

Old Paths

Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls.
Jeremiah 6:16

The secret of the LORD is with them that fear Him; and He will show them His covenant.
Psalm 25:14

An Elijah People in the 21st Century

By Gary Richmond

(The following message was given at the 2001 West Virginia camp meeting. Editor)

I am going to begin by sharing this reference from *Christian Service*, subtitle: "World Conditions Facing the Christian Worker." I am quoting from page 57 under the heading "Lessons From Elijah's Experience." "From Elijah's experience during those days of discouragement and apparent defeat, there are many lessons to be drawn,—lessons invaluable to the servants of God in this age, marked as it is by general departure from right. The apostasy prevailing today is similar to that which in the prophet's day overspread Israel. In the exaltation of the human above the divine, in the praise of popular leaders, in the worship of mammon, and in the placing of the teachings of science above the truths of revelation, multitudes today are following after Baal. Doubt and unbelief are exercising their baleful influence over mind and heart, and many are substituting for the oracles of God the theories of men. It is publicly taught that we have reached a time when human reason should be exalted above the teachings of the Word. The law of God, the divine standard of righteousness, is declared to be of no effect. The enemy of all truth is working with deceptive power to cause men and women to place human institutions where God should be, and to forget that which was ordained for the happiness and salvation of mankind. Yet this apostasy, widespread as it has come to be, is not universal. Not all in the world are lawless and sinful; not all have taken sides with the enemy. God has many thousands who have not bowed the knee to Baal, many who long to understand more fully in regard to Christ and the law, many who are hoping against hope that Jesus will come soon to end the reign of sin and death."

It is my opinion that you and I, and people like us, meet that description—an Elijah people in the 21st century. Let's turn in your Bibles, if you will please, to the book of Malachi, chapter 4. We will begin with a scripture reading there that can help set the tone of this message, "For,

Preparation for the Mark of the Beast

The United States of America and the world community today face a crisis over terrorism the likes of which has never been seen before. The threat of anthrax grips many Americans. People who are fearful of coming in contact with the deadly virus want to know what can be done. This is only natural. When a crisis occurs we need to know what to do to be ready for the crisis. It would truly be sad news if it was known that anthrax was spreading like wildfire, and yet nobody could tell the people how to protect themselves from the virus.

Sadder yet if we knew that nuclear bombs were going to be detonated all over, and we could neither flee nor protect ourselves from them!

Yet, a far greater crisis, one that man has never imagined is soon to come to the United States and the

Continued on page 10

Also in this issue:

Youth's Corner p. 11

behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch. But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall. And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts. Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statues and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse.” Now this prophecy concerning Elijah saw a powerful, but only a partial, fulfillment in the ministry, fearful ministry, of John the Baptist.

Matthew 17:10-13 states: “And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come. And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things. But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.” Here’s a paragraph for you from *Testimonies Studies on Diet and Foods*, page 89. “John the Baptist went forth in the spirit and power of Elijah, to prepare the way of the Lord, and to turn the people to the wisdom of the

just.” Now you need to be praying that God’s spirit will help you retain these things in your mind because they are all going to build and come together in this message. John the Baptist “was a representative of those living in the last days, to whom God has entrusted sacred truth to present before the people, to prepare the way for the second appearing of Christ.” Now that’s you folks. Time, study, observation and experience have convinced me that Jesus cannot and will not return to this planet unless, and until, He has a people who have allowed His Word, will, way, and righteousness to restore and recreate them to a point where sin has no attractiveness to, nor power, over them. Now it doesn’t take much researching or studying God’s Word to find that Malachi, as well as other patriarchs and prophets, points forward to a time when there will be a company of holy people raised up, just prior to Christ’s second coming; who will be a power for the truth and God’s honor and glory, that will be of the same ministry, type and mold as Elijah and John the Baptist.

The message of these people who are to be raised up, just before the second coming of Christ, will be in a marked contrast to the insipid, meaningless pabulum being spoon fed to the compromising pew-warming masses that we know to be the norm today. As a matter of fact, we are told that these people will have an even more pointed testimony to bear than did John the Baptist.

“In this fearful time, just before Christ is to come the second time, God’s faithful preachers will have to bear a still more pointed testimony than was borne by John the Baptist. A responsible, important work is before them; and those who

speaking smooth things, God will not acknowledge as His shepherds. A fearful woe is upon them.” (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, p. 321)

Now if you are acquainted with the ministry of John the Baptist, you know we have quite a job to do, and it has to be right to the point, with no beating around the bush. Is a woe a good thing? This is a fearful woe. You tell it like it is, or you will wish you had.

“The work of John the Baptist represents the work for these times. His work, and the work of those who go forth in the spirit and power of Elijah to arouse the people from their apathy, are the same in many respects. Christ is to come the second time to judge the world in righteousness. The messengers of God who bear the last message of warning to be given to the world are to prepare the way for Christ’s second advent as John prepared the way for His first advent. ... If form and ceremony were of no avail then, a form of godliness without the power can be of no avail now.” (*Youth’s Instructor*, May 17, 1900)

When I read things like this in the Spirit of Prophecy it helps me understand why they shipped her to Australia. Didn’t really work though, did it? What is our work?—The same as that given to John the Baptist. Give that trumpet a certain sound, for there are many who do not understand the prophecies relating to these days and they must be enlightened. It is the duty of both watchmen and laymen to give that trumpet a certain sound. Be in earnest, “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins.” (Isaiah 58:1)

The first step in developing a personality and a character that will enable and empower you to do what is expected of those who have moved, and this is an important step, those who have moved from conviction to conversion. Do you know people like that? They are under conviction but have never been converted. The church is full of them. This is why the church is so sick. There are those who have moved from conviction to conversion and what helps them to do that is to recognize and accept that we have an enormous need of a Saviour and that we need His righteousness in place of our own. We tend to look at ourselves as being somewhat, or much better than we really are. We need to get frank and honest with ourselves and try to view ourselves as God does. What does He see when He looks at us? When He hears us? The enormity of the job and the test that is approaching the true remnant, demands an eye singled to that task. You can't be diverted by other things. You will not be able to do that. You will not be meaningfully involved. It cannot and will not happen till certain prerequisites become prioritized in our lives.

Now one of the most important priorities is found in I John, chapter 4, if you would like to turn there, there is found a remarkable statement. We are going to read verse 12: "No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." Now I want to ask you, do you think there is a difference between God's love and your love? Vast difference! But it tells us here that His love can not only replace ours but it can be perfected in us. That to me is a wondrous thing. It's those last seven words,

"and His love is perfected in us," that must be internalized and realized in His people. Now perhaps those of us who have children can better relate to that love with an example by this illustration. Even merely professed Christians recognize the sacrifice of Jesus. You hear this regardless of what church you go to. It's talked about. It's praised! To come here and give up what and where He was, and allow Himself to be subjected to what those created in His image did to Him. Truly, it is just an amazing, wonderful thing. But what about God's sacrifice in allowing it? It must have been a hard thing to do; His only Child.

Now listen and think. There are situations, circumstances, wherein a genuine, practicing Christian would be willing to die for another—me for you, you for me. This is not out of the realm of possibility. However, I have two sons and I can't envision the possibility of sacrificing either of them for you. Do you understand what I am saying here? I'm willing to die for you under certain circumstances, if it's necessary, and I am sure vice versa. But, I can't see sacrificing one of my sons. Yet, that's the kind of love that God, the Father, has for us. And it states right here in His Word that His love can be perfected in us. Now that kind of love absolutely obliterates fear and doubt, and develops the heart and mind equal to the coming task. Now, do you think knowledge alone, or zeal, or interest, or desire, is going to take you through with what is coming? Another prerequisite is found in the following verse, 13. It says. "Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit." Here again an absolutely essential imperative

in the salvation process, a indispensable ingredient to the development and manifestation of an Elijah presence. What a distinct and gracious gift to bestow on a sin, weakened people, His own holy spirit to strengthen, encourage, bless and guide them. These two holy attributes—His love, His spirit, working in God's people will produce individuals that will personalize and reflect verse 17. "Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world." Now did you follow that? Did you read it? Did you hear it? What is necessary to have that boldness and be like Him in this world, His love perfected in us and His spirit in us? Powerful verse.

Books and sermons could be written and expounded on just that verse. Now, I am going to read verses 12, 13 and 17 from the Amplified Bible. "No man has at any time [yet] seen God. But if we love one another, God abides (lives and remains) in us and His love (that love which is essentially His) is brought to completion (to its full maturity, runs its full course, is perfected) in us! By this we come to know (perceive, recognize, and understand) that we abide (live and remain) in Him and He in us: because He has given (imparted) to us of His [Holy] Spirit." Now I want to skip down to verse 17, "In this [union and communion with Him] love is brought to completion *and* attains perfection with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment [with assurance and boldness to face Him], because as He is, so are we in this world." If we can relate to these verses, if they are real and precious to us, we should be living emissaries of their

message and we should be the means, the tools God will use to convict this world of sin and the certainty of a rapidly approaching day of reckoning. An Elijah people are the only Bible that many people in this world are ever going to have an opportunity to read. God needs such a committed people, in this time of universal apostasy, to live and proclaim His Word, will, way and law to a sin-sick, dying planet, in the spirit and in the power of Elijah, and do it not only demonstrably but also in conjunction with the message "Fear God and give glory to Him for the hour of His judgment is come." (Revelation 14:6)

John the Baptist gave a decided, pointed apology to none. His message was to prepare the people for Christ's first advent. It had to be straight and unsparing to cut through the apathy and the ignorance fostered by the pretended, prostituted, perverters of guile and religious tripe of that time. It is much worse, and the stakes are much higher this time around, in part because of the finality, the impending eternal settlement and resolution of this great controversy between Christ and Satan. Consequently, the message must be louder, clearer, irrefutable and holy.

As time goes by the remnant must expect to encounter all manner of apostates, critics, phonies, fools and pretenders, not only from without but from within, that will try to divert and instill doubt. It's a shame that it has to be that way, but it will work an eternal weight of glory. It will help you grow. It will help you become more alert and more dependent upon God. We have got to have these tests and trials. We have got to have these kinds of trials not only from outside but from within the body. You need to have a

word in due season. You need to practice, so to speak, because you are going to be taken before some pretty knowledgeable people; arrogant people, and some of us will go on trial. We'll be taken up on hate crime charges just for delivering the truth. You are going to need to know what to say, how to say it and when to say it, and if you look at it in that light, these people within us that cause this seem like unending aggravation and frustration. They are just a tool to help us get ready for the real test.

According to E. G. White we are going to encounter many of these people in the pulpit. Just don't let this throw you. Don't let it get you down. Don't get frustrated and combative. It is not necessary. Let it go off your back like water off a duck's back. Just be aware and alert and keep your eye singled to your calling. Silently call upon the Lord for a word in due season, that He help you say the right thing in the right spirit. You know, truth is a beautiful thing and I am very grateful that God has blessed us with it, entrusted us with it, but it can be a club. You can brutalize people with the truth. You need to be compassionate, you need to be tender, and the only way you can do that is by allowing God's love to be perfected in place of your own.

Please notice the following Spirit of Prophecy statements that offer more guidance on what we are talking about:

"As the time of the end draws near, Satan's temptations will be brought to bear with greater power upon God's workers. He will employ human agents to mock and revile those who 'build the wall.' But should the builders come down to meet the attacks of their foes, this would but retard the work. They

should endeavor to defeat the purposes of their adversaries, but they should not allow anything to call them from their work." (*Conflict and Courage*, p. 268)

And that is what these people are trying so hard to do; to divert the work, slow you down, stop you, even reverse you if they can. Don't allow that.

"The forces of the powers of darkness will unite with human agents who have given themselves unto the control to Satan, and the same scenes that were exhibited at the trial, rejection and crucifixion of Christ will be revived. Through yielding to satanic influences men will be merged into fiends and those who were created in the image of God, who were formed to honor and glorify their Creator will become the habitation of dragons, and Satan will see in an apostate race his masterpiece of evil, men who reflect his own image." (5 BC, p. 1136)

Those who claim to be light bearers, and yet take sides with Satan, are the most dangerous of all rebels against God's government. They are Satan's most useful agents in leading souls into darkness. Who are they? They claim to be one of you. In their deception they carry with them a multitude of souls.

If the power of Satan can come into the very temple of God and manipulate things as he pleases, the time of preparation will be prolonged. You understand that?

"The remnant people of God must be a converted people. The presentation of this message is to result in the conversion and the sanctification of souls. We are to feel the power of the spirit of God in this movement. This is a wonderful, definite message; it means everything to the receiver, and it is to be proclaimed with a loud cry. We

must have a true, abiding faith that this message will go forth with increasing importance till the close of time.” (*Adventist Review & Sabbath Herald*, February 24, 1910)

(Let me interject here in the event that it hasn't occurred to you: People do not reject or ignore the Spirit of Prophecy because it contradicts itself, but because it so clearly contradicts them.)

“The truth for this time, the third angel's message, is to be proclaimed with a loud voice, meaning with increasing power, as we approach this great final test.... The present truth for this time comprises the messages, the third angel's message succeeding the first and the second. The presentation of this message with all it embraces is our work. We stand as the remnant people in these last days to promulgate the truth and, swell the cry of the third angel's wonderful distinct message, giving the trumpet a certain sound. Eternal truth, which we have adhered to from the beginning, is to be maintained in all its increasing importance to the close of probation. The trumpet is to give no uncertain sound.” (*MS Release Vol. 9*, p. 291)

“Our work is aggressive. We need the heavenly anointing, that our spiritual eyesight may be clear. We are living in the last remnant of time. Truth is now to be sought for as hidden treasure. The commandments of men have taken the place of the commandments of God. The Lord calls upon His workmen to watch and work and pray. Precious truths are to be recovered from the human traditions under which men have buried them. God desires His people to show a constantly increasing interest in the things of eternity. He desires us to value more highly the favor of His friendship.

Let us not become Satan's agents to belittle the solemn, important truths which we profess to believe.” (*Review and Herald*, June 4, 1901)

If we were to sum up the message of John the Baptist in a sentence, it would be repent and prepare to meet your God. To repent is to feel such regret over an action or intention of which we are guilty that it changes our thinking and our life. Professed Christians, in general, have no problems with asking forgiveness, and have even gone so far as to allow other men to hear their confessions and grant them forgiveness, which in itself, is an evil responsible for the loss of millions. But when it comes to genuine repentance, for the most part, people are no better off, or closer to God's desire for their spiritual state, than were the people in John's day. It seems like every time John opened his mouth he exhorted the people to repent. Were they not God's chosen people? Is that what they were known as? There is a definite, progressive order in the life of the practicing overcomer in dealing with the sin problem. First the spirit convicts of sin; makes you aware of it. Then comes admittance and acceptance of guilt. “Yes, I did it. Someone else didn't make me do it. The devil didn't *make* me do it. I did it. I might have been tempted, but I had to do it.” Friend, nobody else can take the responsibility for your sin. After you have admitted your sin, accepted your guilt and responsibility, then you are ready for confession. You admit it and lay it out. “I did this and I really have no valid excuse.” You surrender. At this point we have the right, because of what Jesus did for us, to ask for forgiveness. Now at this point, if you haven't fallen prey to one of the many counterfeit

theological abominations that pass for religion today, or even your own rationalizing, carnal nature, the realization that you have hurt and betrayed Creator and Saviour should bring you to repentance.

Repentance means now that you recognize what you did, and how evil it is, and you feel so bad about it that you are willing to give it up. By God's grace, by His presence, His work in your life, you are not going to do it again. Now, if that doesn't happen, if you can't reach that point, you are wasting time on the other steps. Believing (at least in the common sense alone) does not save you either. The devils believe and tremble. Genuine repentance is not a continual sinning and repenting, but rather trusting and obeying! Sin, known, practiced sin, is the act of a rebel, and there will be no rebels in heaven. That is simple, common sense. Simple fact, yet how many Christians, whether it's of this persuasion or another, do you know that have never entertained the thought that they were a rebel. They don't. What about the various denominations and persuasions that make up the Presbyterians, Lutherans, Catholics, etc.? Do you suppose that for a moment they ever think of themselves as rebels or apostates?

When Jesus returns, and He will tell a certain group of people to get away from Him and I don't think He will say that angrily or with a scowl. His heart will be breaking when He says that, when He tells a certain group to get away from Him for He never knew them. Who do you suppose He will be addressing when He says that? Is this the man in the street that doesn't know or care about spiritual matters? Let's go to Luke 3:2 and read: “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests,

the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” Does that say anything to you? Now listen, “Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.” Now consider what this is saying. Here is a nation of people whose government and way of life is built upon and around their religion—their business, their schooling, their holidays. Everything is based on and revolves around their church. These two characters, Annas and Caiaphas, were central to everything the people believed about God. They were the highest officials in the church. The time had come for the people to be alerted that an event of great magnitude and consequence was about to transpire and they needed to get ready, and be ready for that event, so the word of God is sent to warn them. With no regard whatsoever for the establishment, the word of God zips right by the entire religious system, the rabbinical schools, the educated Pharisees and scribes, even these highest officials of the church to a man in the wilderness that to all appearances had nothing. (Amazing what you can get out of a tiny verse.) How is it that this happened?

John had something before he was even born that this whole system with its leaders and sheeple [sheep-like followers] had lost. John had God’s Holy Spirit and along with it a corresponding zeal for His honor and glory and a compassion for the lost. Now that made John selfless and non-materialistic. He was consumed and possessed by a single vision, the coming of Christ. That occupied his life, filled his heart and his mind. The unre-served commitment of John to the cause of God and the conversion of

his people made him a conduit for the Holy Spirit to proclaim and reveal the malignancy and the insidiousness of sin in such a manner that many were shaken out of their lethargy and complacency and made to realize there was a living God to whom they might give an account. And not just them, friends, we too must give an account as well.

Now, we have a whole lot more light than they did. You are going to be judged not only for the light that you have been given and chose not to live, but also for the light that is available. Therefore, you decide that you are too busy or too involved to do it. John the Baptist set the standard and was an example of an Elijah people who would be raised up to sound a similar warning on a much larger scale in the closing hours of earth’s history. Now think, there was no earthly distraction, pleasure, sin, no outside interest, concern or consideration to hinder or delude John’s message. That is what he lived for. The giving of this message comprised his being. His motivation was centered on, focused on and around, and fueled by, his zeal for God’s honor and glory, and he expected nothing in return. He loved this rebellious people and longed for their salvation. Perhaps this helps us to understand a lot of our problem. We love others because we expect something back. They are going to love us back, they are going to appreciate us, they are going to praise us or they are going to pay us or something. We are going to get something in return for our love. When your love and compassion for others and their salvation, (not only eternal salvation, but their earthly, temporal welfare), exceeds what you have for yourselves and expects nothing in

return, you can be sure you are well on your way to the kingdom.

Now think of this. Although he was a Jew, he was not bound to, or by, the legalism, confines, dictates and dictums of his church, neither his person nor his message. He resided in, and depended on, the only authority He knew or acknowledged, the Creator God of heaven. (This is a big problem in our church today. The church has become God on earth.) Consequently, John could not be intimidated, diverted, stopped, or silenced. Now, ultimately, what he believed, what he loved and lived, what he proclaimed with love and zeal, deprived him of his earthly life, but that life was such that his witness, faith, and message lives on in a people that will dramatically consummate what was begun by him and his predecessor, Elijah.

Now, isn’t this great to be at a camp meeting among fellow believers and friends in a comfortable room. It’s not too hot. As a matter of fact, this is air-conditioned now, isn’t it? Isn’t that a blessing. It’s wonderful. Now it is one thing to sit in a comfortable place like this, enjoying the protection of the Constitution of this country you live in and its Bill of Rights, and it is quite another thing to maintain your faith when you must stand alone. And sooner or later we will stand alone. You will not have any support. As a matter of fact, I read in several places in the Spirit of Prophecy that many of the people who sit beside you will turn against you before this is over, out of fear of what is coming or anticipation of what is coming!

A little perspective on that:. Let’s go into the cell with John the Baptist for a moment, but before we do, I want you to remember, get this solid

in your mind, this was the man whom Jesus described as having no equal on earth. That's who we are talking about. "Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist." (Matthew 11:11) Now what I want you to consider is the confident declaration of John before he was taken prisoner and locked up, and then the question that came after. He very boldly, confidently said, "Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world." (John 1:29) "He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." (John 1:15) There was no waffling there, he made it very clear, "This is the Son of God." And just a short while later from the dungeon came the question, "Art thou he that should come? Or look we for another?" (Luke 7:20) This is a little different? "Art thou He that should come?" The human nature rose up in him and he failed to realize that he was but a sharer in the sufferings of Christ. Now, if John, the zealous, appointed forerunner, allowed tribulation to cloud his discernment of Christ's mission, what can be expected of lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God? What can be expected from a lukewarm, Laodicean church? What can be expected from apostates, doubters and critics when all is relatively well? What can be expected from professed Christians and practicing sinners, the self-righteous? We need help and a lot of it. We need more faith, unshakeable belief and trust in God in spite of appearances. We need a compassion for the lost, a hunger and thirst for righteousness and an unrelenting, driving desire for souls that we are going to take others into the kingdom with us. We need wisdom, insight, patience and

especially in this age of deception and so many phonies within the church, we need discernment; holy discernment.

The Elijah people are filled with God's spirit and they are given discernment to see and know the difference between the holy and the vile. The recipients of this blessing do not become proud or arrogant, but they do develop holy boldness, for there is no hidden, dark part in them. Can you go before a professed Christian practicing sin and let them know that they are wrong, and they are going to die if they don't repent, if you are doing something similar in your life? Maybe nobody else knows about your sin, but you know it and God knows it. You can't do your job with power unless your vessel is clean, no hidden, dark part in it, no guile. Do you realize how important that is?

What an expression, the word "guile." It's worth doing a word study on just like the word "snared." The Elijah people will have no cherished and/or secret sin. And because of that they work in the fear of God with the spiritual authority of Elijah. Their relationship with their Creator authorizes and prompts them to declare the righteous judgments of a holy God upon the wolves in sheep's clothing that put in no effect the Word, will, and way of God. To do this, once again I say, we need His love perfected in us and His spirit on and in us without measure. Now we have God's spirit or we wouldn't be here today. We couldn't respond to positive truth when we hear it. We wouldn't have a desire to do better, to change, to grow, if we didn't have God's spirit, but we need a whole lot more of that spirit, a whole lot more. I want that outpouring. And frankly, all of us still have

things in our lives that have to go, even if it is just an attitude, if nothing else. Remember when Ahab went out to meet Elijah and he had the gall to say, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel?" (1 Kings 18:17) Remember that? Now, just imagine this corrupted man of Jezebel actually accusing a man of God of causing trouble, division and strife among God's people. Ahab was too blinded by his sins, so immersed in rebellion and apostasy, that it was impossible for him to discern the voice of God in Elijah's words. He couldn't comprehend it. To Ahab, Elijah was a divisive troublemaker. What was Elijah's response for that blasphemy? He looked the spiritual traitor in the eyes and he said, "I have not troubled Israel; but thou." (1 Kings 18:18) Who are the real trouble makers, the real division mongers among the remnant today? I tell you now without hesitation or reservation that those who refuse to address the sin issue and persist in overlooking the compromise and rationalization that are eating the church like a cancer are the real divisionist. The point has been reached in the organized church where certain sins are actually rewarded. Such people have taken the incomparable, unfathomable love of God and degraded it to a cheap sensationalism and sentimentalism, celebrating their trip to the lake of fire. They are actually happy. They don't have a care in the world. They believe they have been forgiven *in* their sins, and that makes them happy. They like that. It gives them cause to celebrate. They believe that they can do what they want and still be saved. And what does it come down to? The dollar!

The true body of Christ is not now, has never been, nor ever will be divided for they are united as

overcomers in the love and righteousness of Christ. Sin and its protectors are the dividers. Recognize sin, regardless of the degree, for what it is, a horrible malignant, insidious evil thing. It will not only keep you out of the kingdom but it will compromise and destroy the quality of your life on this planet. May God give us more “troublers” of Israel, men and women who are not intimidated or afraid to stand up against religious hypocrisy, treason and disobedience. The more time you spend kneeling before the Lord, the clearer your discernment becomes until you are filled with a holy boldness that will not allow you to keep silent. Speaking of John the Baptist, Ellen White wrote:

“He looked upon the King in His beauty, and self was forgotten. He beheld the majesty of holiness, and felt himself to be inefficient and unworthy. He was ready to go forth as Heaven’s messenger, unawed by the human, because he had looked upon the Divine. He could stand erect and fearless in the presence of earthly monarchs, because he had bowed low before the King of kings.” (*Desire of Ages*, p. 103)

When we look at John the Baptist and Elijah we find they were motivated by a strong sense of mission and a powerful love for God’s people. What they hated were the circumstances, the conditions, and the sins that separated the people from the presence and power of God, and prevented them from obtaining and fulfilling their potential and their purpose for being. Every one of us have a reason and a purpose for being. We have a mission. God has something specific in mind for you. Now I know He has contingency plans. I believe from the moment you’re conceived, He has a number one plan for you, a

position, a place, something He wants you to do. Now I don’t know where I am on the contingency plan, probably some where down 30 or 40 plans from the original purpose, but the fact is that if you wake up and stop your rebelling and apostasy, and surrender, He’ll pick you up and dovetail you in. He’ll fit you in somewhere, where you can do His work.

Elijah and John the Baptist wanted to see the honor of God restored in the people prepared to meet Him. I’m willing to go on record as saying there is an Elijah people, true shepherds, in existence today, being nourished by God to prepare the way for the coronation of His Son. This Elijah company is a caring, compassionate people whose burden for souls keep them close to their Lord as they intercede for others. Do you realize how much power is available for you when you go on your knees before the throne and you intercede for other people. There is hardly a better way to get power, direct power, from the throne. You take other people, you take their name, their burdens, and their needs to God and God will bless you for that in a way you can’t imagine until you experience it. Such people have caught a glimpse of the awesome holiness of Christ, and the knowledge of their own past sins being blotted out by His innocent blood has converted and crushed them. Their lives are lived in repentance. They don’t just have to repent, their lives are lived in repentance, and they no longer wink at sin and take this probationary time for granted. Filled with a holy boldness, they fear neither man nor demon. They have eyes to see, ears to hear and a pure heart to obey every word that proceeds out of His mouth. Their

delight is in the love of God and in the righteousness of Christ. That cannot be stressed enough. The righteousness of Christ is what will make your salvation possible. You need it. You need that righteousness. All the prophets, everybody we read about in the Bible, saw this day and prophesied of the gathering of a separated, holy people who would have great understanding in the Word of the Lord. Now listen, Daniel heard great things from God; he understood not. He was highly beloved and favored of God, was he not? Greatly beloved of God, he heard these wondrous, powerful things, but he didn’t understand them, yet he saw a day coming when a purified, tried and tested remnant would understand. It is a last day, holy company who has wisdom and discernment in the things of God. “Many shall be purified, and made white, and tried; but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand.” (Daniel 12:10) What a blessing! Isaiah prophesied, “And in that day shall the deaf hear the words of the book, and the eyes of the blind shall see out of obscurity, and out of darkness.... They shall sanctify my name, and sanctify the Holy One of Jacob, and shall fear the God of Israel.” (Isaiah 29:18, 23)

I believe the “some day” has come for God’s true people. You know, we use those letters “SDA” for Seventh-day Adventists, but most of them are “some-day Adventists,” some day this will happen, some day He will come back, some day we’ll see this, etc. Well, “some day” has come and true, honest in heart, genuine Seventh-day Adventists can see it, but the “some day” Adventists can’t.

“Oh, we still got a lot of time, a lot of time,” they say. Believe me, we are approaching our moment of truth. Whenever you have opportunity to avail yourself of a [camp] meeting like this, do it, because we don’t know how many of these we have left. A careless, indulgent Laodicean church is being shaken and forced to face her complacency in sin. It’s decision time for the remnant. While multitudes are celebrating and chasing after signs and miracles, heaping to themselves teachers of peace, prosperity and safety, preaching nothing but a pseudo love and empty forgiveness, God has been calling and drawing out a wilderness people who have recognized and rejected compromise and confusion. These people are consumed with hunger for more of Christ and His righteousness. Let’s face it, all of us have made some kind of sacrifice to be here [at camp meeting]. That’s because you are hungry and want to grow. You want more of God in your life. Now we all want to be saved or we wouldn’t be here. But the blessing you want to go away with, when this is over, is that you will be better prepared to take your loved ones, your friends, other family members, coworkers, into the kingdom with you.

With all the light that we have available today, God has shown Himself so willing to help, to intercede in our behalf, we still see the majority willfully ignorant. And you have to be willfully ignorant today. You have to turn a blind eye to the evidence that is there for you. These willfully ignorant pursue the pleasures of sin for a season, embrace a lying theology packaged and presented by enemies, masquerading as angels of light. At the same time, the true remnant are

focused on Christ and Him crucified. Friends, just allow your ears to listen and I promise you that you, too, will hear the footsteps of an approaching God. He’s getting close. We must learn to exercise the faith of Jesus, to function and make choices and decisions based on principles and knowledge, in spite of appearances, in spite of what other people do or say. You see, this select group that we have been discussing this morning, are going to have the single honor, now listen, this is important, of replicating every aspect and detail of Christ’s life. Not only as witnesses and as examples, not only with genuine miracles and with power, but also as in those final days and hours when He faced hate, liars, deceit, rejection and scorn, alone.

Now take this with you, and if it doesn’t do anything else maybe it will put you on your knees more: No other person that ever lived, outside of Christ, can claim anything like the experience that awaits the true remnant of God. No race, no generation ever has experienced anything remotely like what lies ahead for you.

In conclusion, I have a couple questions about the Ten Virgins parable. Who or what do the ten virgins represent? Is that not the church in the last days? Yes. Was the Bridegroom with them? No. Where was He? He was separated from them. A group of intimates and supporters that while related to, were not with the sleeping church. Are you following me? Who did the Bridegroom represent? Christ. Who did that company He was with represent? I propose and submit to you that they were none other than this 21st Century Elijah people we have been discussing in this message. Another observation to

ponder: To be among that select group with the Bridegroom is denotive of a special status and relationship with him. When the time came, and that unified body safely followed him through that prevailing darkness, where did he lead them? Now think a minute. Where? To a sleeping church. Do you understand the responsibility that puts upon you? In *Early Writings*, page 279 we read, “I was pointed down to the time when the third angel’s message was closing. The power of God had rested upon His people; they had accomplished their work and were prepared for the trying hour before them. They had received the latter rain, or refreshing from the presence of the Lord, and the living testimony had been revived. The last great warning had sounded everywhere, and it had stirred up and enraged the inhabitants of the earth who would not receive the message....God’s people will be tested and proved.” (*The Second Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 26, 1861)

The plain and pointed testimony must act the prominent part in this work. In these days of darkness and peril, who is able to stand and speak the whole truth? Multitudes of teachers prophesy smooth things. They see no special cause of alarm and the pressing condition, in the professed people of God. The people are asleep and the teachers are asleep. They cry “peace, peace” and the multitude that hear that report are at ease. This makes the necessity greater for the faithful teachers to bear the pointed, faithful testimony. The present is a time of scouring and purifying, a time of warfare and trial. The house of Israel is being sifted, even as corn is sifted in a sieve. The chaff must be

removed and it will require close work to separate the chaff from the kernels of grain. God's discerning eye will detect the smallest particle of chaff, yet He will not cause to fall upon the ground the very least kernel. It's my prayer that none of us will be among that chaff, blown about by every wind of doctrine. As our planet descends to its time of trouble and its time of purification, to be among this Elijah people will be a rare and precious privilege for a holy few people. These people will have chosen to enter into this experience with God because they desire it more than life itself. They will be granted an eternal experience and blessing that only they will know. There is nothing on this planet that even remotely approaches what God has in store for the faithful that love, trust, serve and obey Him. Now think about this. At this very moment all of heaven is involved in preparing a reception for you. Are you

preparing and ready for that journey home? God is looking and waiting for you. I love the way it is put in the Spirit of Prophecy:

“Christ is waiting with longing desire for the manifestation of Himself in His church. When the character of Christ shall be perfectly reproduced in His people, then He will come to claim them as His own.” (*Christ's Object Lessons*, p. 69) ✍

Gary Richmond gave the above message at the 2001 West Virginia camp meeting. This presentation was recorded and is available from Smyrna Gospel Ministries (see contact information on page 12), in both audio and video tape format. You may contact Gary directly at: Straight Testimony Ministries, Box 185, North Fairfield, OH 44855. His phone number is: (419) 744-2291.

Preparation for the Mark of the Beast continued from page 1.

world community. It deals with demonic forces of evil set in a last conflict with God and the forces of righteousness. The greatest warning against false worship and its consequences ever given to man is found in Revelation 14. There three angels are symbolically depicted as giving the last warning message to a dying world. The third angel's message warns that those who receive the “mark of the beast” will suffer eternal damnation! (Revelation 14:9-11) Yet those who refuse to worship the beast will be prohibited from buying or selling and will come face to face with a death decree. (See Revelation 13:15-17) *This* is the greatest crisis that the world has ever seen, or ever will see. Greater than terrorism in any form known to man.

Jesus has said that it will constitute an “hour of temptation which shall come upon all the world.” (Revelation 3:10) Clearly all are involved and none will be able to hide in a corner, or be a “closet Christian” as Nicodemus tried to be before the death of Jesus. However, Jesus says that He will keep His people during that time of trouble. (Revelation 3:10)

Basically, we can simplify the situation down to say that trouble is coming. However, the gospel is truly, “Good News,” and the good news is that the Lord has promised to deliver His people. What preparation should we be making for that time? Should we be acquiring solar water distillers and looking for caves to hide in? Surely God has a plan for us; what are we to do to prepare for the crisis ahead?

The second angel's message is an announcement of the fall of Babylon. The third angel's message is a warning against accepting the mark of the beast. Yet neither of these angels give any positive steps or action to take in order to be able to avoid being involved with the beast, its image, or the fall of Babylon.

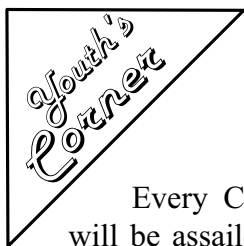
The message of the first angel does give a positive command. It lists three things that we are to do. Revelation 14:7 states: “**Fear God**, and **give glory to him**; for the hour of his judgment is come: and **worship him** that made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and the fountains of waters.” Here is the preparation for the mark of the beast. We are told to:

- 1. Fear God
- 2. Give glory to God
- 3. Worship God

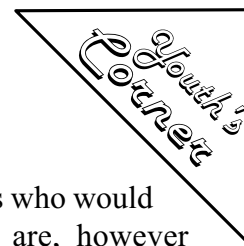
This is the preparation that God Himself has given to his people to be ready for the time of trouble. Yet how can we fear God, give glory to Him, or worship Him if we do not know Him, or, if we have misconceptions about God? We have been told:

“We are here to become like God in character, and by a life of service to reveal Him to the world. In order to be co-workers with God, in order to become like Him and to reveal His character, we must know Him aright. We must know Him as He reveals Himself.” (*Ministry of Healing*, p. 409)

continued on page 12.



Danger of Reading Fictitious and Infidel Books



Every Christian, whether old or young, will be assailed by temptations; and our only safety is in carefully studying our duty, and then doing it at any cost to ourselves. Everything has been done for us to secure our salvation, and we must be not only willing but anxious to learn the will of God, and do all things to his glory. This is the Christian's life—work. He will not try to see how far he can venture in the path of indifference and unbelief, and yet be called a child of God; but he will study to see how closely he can imitate the life and character of Christ.

Young friends, a knowledge of the Bible will help you to resist temptation. If you have been in the habit of reading story books, will you consider whether it is right to spend your time with these books, which merely occupy your time and amuse you, but give you no mental or moral strength? If you are reading them, and find that they create a morbid craving for exciting novels, if they lead you to dislike the Bible, and cast it aside, if they involve you in darkness and backsliding from God,—if this is the influence they have over you, stop right where you are. Do not pursue this course of reading until your imagination is fired, and you become unfitted for the study of the Bible, and the practical duties of real life.

Cheap works of fiction do not profit. They impart no real knowledge; they inspire no great and good purpose; they kindle in the heart no earnest desires for purity; they excite no soul hunger for righteousness. On the contrary, they take time which should be given to the practical duties of life and to the service of God,—time which should be devoted to prayer, to visiting the sick, caring for the needy, and educating yourself for a useful life. When you commence reading a story book, how frequently the imagination is so excited that you are betrayed into sin. You disobey your parents, and bring confusion into the domestic circle by neglecting the simple duties developing upon you. And worse than this, prayer is forgotten, and the Bible is read with indifference or entirely neglected.

There is another class of books that you should avoid,—the productions of such infidel writers as Paine and Ingersoll. These are often urged upon you with the taunt that you are a coward, and afraid to read

them. Frankly tell these enemies who would tempt you—for enemies they are, however much they may profess to be your friends—that you will obey God, and take the Bible as your guide. Tell them that you are afraid to read these books; that your faith in the word of God is now altogether too weak, and you want it increased and strengthened instead of diminished; and that you do not want to come in such close contact with the father of lies.

I warn you to stand firm, and never do a wrong action rather than be called a coward. Allow no taunts, no threats, no sneering remarks, to induce you to violate your conscience in the least particular, and thus open a door whereby Satan can come in and control the mind.

Suffer not yourselves to open the lids of a book that is questionable. There is a hellish fascination in the literature of Satan. It is the powerful battery by which he tears down a simple religious faith. Never feel that you are strong enough to read infidel books; for they contain a poison like that of asps. They can do you no good, and will assuredly do you harm. In reading them, you are inhaling the miasmas of hell. They will be to your soul like a corrupt stream of water, defiling the mind, keeping it in the mazes of skepticism, and making it earthly and sensual. These books are written by men whom Satan employs as his agents; and by this means he designs to confuse the mind, withdraw the affections from God, and rob your Creator of the reverence and gratitude which his works demand.

The mind needs to be trained, and its desires controlled and brought into subjection to the will of God.

Instead of being dwarfed and deformed by feeding on the vile trash which Satan provides, it should have wholesome food, which will give strength and vigor.

Young Christian, you have everything to learn. You must be an interested student of the Bible you must search it, comparing scripture with scripture. If you would do your Master good and acceptable service, you must know what he requires. His word is a sure guide; if it is carefully studied, there is no danger of falling under the power of the temptations that surround the youth, and crowd in upon them.

(Mrs. E. G. White - *Youth's Instructor*, September 10, 1884)

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Preparation for the Mark of the Beast continued from page 10.

Whatever my concept of God is, if it is false, then I cannot be ready for the mark of the beast! This trashes the idea that the identity and character of God is not essential in the plan of salvation.

We are told to “fear God,” not “Gods”. We are told to “give glory to him,” not “them.” We are told to “worship him,” not “them”! In the book of Revelation, God is always presented as a single individual. He is the one sitting on the throne. Jesus is presented as “the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David.” He is called “the Lamb,” the “Lord’s Christ,” etc.

I have always been intrigued by a statement found in Revelation 1:3 where it says, “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.” I could grasp the concept of reading and hearing the words of the Revelation, but what

were the things that we were to keep which were written therein? As one reads the book of Revelation we find very few commands for the reader. But right in the heart of the book we find the commands that prepare us for the mark of the beast crisis!

Allen Stump

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