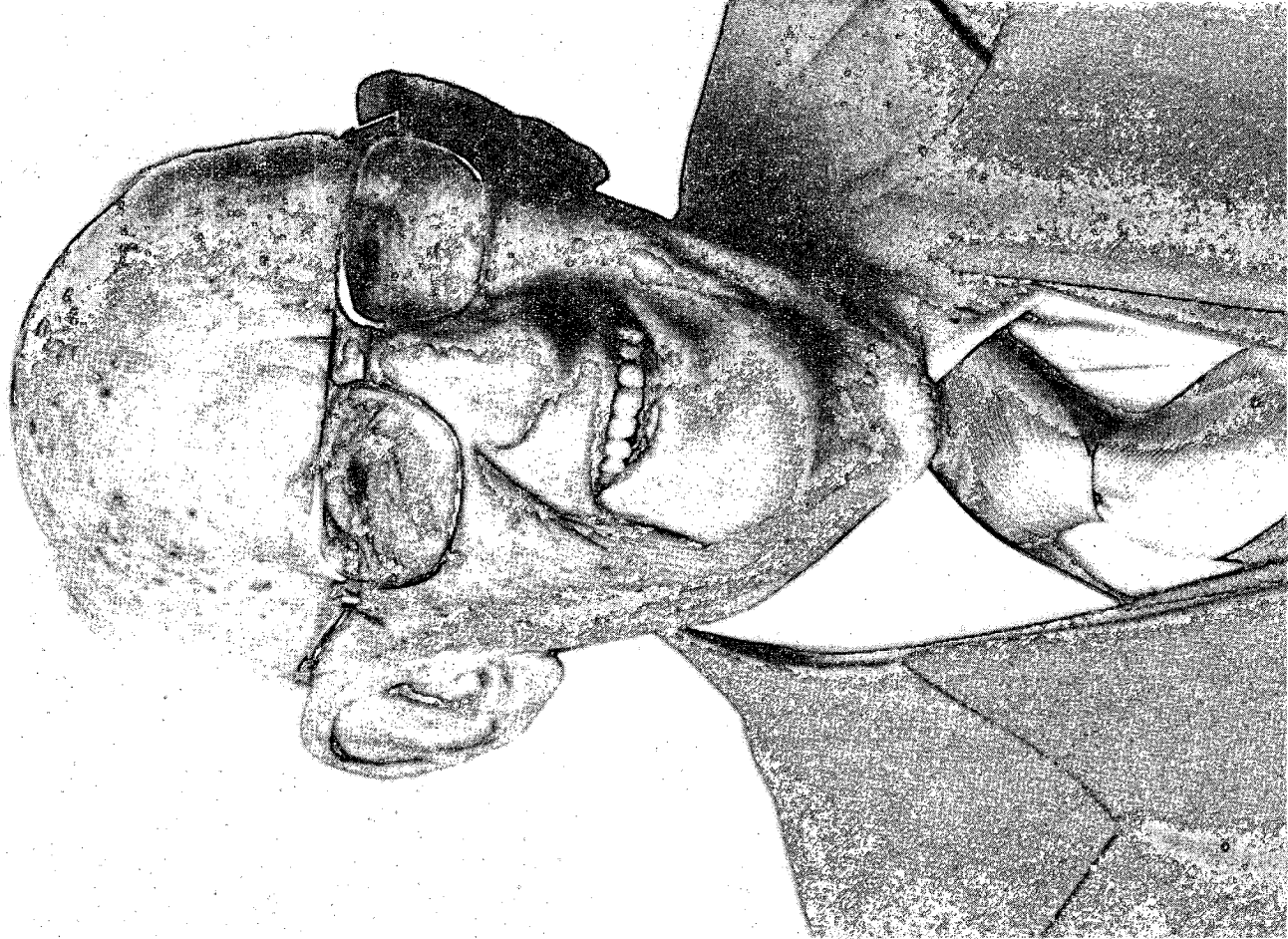
"When Jesus spoke, it was not with hesitating uncertainty, with repetition of words and familiar figures. The truth came from his lips clothed in new and interesting representations that gave it the freshness of a new revelation. His voice was never pitched to an unnatural key, and his words came with an earnestness and assurance appropriate to their importance and the momentous consequences involved in their reception or rejection."—Ellen G. White, *Review and Herald*, Jan. 7, 1890.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do we expend too much time correcting those who don't see things as we do and not enough time testing our ideas against Jesus' ideas and style?

FURTHER STUDY

Counsels on Sabbath School Work, pp. 30-33.



12. "Ye Are the Light"

"In him was life; and the life was the light of men" (John 1:4).

God has called Seventh-day Adventists to share an experience of His love and wisdom, to share their remarkable insights into the history of the great controversy and their knowledge of God's character with the rest of the world.

Imagine for a moment that you have been invited to a non-Adventist gathering. In a conversation with the person sitting next to you, the subject turns to religion. Suppose he asks you something like this: "What do you Seventh-day Adventists mean when you call yourselves the true church, or the light of the world for the last days? Do you mean to say that you are better than the rest of the Christian world?" How would you answer?

The Christlike answer would have two elements in it: (a) You would have to confirm that your church does have unique insights to share with the world, and (b) that you, far from being elevated or decorated by God, are a servant—that you, as with every member of the human family, stand in need of the grace and forgiveness of God.

Paul's ministry was a superb example of balancing a sense of humility with the knowledge that God had called him to share special truths. Read the first chapter of 1 Timothy for instance. Note the balance between Paul's humility and his confidence in the message that God had committed him to preach. Of him Ellen White says: "Paul's life was an exemplification of the truths he taught, and herein lay his power. His heart was filled with a deep, abiding sense of his responsibility, and he labored in close communion with Him who is the fountain of justice, mercy, and truth. He clung to the cross of Christ as his only

guarantee of success. The love of the Saviour was the undying motive that upheld him in his conflicts with self and in his struggles against evil as in the service of Christ he pressed forward against the unfriendliness of the world and the opposition of his enemies."—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 507.

In terms of their responsibility to be the light of the world, church members have three alternatives. They may, as their first-century spiritual ancestors did, become religiously exclusive, arrogant, and selfish. They may hoard their blessings under the guise of maintaining internal purity.

Second, some church members may conclude that the cost of discipleship is too high. Evangelism becomes a means of getting close to the world they have come to adore. As the argument runs, they must become very knowledgeable in the ways of the world in order that they might reach nonbelievers.

Happily, there is a third alternative for those who wish to take seriously the commission to be the light of the world. It is a Christlike missionary motive which balances humility and a sense of service with gleaming confidence in the values of the kingdom of heaven. This involves a compulsion to share.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **The Problem of Darkness**
(John 3:19)
2. **The Symbol of Light**
(2 Cor. 4:6)
3. **Your Good Works**
(Matt. 5:16)
4. **Glorify Your Father**
(John 17:4)
5. **Light Involves Confidence**
(Matt. 5:15)
6. **A Quality of People**
(Hosea 6:6)

**Part 1
THE PROBLEM
OF DARKNESS**

How should we understand the spiritual darkness of our world?

"This is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

In order to light the world effectively, God's people must understand what constitutes the spiritual darkness of their world. In order to establish evangelistic priorities, we need to consider what the Bible and the spirit of prophecy have singled out as the world's main problem.

How is darkness defined by Paul in Romans 1:19-25?

Let us refer back to a cornerstone passage in *The Desire of Ages* as we attempt to set priorities for witnessing to our non-Adventist friends. "The earth was dark through misapprehension of God. That the gloomy shadows might be lightened, that the world might be brought back to God, Satan's deceptive power was to be broken. . . . To know God is to love Him; His character must be manifested in contrast to the character of Satan. This work only one Being in all the universe could do. Only He who knew the height and depth of the love of God could make it known."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 22.

What does Paul say most sinners have chosen instead of the revelation of God's character? Rom. 1:26-31.

Unhappily, relatively few people in every generation have accepted Jesus' revelation of God's love. Few have been willing to accept Jesus' life as evidence that the law of God—the value system that sustains the universe—offers the best possible way of living. "As the evil passions and purposes of men banished God from their thoughts, so forgetfulness of Him inclined them more strongly to evil. The heart in love with sin clothed Him with its own attributes, and this conception strengthened the power of sin. Bent on self-pleasing, men came to regard God as such a one as themselves—a Being whose aim was self-glory, whose requirements were suited to His own pleasure; a Being by whom men were lifted up or cast down according as they helped or hindered His selfish purpose."—*Education*, p. 75.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are our personal witnessing efforts articulately directed at the main problem facing men and women—the problem of depreciating the values God stands for?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 35-38.

**Part 2
THE SYMBOL
OF LIGHT**

In what sense are Christians the light of the world?

"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor. 4:6).

Clearly, Christians are the light of the world only in the sense of service and not in the sense of having something which draws attention to themselves or even their church. Even as they are reflectors rather than sources of light, they should seek to draw the attention of the world, not to themselves, but to heaven.

What did Jesus mean when He referred to His disciples as the light of the world? Matt. 5:14.

As she did at the very outset of her book on the Sermon on the Mount, Ellen White encourages us to consider the context of Jesus' remark about believers' being the light of the world. Clearly, the servant of the Lord wants us to avoid making the same mistake our spiritual ancestors made. She said: "The people had come together while it was yet morning. The glorious sun, climbing higher and higher in the blue sky, was chasing away the shadows that lurked in the valleys and among the narrow defiles of the mountains. . . .

"No other light ever has shone or ever will shine upon fallen man save that which emanates from Christ. Jesus, the Saviour, is the only light that can illuminate the darkness of a world lying in sin."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, pp. 38, 39.

Consider the impact Jesus had on His hearers, when they could see shadows disappearing at the very moment they were listening to the Saviour. The message was plain; consecrated individuals would clear away misconceptions that had enslaved the world.

Are we really the light of the world? 1 John 1:5.

More properly, we are reflectors of the Light of the world. "As Christ is the channel for the revelation of the Father, so we are to be the channel for the revelation of Christ. . . . The church of Christ, every individual disciple of the Master, is heaven's appointed channel for the revelation of God to men."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 40.

THINK IT THROUGH

What must I do to be an effective channel for the revelation of God and His values to the world?

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "The Beatitudes" (Matt. 5:14), pp. 38-44; *The Desire of Ages*, pp. 463, 464.

Part 3
YOUR GOOD
WORKS

Of what value are our good works?

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt. 5:16).

Ever since the fall of mankind, the human family has needed a point of reference to check the trustworthiness of God's values and requirements. Being the guardian of freedom that He is, God does not ask men and women to do anything without first giving them evidence of His love and concern for them. Hence, He has always sought to have a people who would communicate His love, thus demonstrating His trustworthiness. In modern times the word *works* has come to have a negative connotation because it is often associated with pride and the attempt to earn salvation by obligating God. Actually *works* is a good word, if it means, for instance, demonstrating the benefits of living our God's ideals.

Was Jesus taking a risk in encouraging His disciples to let the world see their good works? Matt. 23:5.

"In like manner the disciples of Christ are set as light bearers on the way to heaven; through them the Father's mercy and goodness are made manifest to a world enshrouded in the darkness of misapprehension of God. By seeing their good works, others are led to glorify the Father who is above; for it is made manifest that there is a God on the throne of the universe whose character is worthy of praise and imitation."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 41.

"Let us remember that a Christlike life is the most powerful argument that can be advanced in favor of Christianity. . . . Men will believe, not what the minister preaches, but what the church lives. Too often the influence of the sermon preached from the pulpit is counteracted by the sermon preached in the lives of those who claim to be advocates of truth."—*Testimonies*, vol. 9, p. 21.

What makes works "good"? Matt. 6:1-3.

"Every ray of light that we shed upon others is reflected upon ourselves. Every kind and sympathizing word spoken to the sorrowful, every act to relieve the oppressed, and every gift to the needy, if prompted by a right motive, will result in blessings to the giver."—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 218.

THINK IT THROUGH

What constitutes the right motive in doing good works?

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "True Motive in Service" (Matt. 6:1), pp. 79-83.

Part 4
**GLORIFY
YOUR FATHER**

How may we glorify God, who is all glory?

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4). (Read also verses 5, 6.)

By revealing God, Jesus glorified God. The highest compliment that can be paid any person is that he or she speaks well of God. (See Job 42:7.) Often God is portrayed as being like an earthly despot who demands praise and adulation from his subjects. But Jesus' life cancels this picture, for in it we see God wanting nothing more from created beings than that they know and share His love for them.

What does the Bible mean when it refers to God's glory? "The word of God reveals His character. He Himself has declared His infinite love and pity. When Moses prayed, 'Show me Thy glory,' the Lord answered, 'I will make all My goodness pass before thee.' Exodus 33:18, 19. This is His glory."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 10. If God's glory equals His character, then the process of glorifying God amounts to speaking well of His character by faithfully living out His principles in our lives. Glorifying God means worshiping Him as our Friend and Saviour rather than as a harsh and tyrannical ruler.

"Satan led men to conceive of God as a being whose chief attribute is stern justice,—one who is a severe judge, a harsh, exacting creditor. He pictured the Creator as a being who is watching with jealous eye to discern the errors and mistakes of men, that He may visit judgments upon them. It was to remove this dark shadow, by revealing to the world the infinite love of God, that Jesus came to live among men."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 11.

Is it sufficient for our Christian experience just to admire God? 2 Cor. 5:11, 14.

Actually true admiration for God involves a compulsion to share what we know to be true about Him with others. Indifferent admiration is not admiration at all. Ellen White reminds us, "We are not only to contemplate the glory of Christ, but also to speak of His excellences. Isaiah not only beheld the glory of Christ, but he also spoke of Him. . . . Who can by faith behold the wonderful plan of redemption, the glory of the only-begotten Son of God, and not speak of it?"—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 43.

THINK IT THROUGH

Does my life glorify my Creator?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, p. 576; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "To Meet the Bridegroom," p. 414; *Counsels to Teachers*, p. 30.

**Part 5
LIGHT
INVOLVES
CONFIDENCE**

How may we become effective lights for Christ? How may we put our lights for God on candlesticks?

“Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house” (Matt. 5:15).

We cannot give what we do not have. We need to study God’s Word in order to be effective witnesses for Him in this world. What is more, life is not static. From day to day we become more and more like the things and people we think about and admire.

How can we know the way of salvation? 2 Tim. 3:15.

Ellen White cautions us that “the great work of life is character building, and a knowledge of God is the foundation of all true education. . . .

“It is a law of the mind that it gradually adapts itself to the subjects upon which it is trained to dwell. If occupied with commonplace matters only, it will become dwarfed and enfeebled. If never required to grapple with difficult problems, it will after a time almost lose the power of growth. As an educating power the Bible is without a rival.”—*Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 596.

As church members, what we really need is firm confidence in the fact that a study of the Bible, contemplating the stories recorded there, will refine and polish us. Such study will groom our tastes and improve our ability to converse with people.

What did Jesus teach that God was willing and able to do? Matt. 7:11.

The initial sin in heaven was disbelief about the goodness and wisdom of God. In the end, those who would be saved must develop precisely the opposite attitude. They, like Job, must be absolutely, unmovably certain that God is wise and fair and loving, that He asks only of them what is for their best good. They must be sealed: “It is not any seal or mark that can be seen, but a settling into the truth, both intellectually and spiritually, so they cannot be moved.”—Ellen G. White *Comments, S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 4, p. 1161. We cannot acquire this level of confidence in God and in our Saviour without giving consistent attention to the divine character revealed in the 66 books of the Bible and in the pages of the spirit of prophecy.

THINK IT THROUGH

How seriously do I take my need for daily contact with the Word of God?

FURTHER STUDY

Patriarchs and Prophets, pp. 596-599.

**Part 6
A QUALITY
OF PEOPLE**

What does God expect from His light bearers?

"I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings" (Hosea 6:6).

Some religions speak of sanctifying things, places, animals, seasons, and heroes of the past, while the character development of living believers virtually is ignored. Not so with Seventh-day Adventist Christianity, for it is about people—people who are becoming more Christlike all the time.

What ongoing process are believers to experience? 2 Cor. 3:18.

Adventists are not ashamed of emphasizing Christlike change. They ask, Is it not reasonable to want to change and be gracious? Sanctification has nothing to do with earning salvation. It has everything to do with admiring the obedience, the sense of humility, and the effective service displayed so vividly in Christ's life. "Trials patiently borne, blessings gratefully received, temptations manfully resisted, meekness, kindness, mercy, and love habitually revealed, are the lights that shine forth in the character in contrast with the darkness of the selfish heart, into which the light of life has never shone."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*. p. 44. Does not a person of this quality have an enviable life-style?

How does the process of Christlike change occur? 2 Peter 1:3, 4.

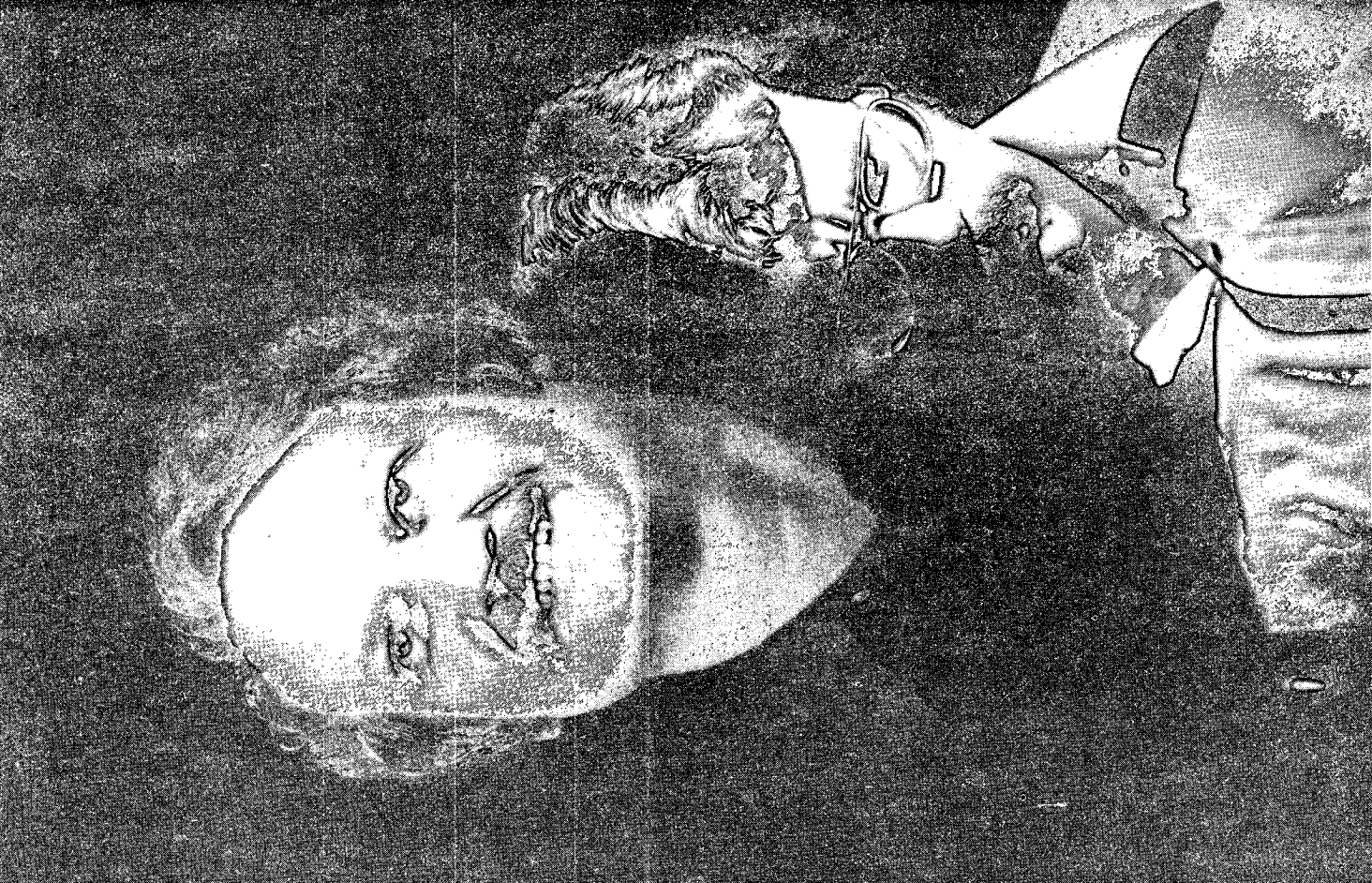
"It is not by looking away from Him that we imitate the life of Jesus, but by talking of Him, by dwelling upon His perfections, by seeking to refine the taste and elevate the character, by trying—through faith and love, and by earnest, persevering effort—to approach the perfect Pattern. By having a knowledge of Christ—His words, His habits, and His lessons of instruction—we borrow the virtues of the character we have so closely studied, and become imbued with the spirit we have so much admired."—Ellen G. White Comments, *S.D.A. Bible Commentary*, vol. 6, pp. 1098, 1099.

THINK IT THROUGH

"The religion of Christ means more than the forgiveness of sin; it means taking away our sins, and filling the vacuum with the graces of the Holy Spirit."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, pp. 419, 420. Do we pray for change as well as forgiveness?

FURTHER STUDY

The Desire of Ages, pp. 825-827; *Christ's Object Lessons*, "To Meet the Bridegroom," pp. 419-421.



13. The Two Gates

“Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat. . . .

“Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit” (Matt. 7:13, 17).

“Two roads diverged in a wood,
and I—

I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the
difference.”

So wrote Robert Frost in his poem
“The Road Not Taken.”

The concept of two roads or gates—one being broad and appealing, the other, narrow and foreboding—is common to both secular and religious literature. Usually the metaphor of two ways refers to our struggles with self-will, in opposition to God’s will. Ellen White offers this interpretation:

“The reason many in this age of the world make no greater advancement in the divine life is because they interpret the will of God to be just what they will to do. While following their own desires, they flatter themselves that they are conforming to God’s will. These have no conflicts with self. There are others who for a time are successful in the struggle against their selfish desire for pleasure and ease. They are sincere and earnest, but grow weary of protracted effort, of daily death, of ceaseless turmoil. Indolence seems inviting, death to self repulsive; and they close their drowsy eyes and fall under the power of temptation instead of resisting it.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 565.

In an age when many Christians feel satisfied in merely possessing some vague notions about God’s promise of forgiveness and salvation, Adventists stand out in vivid contrast. Our church

confidently speaks of not only the desirability of, but the possibility of real character development, now, in this life. We believe that God daily offers both the pardon and the power we need to effect Christlike change in our lives.

Adventists look forward to the state of affairs described in this popular passage: “The great controversy is ended. Sin and sinners are no more. The entire universe is clean. One pulse of harmony and gladness beats through the vast creation. From Him who created all, flow life and light and gladness, throughout the realms of illimitable space. From the minutest atom to the greatest world, all things, animate and inanimate, in their unshadowed beauty and perfect joy, declare that God is love.”—*The Great Controversy*, p. 678. Adventists live the promise of Revelation 21:5, “Behold, I make all things new.” They believe that “it was His [Jesus’] mission to bring to men complete restoration; He came to give them health and peace and perfection of character.”—*The Ministry of Healing*, p. 17. And Seventh-day Adventists believe this complete healing begins now, in this life.

DAILY HIGHLIGHTS

1. **What You See Is Not What You Get**
(Prov. 14:12)
2. **Think Things Through**
(John 17:3)
3. **Self-control Is Required**
(Prov. 25:28)
4. **Strivers**
(Luke 13:24)
5. **Free to Be Myself**
(Matt. 11:28)
6. **Jesus Leads the Way**
(John 14:6)

Part 1
WHAT YOU SEE
IS NOT WHAT
YOU GET

How do we know which gate to enter? Consider Proverbs 14:12.

"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death" (Prov. 14:12).

Choice and taste play a large part in our ability to live a Christlike life. The more these are indulged selfishly, the more difficult it is to perceive the right decision in any given situation. This is what happened to the Pharisees. Unbeknown to them, Satan had substituted his values and characteristics to the point that they behaved more satanically when they thought they were doing God's will.

Psalm 1 speaks of the same principles as the illustration of the two gates. What does it indicate that makes one way pleasurable and the other one painful?

God respects freedom, but there are consequences to our acts. "All along the road that leads to death there are pains and penalties, there are sorrows and disappointments, there are warnings not to go on. God's love has made it hard for the heedless and headstrong to destroy themselves."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 139.

On the contrary, the narrow road may be very rewarding. "God does not require us to give up anything that it is for our best interest to retain. . . .

"It is a mistake to entertain the thought that God is pleased to see His children suffer. All heaven is interested in the happiness of man. Our heavenly Father does not close the avenues of joy to any of His creatures. The divine requirements call upon us to shun those indulgences that would bring suffering and disappointment, that would close to us the door of happiness and heaven."—*Steps to Christ*, p. 46.

What thoughts do you find in Colossians 3:1, 2 that point out what helps us choose the right gate?

Speaking of Jacob's all-night struggle with the angel, Ellen White says, "Jacob, in the great crisis of his life, turned aside to pray. He was filled with one overmastering purpose—to seek for transformation of character."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 144. Not making excuses, not procrastinating, not doubting God's power to change us into the likeness of His image—this leads the Christian to the right gate.

THINK IT THROUGH

Do I really want to educate my tastes and my power of choice?

FURTHER STUDY

Fundamentals of Christian Education, p. 84; *Child Guidance*, p. 484.

**Part 2
THINK
THINGS
THROUGH**

Why is it important to have a correct understanding of God and Jesus?

"This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent" (John 17:3).

Heaven will be populated with people who have a variety of opinions on given doctrines. Each individual has specific spiritual needs; each will emphasize a different aspect of a given doctrine. However, these varied emphases will all fit on a spectrum of truthful Bible interpretation. It matters, for instance, that we believe in the mortal nature of man and the resurrection rather than in the immortality of the soul.

What thought in Luke 24:25-27, 44-48 helps us understand what the correct interpretation of Scripture has to do with entering the gate of life?

"In the road to death the whole race may go, with all their worldliness, all their selfishness, all their pride, dishonesty, and moral debasement. There is room for every man's opinions and doctrines, space to follow his inclinations, to do whatever his self-love may dictate. In order to go in the path that leads to destruction, there is no need of searching for the way; for the gate is wide."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 138.

In the wide gate it not only doesn't matter what we think, it happens not to matter whether we think at all.

"Satan is constantly endeavoring to attract attention to man in the place of God. He leads the people to look to bishops, to pastors, to professors of theology, as their guides, instead of searching the Scriptures to learn their duty for themselves."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 595.

Why does it matter that we understand Christian doctrine? John 8:32.

"The position that it is of no consequence what men believe is one of Satan's most successful deceptions. He knows that the truth, received in the love of it, sanctifies the soul of the receiver; therefore he is constantly seeking to substitute false theories, fables, another gospel."—*The Great Controversy*, p. 520.

Obviously, what we think and believe effects change in our lives.

THINK IT THROUGH

Are my theological principles inherited, or are they established through personal study?

FURTHER STUDY

The Great Controversy, pp. 520-523, 528.

**Part 3
SELF-CONTROL
IS REQUIRED**

What is the relation of self-discipline to salvation?

"He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls" (Prov. 25:28).

The Christian's argument against such phenomena as drugs, alcohol, hypnotism, and spiritualism rests in a belief that these violate an individual's ability for self-determination. The potential for personal fulfillment is related to the amount of self-discipline one has. The Christian finds success in self-discipline by surrender of his will to God.

How does the will help us in our battle against sin? Phil. 2:13.

"The Christian life is a battle and a march. But the victory to be gained is not won by human power. The field of conflict is the domain of the heart. The battle which we have to fight—the greatest battle that was ever fought by man—is the surrender of self to the will of God, the yielding of the heart to the sovereignty of love. The old nature, born of blood and of the will of the flesh, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. The hereditary tendencies, the former habits, must be given up."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 141.

Will self-control eliminate sin in our lives? Rom. 7:15-20.

Christians are divided as to whether Romans 7 describes a pre- or post-conversion state. However, almost all agree that sanctification is the work of a lifetime. Certainly all the self-control in the world without a relationship of dependence upon God is of little ultimate value. But God understands this. "When it is in the heart to obey God, when efforts are put forth to this end, Jesus accepts this disposition and effort as man's best service, and He makes up for the deficiency with His own divine merit. But He will not accept those who claim to have faith in Him, and yet are disloyal to His Father's commandment. We hear a great deal about faith, but we need to hear a great deal more about works. Many are deceiving their own souls by living an easy-going, accommodating, crossless religion."—*Selected Messages*, bk. 1, p. 382.

THINK IT THROUGH

How much time do I spend in prayer and Bible study seeking to understand the will of God?

FURTHER STUDY

Christ's Object Lessons, "First the Blade, Then the Ear," pp. 65, 66.

**Part 4
STRIVERS**

In what sense should Christians strive to be saved?

"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).

We live in a time of de-emphasis on striving to keep God's law. Yet Luke says, "Strive [Greek: *agonizomai*]!" Commenting on this, Ellen White suggests: "I have stated before them that, from what was shown me, but a small number of those now professing to believe the truth would eventually be saved—not because they could not be saved, but because they would not be saved in God's own appointed way. The way marked out by our divine Lord is too narrow and the gate too strait to admit them while grasping the world or while cherishing selfishness or sin of any kind. . . ."

"The words of Christ are plain: 'Strive [agonize] to enter in at the strait gate.'"—*Testimonies*, vol. 2, pp. 445, 446.

What prevents striving after righteousness from being mere salvation by works? Phil. 1:21.

"Day by day, and hour by hour, there must be a vigorous process of self-denial and of sanctification going on within; and then the outward works will testify that Jesus is abiding in the heart by faith. . . . Strive, but let it be in the strength of your risen Saviour."—*Fundamentals of Christian Education*, pp. 136, 137.

What do Micah 6:8 and 7:7-9 say that can help us understand how we can strive and yet remain absolutely dependent upon God?

"The victory is not won without much earnest prayer, without the humbling of self at every step. Our will is not to be forced into co-operation with divine agencies, but it must be voluntarily submitted. Were it possible to force upon you with a hundredfold greater intensity the influence of the Spirit of God, it would not make you a Christian, a fit subject for heaven."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 142.

We must be convinced that Christ offers a blueprint for living. We must want to be like Him. We must be fascinated by His life-style more than by the life-styles of the world's celebrities and heroes.

THINK IT THROUGH

Am I convinced that Jesus' life displays values that are effective in today's world?

FURTHER STUDY

Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing, "Not Judging, but Doing" (Luke 13:24), pp. 141-144.

**Part 5
FREE TO
BE MYSELF**

What did Jesus say that helps us see the result of squeezing through the narrow gate?

"Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28).

It is paradoxical but true that the denial of self enhances personal freedom and therefore peace and satisfaction. Not that the denial of self means living a shriveled and shallow life; on the contrary, "the development of all our powers is the first duty we owe to God and to our fellow men."—*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 329.

The narrow gate is the gate of self-worth, the wide one of selfishness. There is a vast difference between the two.

From Philipians 2:3, what can we pinpoint as the cause of most of our problems?

"There are many whose hearts are aching under a load of care because they seek to reach the world's standard. They have chosen its service, accepted its perplexities, adopted its customs. Thus their character is marred, and their life made a weariness. In order to gratify ambition and worldly desires, they wound the conscience, and bring upon themselves an additional burden of remorse. The continual worry is wearing out the life forces. . . .

"It is the love of self that brings unrest. . . . The value of our work does not consist in making a show and noise in the world, and in being active and zealous in our own strength."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 330, 331.

What is the best way to rid our lives of selfishness? Matt. 16:24.

"Whatever your anxieties and trials, spread out your case before the Lord. . . . The way will be opened for you to disentangle yourself from embarrassment and difficulty. The weaker and more helpless you know yourself to be, the stronger will you become in His strength. . . .

"In the heart of Christ, where reigned perfect harmony with God, there was perfect peace. He was never elated by applause, nor dejected by censure or disappointment. . . .

" . . . When our will is swallowed up in the will of God, and we use His gifts to bless others, we shall find life's burden light."—*The Desire of Ages*, pp. 329-331.

THINK IT THROUGH

Consider how much of our personal difficulties and embarrassments are the results of self-assertion.

FURTHER STUDY

Steps to Christ, "Consecration," pp. 43-46.

Part 6
**JESUS LEADS
THE WAY**

How does Jesus help us through the narrow gate?

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6).

One of the great principles of Christianity is that God wouldn't ask His friends to do anything He would not do. Jesus' life reveals this to be true. God only asks of His creatures what is for their best possible good. But for many this concept is difficult to accept. Few have believed Christ's words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Few have transferred what they think about the Son to what they think about the Father.

In what way does Jesus guarantee the quality of God's value system or message? John 17:6-8.

"If we ever attain unto holiness, it will be through the renunciation of self and the reception of the mind of Christ."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 143.

Jesus lived God's values. By accepting, as Ellen White suggests, the "mind of Christ," we accept His confidence in the values of the kingdom of God.

Note this gracious warning: "He who feels whole, who thinks that he is reasonably good, and is contented with his condition, does not seek to become a partaker of the grace and righteousness of Christ."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 7.

"There are many in the broad way who are not fully satisfied with the path in which they walk. . . . They look toward the narrow way and the strait gate; but selfish pleasure, love of the world, pride, unsanctified ambition, place a barrier between them and the Saviour. . . . They desire the good, they make some effort to obtain it; but they do not choose it; they have not a settled purpose to secure it at the cost of all things."—*Thoughts From the Mount of Blessing*, p. 143.

In what sense does Jesus bring the kingdom of heaven to fulfillment for us in this life? John 15:15, 16.

"As through Jesus we enter into rest, heaven begins here. We respond to His invitation, Come, learn of Me, and in thus coming we begin the life eternal. Heaven is a ceaseless approaching to God through Christ."—*The Desire of Ages*, p. 331.

THINK IT THROUGH

Have I accepted Jesus' life as evidence that the principles Jesus enumerated in the Sermon on the Mount represent the best way to live?

FURTHER STUDY

The Acts of the Apostles, pp. 9-12.

Lessons for 1st Quarter / 1981

Sabbath School members who have not received a copy of the Adult Lessons for the first quarter of 1981 will be helped by the following outline in studying the first two lessons. The title of the series is THE CHURCH—SERVANT TO THE WORLD.

First Lesson

GOD STILL IN CONTROL

Memory Text, Rom. 11:33.

1. *Freedom to Sin (Isa. 14:12)*
2. *Choosing to Sin (Gen. 3:6)*
3. *Responding to Sin (Gen. 3:22)*
4. *People and Prophets (Ex. 20:2)*
5. *God With Us (Matt. 1:23)*
6. *Into All the World (John 3:17)*

Second Lesson

BUILT ON THE ROCK

Memory Text, 1 Cor. 3:11.

1. *Inadequate Answers (Matt. 16:14)*
2. *A Basic Confession (Matt. 16:16)*
3. *Truth Revealed (Matt. 16:17)*
4. *The Rock Foundation (Matt. 16:18)*
5. *Power to Survive (Matt. 16:18)*
6. *Authority Confirmed (Matt. 16:19)*

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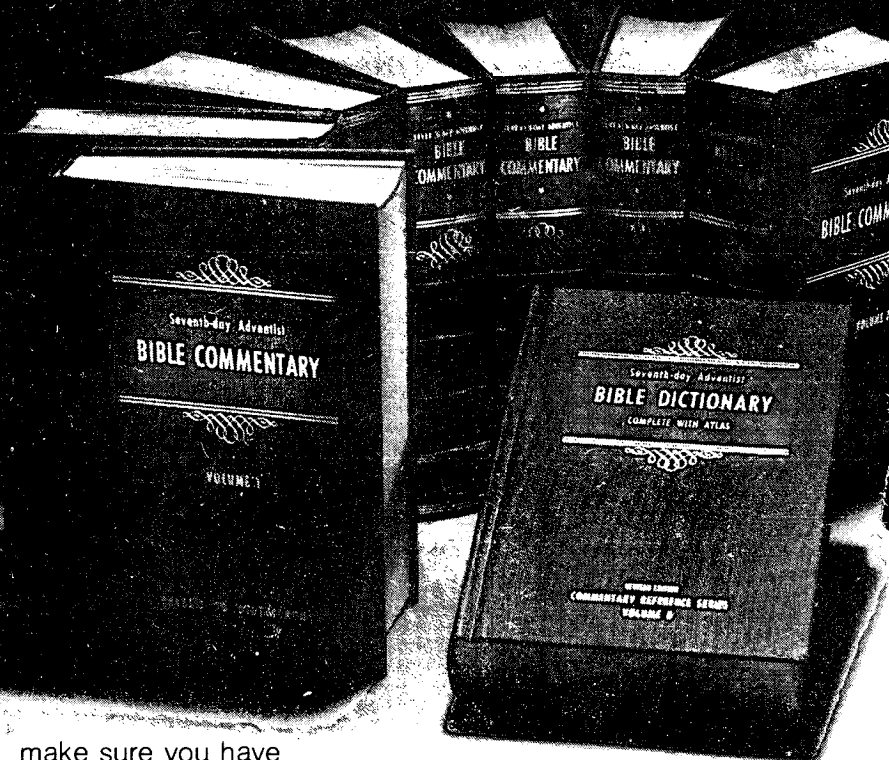
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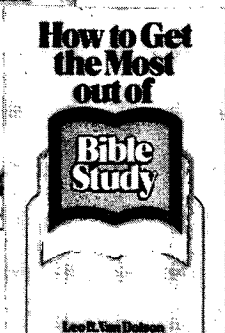
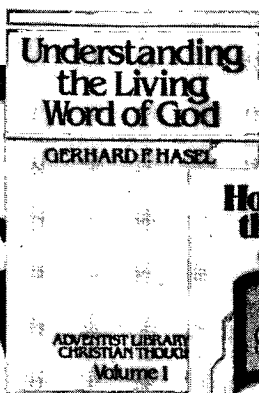
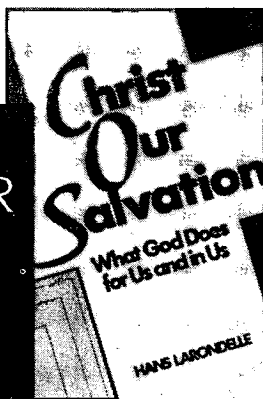


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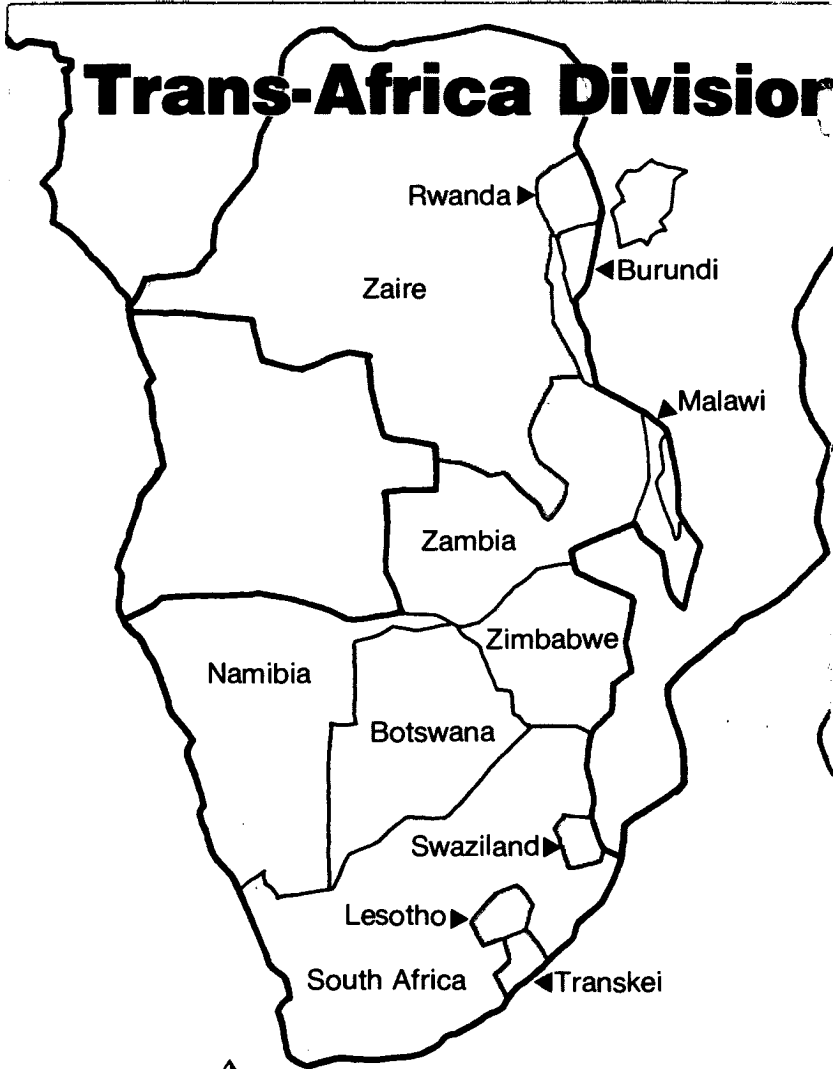
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Unions	Population	Churches	Church Members	Sabbath School Members
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South African	7,789,522	169	16,799	12,306
South-East Africa	5,817,000	211	41,800	91,119
Southern	21,500,469	193	16,081	48,873
Zaire	26,000,000	325	63,318	128,657
Zambesi	7,159,140	283	50,403	81,287
Zambia	4,000,000	231	33,487	109,790

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(Figures as of September 1979)