

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

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Straight and Narrow

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The Fruit of the Gospel

By David Clayton

“And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen, And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.” (Revelation 18:1-4) The coming of this mighty angel has long been expected by Christians and particularly those who have some connection with Seventh-day Adventism. Here is a promise that at some point the work of God is to receive great power to enable the truth to be spread mightily. At the moment the work of God languishes and the population of planet earth is growing at a far greater pace than is the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. What is the reason why God delays in sending this angel? Is it that there is no need for such power in His work, or is there some other reason?

At first, in reading this passage in Revelation I misunderstood it, as I am sure many others have. I thought that the glory which was to lighten the earth was the message of the angel, which said, “Babylon is fallen. . . come out of her my people.” And I must confess that I bent all my energies, at one point in seeking to give that message, hoping that the power of God would eventually be added to my efforts. I eventually came to see that I had missed a most important factor in the message.

Notice that it says that the earth was lightened with the glory of this angel, then he cried with a loud voice in calling God’s people out of Babylon. It does not say that the message which he gives is the glory which lightens the earth. Rather, the suggestion is that it is only when the light of this glory floods the earth that the angel is able to give the message to come out of Babylon. It is only then that Babylon will be plainly identified in the light of that glory.

What is the significance of “glory” in the Bible, and particularly in the New Testament? It refers to the character of God! When Moses asked God to show him His glory (Exodus 33:18), the Lord replied, “I will make all my goodness pass before you ...” (verse 19). This, and many other passages, emphasizes the truth that the glory of God is found in His character.

This enables us to have a different perspective of Revelation 18. The delay in the coming of the angel, the tardiness in the finishing of the work, and the lack of power attending the truth is not a result of God wishing to prolong the agony and misery of this world. It is simply due to the fact that God’s people have been more interested in the power of God, than in His character. The great question before us today is not how to get more power, but the greatest,

Prayer Requests

This month we would request your prayers for two mission trips.

The first is a visit to Germany by David Clayton of Jamaica and Dr. Stephen Burks of Ohio during the first week of August. They will be speaking at a camp meeting in Germany and then David will be traveling with Brother Erwin Zoor to Poland for meetings during the second week of August. We ask that you will remember these brethren in their travel and in their ministry to the people in Europe.

The second mission trip is being organized by Sister Esther McDaniel of Hearth to Hearth Ministries to help with some building work for the orphanage in Kenya. The trip is planned for October 27 through November 17. Anyone interested in going, who would like to volunteer their time, needs to call Esther as soon as possible at: 304-294-8424 to get the details. There is a set fee for each participant.

Editor

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and indeed the only question is, “how may we obtain the character of God?”

The Word of God gives us an answer to this question. In spite of the fact that we have been sidetracked and have gone far from the mark, it is possible for us to find the true focus. It is possible—in fact it is certain that it will happen—that some of us will finally fix our eyes on the right place and God will be able to give us the power necessary to finish the work, because finally we will have the character that can be entrusted with the power.

God is not short of power. Power was never, and will never be an issue, in the finishing of the work. But God has not been able to find Christians anywhere who were fit vessels, so surrendered to Him, so much like Him, that He was able to entrust them with His power.

The challenge before us, brothers and sisters, is to faithfully follow the method outlined in the Word of God which will lead us to develop the character of God. This method is clearly outlined in the Bible and, as sure as God lives, *when* we are ready to be used by Him, *then* the power will come to finish the work, whether it is only one, or a thousand who are ready.

A Critical Truth

Some have suggested that the truth about God not being a Trinity is a minor distracting point. They say we should focus on the fundamentals, such as the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the 2300 days, the mark of the beast, health reform, etc. These people say that we should not place so much emphasis on this question, which (they say) is so hard to understand. Those who take this position manifest a sad lack of understanding. The above-mentioned doctrines are surely important, but they are definitely secondary and subordinate to the truth about God. For example, as important as the Sabbath is, the God of the Sabbath is more important. The God of the true love is the ultimate fruit of the gospel. As Ellen White said,

“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)

Yet the only way that we can develop true love is by the Holy Spirit reproducing it in our hearts as we behold the love of God. The problem is, we cannot understand or appreciate the enormity of this love until we realize that God is not a Trinity, but rather, that Jesus Christ is truly God’s only begotten Son, who truly died for us.

The truths of the Sabbath, the state of the dead, the sanctuary, etc., must be presented in the context of, and by people who have experienced the wonder of, God’s love. Without this, all we are doing is presenting dry, empty legalism and propagating a system which can do no more than produce Sabbath-keeping candidates for hell.

True Sonship and True Love

John emphasizes the preeminence of love over and over. He also repeatedly points to the sonship of Jesus as the key truth which we need to recognize. We cannot miss the connection between both things? Let us look at the two following statements of John:

“If we love one another, ***God dwelleth in us***, and His love is perfected in us.” (1 John 4:12)

“Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, ***God dwelleth in him***, and he in God.” (1 John 4:15)

Notice that both verses mention a certain condition which, if fulfilled, is an indicator that God is dwelling in us. These conditions seem to be different, but in fact, they are inseparably united. Where we find one, we can guarantee that the other also exists. What are these two conditions?

(1) If we love one another.

(2) If we confess (believe) that Jesus is the Son of God.

John’s main burden is that we should love one another, but he plainly points out that it is not possible for us to love one another unless we first appreciate

how much God loves us. He states that we can only appreciate God’s love based on the value of the gift He gave for our redemption and what that gift meant to God. John is emphatic that we cannot understand what it cost God unless we recognize that it was His own dear Son, His only begotten whom God gave. Then and only then will we recognize the value and the worth of a human soul. Then and only then may we have some understanding of the pain which comes to the heart of our Father when a single soul is lost. When this becomes our experience, then we will be motivated to treat others in accordance with the love which God has poured out upon us. Then, and only then, will we be ready to give the call to come out of Babylon.

The Revelation of Love

“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.” (1 John 4:9)

God’s love was manifested: It was revealed, displayed, opened up to the view of the world. This love was always there, but now it was revealed in the clearest manner possible. This was God’s statement to mankind—His way of unveiling the true sentiment and attitude of His heart.

Toward us: This display of love was directional. It was aimed especially at humanity. The effort of God to unveil His love was with the chief purpose of making it known to mankind

Because, or, for this reason, God sent His only begotten Son into the world. This is how we come to see or understand God’s love.

Who sent and who was sent

Who was the one who sent, and what does it mean to say that He sent?

God sent. It was the Father who sent Jesus. Jesus Himself testified of this several times. (See John 5:23; John 5:30; John 6:44; John 12:49; Mark 12:6, etc.) Here, and in every other place where it says that God sent His Son, there can be absolutely no

question that the person who “sent” is God the Father. Therefore, the emphasis here is on God the Father. We are being directed to Him as the object of our supreme affection, desire and attention.

When it says that “God sent,” several ideas follow. Firstly, God permitted His Son to come. It was His decision to make. He had the authority and the right to permit or to forbid. This emphasizes the fact that He, the Father, is the Supreme Being in heaven and the one who sits at the ultimate pinnacle of all authority. Secondly, God sent, or determined, that it should be so. It was His purpose, or His plan (formulated in council with Christ). It was devised by them because of their great love for the human race.

His only begotten Son: It was His only begotten Son that God sent. The One whom He directed to go, the One whose loss He contemplated and accepted was His only begotten Son. This was His identity at the time when He was sent. When the Father contemplated the plan of salvation, when He weighed humanity in the balance scales, it was His Son that He placed in the other side. He looked at Jesus with the eyes of a Father, not an associate.

“Theologians” argue about the meaning of the term, “only begotten.” They accept any meaning except the obvious one, that it means “only born.” Their preconceived misconceptions will not permit them to accept such an idea. But if Jesus was not God’s true, begotten Son, then who was He? What other options are present? Was He God Himself? Was He a created angel?

If Jesus was God Himself, we face the question: how then did it become the right and the prerogative of the Father to send Him into the world? By what means did one Person in a three-part godhead receive such authority over the other that He could command Him to go or to remain? And what about the “third person,” how is it that He had absolutely no say in the matter? At least, if He did, the Bible

writers appear to have known nothing about it.

The Bible says that Jesus was sent into the world. The Bible says that God sent His Son into the world. How incredible is the suggestion that Jesus never became the Son of God until He was born in Bethlehem! We might ask, “When was Jesus sent”? Was it after He arrived on this earth or was it before He left heaven? If language means anything at all, Jesus had to have been sent before He left heaven. The word “sent” includes the giving of the instruction to go, as well as the imparting of the means by which to go. While Jesus was still in heaven He was directed by His Father to go; He was sent. In obedience to His Father’s directive He came to earth.

The Implications of Fatherhood

It is the instinct and duty of a father to protect his son. No matter how mature and capable a son may become, a father can never forget the joy and satisfaction he has experienced as he watched his son develop. For a good father, his son represents his ultimate achievement—his truest and most enduring legacy. Love naturally implants a desire to protect and to preserve one’s child at all costs.

The father watches his son’s life and development from the first moment of his son’s existence and carefully guides and guards him at every step of the way. It is only natural that a son should be the best-loved and most cherished possession of a good father.

Some months ago I went swimming with my youngest child, my daughter Annelie who is 17 years old. We had gone swimming at that spot several times before, but this morning the sea was particularly rough and there was a strong current which we failed to notice. I first became alarmed when I noticed that the depth of the water was up to our necks and I was having difficulty moving towards the shore. We had gradually drifted out without noticing it. I called to Annelie that we should head towards shore and I

watched with a growing sense of horror as I realized that she was being pulled irresistibly outwards by a current that was much stronger than she was. I moved across to where she was and tried to help, but the outward pull of the current was stronger than we were and, in addition we were being buffeted by large waves.

Several things about that experience will live in my mind forever. Firstly, my daughter had followed me so far out into the water because she had confidence in me. I am a fair swimmer but, while she can swim, she is not a strong swimmer. Now here she was in trouble because of trusting in me and I was absolutely helpless to aid her. It was a feeling I cannot describe and one I never wish to experience again. At one point a huge wave washed over her and she cried out. I felt as if a knife had been thrust into my heart.

I think I could have saved my life, but I had no doubt that we were both going to die and that I would die first. There was no thinking or considering. I knew that it was impossible that I should get back to shore alive without Annelie. I would tread water as best as I could and hold her up as long as I could, but I would never let her go. We would both live, or I would die first. My instinct as a father told me this. It would be far easier for me to die than leave my child to die alone and forsaken!

But, of course, I called upon God. Twice I cried out, “Lord, help us!” The second time my foot hit against a high place on the sea floor. When we scrambled up on it, the water was only waist high. From there we were able to make our way back to shore.

That experience helped me, in part, to realize what God suffered when His Son died. I think God allowed me to have that experience just so that I could understand. His Son trusted in Him. In full confidence He entered the deep waters, but when He got into difficulty and cried out to His Father, God had to turn away from that cry with a breaking heart. As Jesus cried out in

bewilderment, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?”, the Father could not answer. He could offer no help. I can somewhat relate to how God felt at that moment! He must leave His Son to suffer, to die alone, to be overwhelmed by the deep waters; bewildered, abandoned by the One in whom He had trusted. He had to do it in order that I could be saved. This is what we are asked to contemplate when we are told that God loved us so much that He gave His Son. It was a great sacrifice for God. It cost Him greatly in pain, suffering and tears to give His Son. What else can be the suggestion intended by pointing to the gift of God’s Son as the greatest manifestation of the Father’s love?

This is in contrast to the concept of an associate, a fellow God, one who was a dear friend, but not one who was a personal responsibility. Not one whose decision whether to go or to stay, depended on the approval of the Father.

God’s Feelings

God cannot be affected on the *physical* level. No contrary force in the universe may ever dream of opposing the omnipotence which is God, in a physical way. The only way in which God can be affected by others in a positive or negative way is in His feelings. Think about it. There is absolutely no other way. Since God’s feelings are the only level on which He may be affected, and since the sufferings of a son are the most terrible pain which can come to a father, we can understand that the almighty God has been stirred to the utmost degree by His feelings for us and has paid a price in pain and suffering which could not possibly have been greater for Him.

This was for humanity. People who believe in God as an almighty, unfeeling force cannot accept His mercy or His grace. For them, this plays no part in a relationship with Him. This is why relating to God is such a challenge for the heathen; an experience which must be sought with such extreme and meaningless exercises, because, for

them, they must get in touch with a force, rather than a thinking, feeling, loving, sympathetic person.

The Best for the Worst

“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 4:10)

The apostle John reinforces the point: “Herein is love.” Here we can see love, or this is what love is all about. The contrast is made between what He did and what we did not do. On the one hand, here we were, the most unworthy and undeserving. We did not love God—we had no affection for Him. But He loved us. Loved us how? To what degree did He love us? He sent His Son. By making this contrast John intends that we should see how great is the gap between what we were and the love God had for us. He emphasizes our poverty, our unworthiness, our wretchedness—the lowest of the low. In contrast he highlights the love of God towards us—a wondrous, improbable thing, as high as the heavens are above the earth. How can we know and believe in that love? How may we perceive the magnitude of it? It is by appreciating, by recognizing the value of the gift that He gave for us. He, the Father, paid a price, He made a sacrifice in proportion, not to our unworthiness, but in proportion to His love. That price is the measure of God’s love to us. What was that price? It was His only begotten Son. That is the measure of God’s love. That is the price He paid. Only as we believe and accept this truth may we truly appreciate the kind of love which God has for us. If we suggest that Jesus was anybody other than God’s only begotten Son, we mar the truth and obscure God’s revelation of His love.

The Reason for Our Love

“Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God.” (1 John 4:7)

There is a reason for true love. There is a cause and a motivation for the care, concern and attitude of good-will which Christians manifest towards

each other (or ought to manifest). What is this reason? The reason is ... love is of God. Since we are the property of God and live our lives in Him, then what could be more natural, reasonable, and expected, than that we should love one another?

“And every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love.” (1 John 4:7, 8)

Though John gives us a command to love one another, he here shows us that there has to be an underlying cause before this command can be obeyed. It is only those who are born of God who can love. It is only those who know God who are able to obey this command to love one another. On the other hand, nothing can be more natural than that those who know God should love one another, because “God is love.” It is the very essence of His nature, the foundation of His being. Those who encounter Him cannot help being encompassed and infused with this love. Therefore, he that knows God will love his brother, and he who does not love his brother reveals by this lack that he does not know God.

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” (1 John 4:11)

Love is *imparted* through contact with God. More than that, however, love is *demanding* by the recognition of God’s love for us. If God did, we ought to. This is the argument which John proposes. In other words, the root, the foundation, and the rationale for the love which binds God’s people together and which is the very mark that identifies us as God’s people, is the fact that God “so loved us.” To what degree does God love us?

God so Loved

“Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.” (1 John 4:11)

Here is the foundational argument for Christian behaviour. Paul expressed it when he said, “The love of Christ constraineth us.” (2 Corinthians 5:14) He emphasized the love of Christ but John emphasizes the love of the

Father. His statement is, "If God so loved us." The emphasis here is on the degree and the quality of that love. It was not simply that He loved us, but that He **SO** loved us. Again, reference is being made to the gift which God gave, to the sacrifice which He made.

Love is not merely an abstract principle, standardized and turned on or off at will. No! Love is an active, living attitude that affects every aspect of a person's being. It masters the emotions and produces joy, ecstasy, and even grief, pain, and internal upheaval. Love can evoke many responses, but it is never unfeeling or unmoved.

It is very important that we should see the significance of this because there is only one way in which it is possible to grasp the enormity of God's love and, in doing this, to be changed by it. 1 Corinthians 3:18 states: "But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." We will only be changed into God's image as we behold Him and His love.

We need to understand what God's love towards us impelled Him to do. **Love is only relevant if it acts.** A false love masquerading as merely feelings is a meaningless frustrating thing. But when love acts, it can be seen, it may be measured. How can we measure the love of God? What action of His makes that love evident? It is in the action of God sending His only begotten Son that we can see the display of a wonderful, selfless love, which changes us as we keep on looking at it.

As He loves

"If God so loved us." What then is the most logical response than that we who are the objects of such a love should also love the others who are fellow recipients of that same love. (See 1 John 5:1.) If God loves you, then that is my reason for loving you, because by His love He has given me the right and the duty to be an extension of

Himself, to reveal Him and to propagate His character in the entire world.

A further implication of this is that we who have received of His love and partaken of His spirit should love as He loves. (See John 4:12,16.) We should so love as He "so loved." Our love should be His love extended through us; therefore it should be unconditional, unchangeable, self-sacrificing, giving, willing to suffer supreme pain and loss for the well-being of others, and always willing to put others before ourselves.

Love is the ultimate purpose of the gospel. *When a person reproduces the love of God, then the gospel has nothing more to do for him.* The Bible has fulfilled its purpose for Him.

"Love to man is the earthward manifestation of the love of God. It was to implant this love, to make us children of one family, that the King of glory became one with us. And when His parting words are fulfilled, 'Love one another, as I have loved you' (John 15:12); when we love the world as He has loved it, then for us His mission is accomplished. We are fitted for heaven; for we have heaven in our hearts." (*Desire of Ages*, p. 641)

When a person reproduces the love of God, then the gospel has nothing more to do for him.

The truth that love is the ultimate and main fruit of the gospel needs to be repeated over and over again until we fully grasp the reality of it. Many see love as one of the peripheral doctrines of the Bible, and really feel that we need to concentrate more on the "real issues," such as the Sabbath, the mark of the beast, etc. Perhaps this attitude is strengthened by the fact that the word "love," is so abused and misused today to the extent that even the abominable practice of homosexuality is justified in the name of "love." Popular Christian leaders and televangelists like to use the word, and have so distorted its

meaning that almost anything is accepted in the name of "love."

However, these abuses are no reason for God's people to neglect this focus. The Bible makes it very clear; over and over again, that love is everything.

"The fruit of the spirit is love." (Galatians 5:22)


"The greatest of these is love." (1 Corinthians 13:13)

"Above all these things put on love which is the bond of perfectness." (Colossians 3:14)

Assurance in the Judgment

Let us conclude by examining one final point, which is especially significant for Seventh-day Adventists. It is found in 1 John 4:16, 17:

"God is love and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God and God in him. 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."

This is a truth on which to meditate. Here is cause to pause for deep reflection. Here we see a reason to reorient our entire lives. What is it that gives me boldness in the judgment? Where does my confidence lie? What is it that gives me the assurance that I am able to face the scrutiny of the last great tribunal? Yes, it is what God has done for me through Christ. This is true. However, the evidence that I have accepted the gift of God is the fact that, "as he is, so are we in this world." It is the fact that we "dwell in God" by dwelling in love—that is, by living our lives wholly and completely for the purpose of loving others—and in this way, perfecting love. When the Day of Judgment comes we will have no fear (John 4:18). We know that we have His character and are ready for heaven because we love as He does. 

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Commitment and Dedication

By Allen Stump

(The following is an edited transcription of a sermon preached at the 2004 Florida camp meeting. Editor)

Friend, what do you expect to do in your Christian life this coming year? What are your goals and purposes? What have you dedicated yourself to do? What have you made a commitment with the Lord to do? Have you ever thought about what it really means to make a commitment? What does it mean to have a conviction about something versus having a preference? Many times we believe that we should do something. We believe that we want to do something. But we don't do it. And that's not really a conviction. That's not making a commitment.

A commitment is when we say, "I'm going to do something." And then what happens? We do it! We go through with it, even if it's to our own hurt. Ecclesiastes 5:4, 5 says, "When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay." As Christians, when we look at the Bible we see a Book of dedication, which tells us about a God and a Saviour who are dedicated and committed. And it tells us that we are to be a partaker of the divine nature. It tells us that we are to be Christ-like. Have you thought about what that means? It means that we are to be dedicated people, and that we have a commitment that we should be making to our God.

"Dedicate" simply means to set apart for special use; specifically, to set apart for God. God has made a commitment to you. We all know John chapter three and verse 16 quite well, don't we—that "God so loved the world." If I could just paraphrase it slightly, He had made a commitment in the council of peace to send His Son, that "

whosoever believeth in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."

Romans 8:32 says, "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

I don't own a lot of material possessions of this earth. I have a couple of old automobiles that are not worth very much. I have a small house. I have a few clothes. I'm trying to get rid of some of them. I don't need as many as I have. It used to be common people didn't have closets in their houses one-hundred-fifty years ago. They had a nail or a hook here and there and that's about all they needed. But today we have closets. We have a lot of clothes and things. We have storage rental places that litter the highways because we don't have enough room in our own garages. How many people in America, who have garages, actually park their cars in the garages? Do you realize more people do not park their cars in their garages than people who do because the garages are full of their junk. Oh, we've got all kinds of stuff. But we don't have anything at our disposal compared to what God does. He has everything that we can imagine at His disposal, but He says to us in this text that, in giving us Christ, He has given us all of heaven and everything wrapped up together. And if He would not spare His Son, but would allow Jesus to die for us, then there is no gift, there is no effort, that He is not willing to pour in to see that you, and that I, are saved at last in His kingdom. He has made a commitment to us.

This commitment reveals the purpose and the sincerity of our God. We need never question the sincerity of His goodness. Sometimes people say, "I don't think God loves me." "Where is God when my trouble happens?" I tell you friends, God is right there with you. Sometimes, because of our dullness of hearing, we don't hear Him. In

our dullness of eyesight, we don't see Him, but I assure you, He is there. In giving His Son, He reveals the depths of His love and reveals the depths of His dedication to you.

Jesus Christ Himself is committed to this plan. The Bible says that the council of peace is between them both. It has been said many times during this camp meeting, and I think it is a powerful-enough statement that it bears repeating again, that when Jesus died the death of the cross He was willing to die for all of eternity. He was willing to never have an existence again, if necessary, to save just me alone. Not just the whole world, but just me alone. I've thought about it, but not enough. I tell you, the price is too high. I'm not worth it, and the truth is, friends, all of humanity isn't worth it, but God's love demanded no less. His love demanded no less, and I appreciate the love of God and the love of Christ.

There is a text in Isaiah we might turn to, found in chapter 50 and verse seven. Jesus said, "For the Lord God will help me; therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set my face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed." In Luke 9 we find a text that parallels this, verse 51: "And it came to pass, when the time was come that He should be received up, he steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem." What had He told His disciples would happen in Jerusalem? He said the Son of Man was going to be taken, crucified, and killed. The Bible says He set His face like the flint, and nothing was going to deter Him from that mission. He had made a commitment, and He was bound by the love that He has for His creation to fulfill that commitment in every detail.

Commitment Before the Crisis

Christ's commitment to go to Calvary was not something that was done on the spur of the moment. Christ's commitment was made long before Calvary, and if we are going to be committed to the end, then we are going to have to do something that Daniel did. He purposed in his heart. He didn't

wait until the crisis came, but he decided before the crisis. How far is it from Jerusalem to Babylon? It is about 500 miles through the dusty desert. It is not a pleasant road. He had awhile to think about this. But not only that, Daniel was one of the princes, one of the elite people of Israel. He was of royal heritage. It is very likely that some of the contemporary people, like Habakkuk, read to Daniel out of the prophecies of Isaiah about how the king of Babylon would come and take some of the royal seed, and even make them eunuchs in his household. That was prophesied and it happened to Daniel. But Daniel had purposed in his heart that he was going to serve God no matter what. Christ had purposed in His heart even before He came to this earth.

Today we are living in a time that, compared to what we believe is going to happen, is a time of relative calmness. One sister was talking, in an earlier meeting, about tests and trials that God's people will be put through. And that's true, but if we wait until the trial to decide it is time to get ready, we will fail the test, and it will be far too late. We need to be making the commitment now. We need to be setting our faces steadfastly toward the New Jerusalem today. We need, friends, to make a commitment today that we will not let God down.

In Matthew 25, Jesus tells a parable about ten virgins. How many of them stayed awake all the way through? Did five stay awake all the way through? Interestingly, they all slumbered and slept. But what was the real difference between the five wise and the five foolish? The five wise had taken extra oil. They had made a prior preparation. It made all the difference in the world.

When I was thirteen years old I was a member of our school basketball team. We had a new coach that year. The year before, the school had not done well in their basketball program. The new coach came in, and he was determined that we were going to do better. His name was Steve Joy. I'll never forget

Steve Joy, because I never learned to run, jump, and work so much in my life as that man made us work. Every day we had to jump rope, run, and pass. Do you know what? That year we won eleven straight games, losing only two games, and that was because everyone on the team had such a bad flu that we could hardly stand up. We would have went undefeated that year if we hadn't been sick. We had made a commitment that we just weren't going to give up easily. We were playing a rival team that my school had never beaten, and the game came down to the last four seconds. Coach Joy drew up the winning play and we won. We were happy, and I tell you, we weren't going to quit or give up. Even as kids we weren't going to give up because of the commitment we had made. We had been through so much and we weren't going to quit. If we can do that in secular things, why can't we do it in spiritual things where we have heavenly help?

God Calls for Our Commitment

I'd like to say that God has made a commitment to us and He wants us to make a commitment to Him. God wants all of us. Turn over to First Thessalonians 5:23. It says, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; [in other words, everything about you, and every aspect about you] and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." There should be, beloved, a singleness of purpose in our lives.

Notice what Jesus said in Matthew 6, verse 22. He said, "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light." If our eye is single to the glory of God, and it is so clear that we can see through it, the whole program will fall into line. It is what we decide to do in our mind.

There is a statement I found in the book, *Thoughts from the Mount of Blessings*, page 91. "Real piety begins when all compromise with sin is at an end." Do you think you are dedicated and have any piety? "Real piety begins

when all compromise with sin is at an end." Not just in part of our lives but in all of our lives. Singleness of eyesight results in singleness of purpose, in whole-hearted devotion to the kingdom of heaven and to the practice of its eternal principles. If our commitment to God is not full, then it is not a commitment. Our commitment is neither to a church nor to a denomination, nor to a ministry. It is not to any man. It is to God!

The apostle Paul went through some tremendous experiences in his lifetime. He eventually gave his life for Christ, but Paul is not my example. I've heard people say, "Oh, if I could just live like Paul lived." I don't want to live like Paul lived. That's not good enough for me. I want to live better than Paul lived. You say, Well, that's asking a lot." Yes, it is, but why not? Why not the best? Why not ask God for more? Do you think He wants to give us more? I know He wants to give us more.

We probably all know what it says in Deuteronomy 6:4, 5. "Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." This is the kind of love that God wants us to have, because it is the kind of love He has. A love that is totally committed in every way. We are also told that this is the greatest commandment. The second greatest commandment is that we love others as ourselves. Do we really do that? Do we show that kind of love? I saw a little saying recently that I really liked. It is simple, but it means a lot if we think about it. It said, "Love people, use things. Don't use people and love things." Aren't we so oftentimes guilty of the latter? Beloved, our self and our sin have to be put away. Not as the children of Israel did. Remember, God brought them out to Mt. Sinai, and He said, if you do this and this you'll be My people, and they said, "All that the Lord has said, we will do." They didn't do it, though, did they?

I have a statement from the book, *Steps to Christ*, page 47, because it reminds me a little bit of the children of Israel: “You desire to give yourself to Him, but you are weak in moral power, in slavery to doubt, and controlled by the habits of your life of sin. Your promises and resolutions are like ropes of sand. You cannot control your thoughts, your impulses, your affections. The knowledge of your broken promises and forfeited pledges weakens your confidence in your own sincerity, and causes you to feel that God cannot accept you; but you need not despair. What you need to understand is the true force of the will. This is the governing power in the nature of man, the power of decision, or of choice. Everything depends on the right action of the will. The power of choice God has given to men; it is theirs to exercise. 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.”

Now, have we committed ourselves to God? I’d like to say that our whole being, as we think about our lives and all that we are, all that we have, we can basically sum this up into about three different fields that are very simple. Three different fields:

Commitment of Our Time

The first thing that we need to commit to God is our time. Of all the talents and things that have been entrusted to us, of none will we be required a more diligent accounting of than the time we use. Did you know that? Time is very important.

First of all, let’s talk about our personal time in devotion. There is a song in our hymn book, “Sweet Hour of Prayer,” but is it really just a few moments or two of prayer? Do we really take time to talk to God?

As most of you know, my wife has been sick with some serious respiratory trouble, and she is in Arizona now, trying to rehabilitate some. I’ve

been going back and forth, commuting long distance. When I am home, Hans, Heidi, and I spend a lot of time on that phone each day talking to her. Do you know why? It is because we want to. We miss her. We love her and we want to talk to her. Now, if we really love God, friends, if we are really dedicated to Him, do you think that we are going to want to talk to Him? Do you think that we are going to want to hear what He has to say to us. Are we going to be listening to Him? We will not just *read* the Word, but *study* the Word to see what He has for us.

The first thing that we need to commit of our time to the Lord is our personal time to Him; even myself, as a minister. I can come to this camp meeting in Florida, I can spend a whole night driving down here, which we did, and I will spend most of tomorrow on the way back. I’ve put in time up front here. I’ve tried to make myself as available as I could to visit around, and even with the smaller group we have had this year, it has been hard. I can do all these things for the Lord, but am I really doing the most important thing that God wants me to do. I tell you, no, I’m not. If I don’t take time to personally commune with my God, then I have failed my commitment to Him.

We need to take time to witness for God. There are a variety of ways this can be done. I’m not saying there is only one way that you can witness for our Maker. Of course most of you know that I am involved in a publishing ministry and, for me, it is very easy to take a tract out of my pocket. Last night we needed some juice and bottled water, so I drove to the little Winn-Dixie store close to our motel. As I was waiting in line at the check out counter, I noticed that the young man checking people out seemed to be very courteous and nice. So, as he checked me out, I took out a little pocket tract and said, “Here is something I think you will enjoy reading.” He said, “You know, I will.” Then he said, “Something strange has happened tonight. Earlier a man was in and, as he was

getting some change out of his pocket, a penny dropped and rolled over by me. When it fell, it landed up and there was a cross scratched on it, and then you gave me this tract.” He went on to say he hadn’t been in church for three years. “The last time I was in a church, the preacher told me I was a child of the devil and that I was going to hell, and to get the _____ out of his church.” And I said, “Justin (he had a name tag on), I want you to know that Christianity isn’t a preacher, it’s not a church, it’s Christ, and you just study your Bible, and you will find Christ.” He said, “Well, I’ve been reading the Bible some and it’s good.” Then I said, “On the back of the little tract that I gave you, there is an offer for a free book. You write in for that book, and when you do, put attention Allen on it. That’s who I am. I’ll remember you, because I’m going to be praying for you, Justin.” And I’d appreciate it if you would pray for Justin, too. I’m so thankful I had that experience.

There are other ways we should be witnessing and are we doing it? Are we taking time for other people, the people that are really precious to us? Parents, are you getting to really know your children? Grandparents, are you getting to know your grandchildren? Do we take time for the people who are important to us? One older brother, now dead, said that when his parents were younger, they had a farm, but every Thursday was visiting day. They worked hard. They didn’t have a toaster or a washer and dryer. They didn’t have a car when he was young. They had a horse and buggy. They didn’t have all our conveniences of life that make it so easy and *save us so much time*, but every Thursday was visiting day. They stopped everything they were doing and went out and visited friends and family on Thursday, to encourage them in the Lord. They took that whole day just to do that.

Are we taking time for the services of God? Do we allow the circumstances to come, or do we make or allow excuses to keep us away? Some

of you who are at this meeting are here, and are probably being greatly blessed, because you may not be close to where there is a fellowship that you can meet with every Sabbath. I am very blessed that I am involved with a church group every Sabbath. I can be there, and if I am not, it is usually because I am on the road meeting with another group. When you can't do that, you really do suffer and hurt, but I would like to say that wherever you can and whenever you can, you need to meet with the people of God and to be involved in the services of God, and that includes the prayer meeting. If you are not having a prayer meeting, I suggest you should be having a prayer meeting somewhere, if nowhere else, then in your own home with your family.

I learned something interesting recently. I was talking with a mental health worker, and I was told that studies have been done that say that people who attend religious services *twice* a week have better mental health than people who attend only *once* a week, or do not attend at all. The people with the best mental health are the people who attend religious services at least twice a week. Isn't that interesting? I think somewhere I've read that those who are looking for that translation that I was speaking of a little bit of earlier, are going to be found in the prayer meeting. So, if you don't have a prayer meeting where you are, start one, even if you have to start it in your own home, because it's needful. You need that. You need that association with other Christians. You need to be willing to give that time up.

As a minister I should be able to control my schedule, but sometimes my schedule gets hectic, and sometimes on Wednesday afternoon or Wednesday evening, I get rushed. Sometimes I don't get to eat my food because I can't eat and get to prayer meeting on time. So, I don't eat. To me, it is not a hard decision. It's simple. You give up whatever is necessary, you do whatever is necessary, to be there, if you are really interested and you are really

concerned. If I am allowing the things in my schedule, or in my life, to control my schedule so that I can't be there, for whatever reason, I need to try to rearrange it as far as humanly possible. I am not saying that there are not extenuating circumstances that, at times, take us all away. Sometimes someone becomes sick or things can happen, but as our common practice, as our habit is, are we there at the prayer meeting?

Commitment of Our Possessions

Well, that's our time. What about our possessions, the things that we claim we possess? Are we being faithful to God with what He has blessed us with? Now, as good old Seventh-day Adventist people, we believe in tithing. Malachi says to bring in the tithes and the offerings. Beloved, the tithe is simply the recognition that God gives everything we have to us. However I obtain anything, friends, it is only because somehow God has provided it for me. The tithe we recognize as that, but the tithe is not an offering. Whatever I have, whether it is my income, my house, my automobile, my clothing, or whatever I have, should be dedicated to God. I'm not doing very well with this, but I am working on it, buy God's grace. If I am God's representative, shouldn't I dress like it? Shouldn't my home also look representative? All the things that I have should be dedicated to God and to His service, and they should look like it.

Well, here's a hard one, friends. What about your children? Have you dedicated your children to the Lord? Of all the things you possess, is there anything more important than your children? I can't think of anything in this world more important to me than my children, and I love them dearly.

I want to tell you a story that I read in a book about martyrs. This woman had seven sons. She was being persecuted for her Christianity. She was asked by her persecutors to renounce Jesus, and she would not do it. So, her seven sons were brought in one at a time. She was asked again if she would renounce Christ, and again she refused. They

killed the first son in front of her eyes. She was asked again to renounce Christ, and again she refused. They brought in the second son, the third, the fourth, the fifth, the sixth, and the seventh. All seven of her sons were killed in front of her. She was asked, "Now, what do you think about your God?" She said, "I'm so thankful that God has given me seven sons who were dedicated and committed to God." Well, I don't know if God has chosen my children to someday be martyrs for Him, but if He has, I will be thankful that He has considered them worthy for that.

On the other hand, do we offer our children on the altar of the world? No, we wouldn't do that, would we? We read in the Bible about how the Children of Israel, at times, went so far into apostasy that they sacrificed their children to Molech. We would never do that, would we? Or would we, in the way we live, where we allow them to go, and what we allow them to do?

Commitment of Our Talents

Well, let's go on. What about our talents? Our time, our possessions, our talents—that really is about all we have in this world. Our talents are something that God has given us. Sometimes our talents are best recognized by others. Did you know that? Sometimes we have the wrong understanding of our own talents and abilities. My wife sometimes chides me because she thinks that I think I can sing. I realize I don't sing very well. I love to sing, but I realize it is not one of my better talents. Do we use the talents we know God has given us? I don't claim to be the most eloquent minister or preacher we have in this movement, by any long shot, but God has called me to be a minister for Him. I recognize that talent, and I am appreciative of it. I want to improve it and make the best use of it I can. Whatever talents we have, and the Bible says we all have at least one, are we honestly using them for the glory of God?

Galatians 6:9 - 10 states, "Let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not. As we

have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.” Sometimes we feel like we get weary in doing well for the Lord, like maybe we just give Him too much of ourselves, but friends, you cannot out-give God. “But they that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

I’ve been getting ready to go to Arizona next month to see my wife again, and I am taking the kids with me. Some of us are going to hike the Grand Canyon, Lord willing. I’m getting ready for it. I’ve been doing some running and I’ve been doing some walking. I get tired. I get on a treadmill at a fitness center, and I elevate it up to fifteen degrees, which is the maximum elevation. I set it at about six miles an hour for awhile, and I get tired, but if we are running in the things of God, the promise is, we will run and not be weary. We’ll walk and not faint. We don’t need to be weary in well doing. If we feel like we don’t understand what to do, the Bible says, “If any man lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally.” He *will* give, friends. He will help, but I don’t believe He will help us unless we have the singleness of purpose we need.

Turn with me to Genesis 24. I want you to notice a story here about Rebekah, starting in verse 54. You remember the story of Abraham and how he sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac. It says they met together, did eat and drink, he and the men that were with him, and tarried all night. They rose in the morning and he said, “Send me away unto my master. And her brother and her mother said, Let the damsel abide with us a few days, at least ten; after that she shall go.” You know what, I’d be sympathetic. If somebody comes one day and says, “I’ve come to take your daughter away for my master’s son,” and then the next morning he rises up and says, “I’m

going!, you may never see her again,” I don’t think I’d let him go too easily. My daughter is sitting in the back right now and she knows that’s the truth. She knows it may be pretty hard anyhow. I’d be sympathetic. Well let’s read on and see what it says in verse 56. “And he said unto them, Hinder me not, seeing the Lord had prospered my way; send me away that I may go to my master. And they said, We will call the damsel, and enquire at her mouth. And they called Rebekah, and said unto her, Wilt thou go with this man? And she said, I will go.” Singleness of purpose! Can you imagine? “I will go.” “I’m going to live with this man for probably eighty years, but I won’t wait nine more days. I’ll go right now.” When the Lord says, “Who will go for Me? Who shall I send?” Can we respond, “Here am I Lord, send me”? We need a singleness of purpose.

In Genesis chapter 3, the story of the fall of man is told. It’s a very sad story, but it is also a story of encouragement, in that God did not forsake Adam and Eve after they had disobeyed and rebelled against Him. Notice in verse 17 what God said to Adam: “Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and has eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground...” Cursed is the ground, but He did not stop there. He said, “...cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life.” God did something for man. It might not have seemed good at the beginning, but it was for his very best good that He even cursed the ground. The point I am making is that even in their disobedience, even in their rebellion, God did not forsake them. He blessed them. He cursed the ground for Adam’s sake. He made it hard to produce a living from the soil because He knew that would be good for Adam. He still loved him and He wanted him saved.

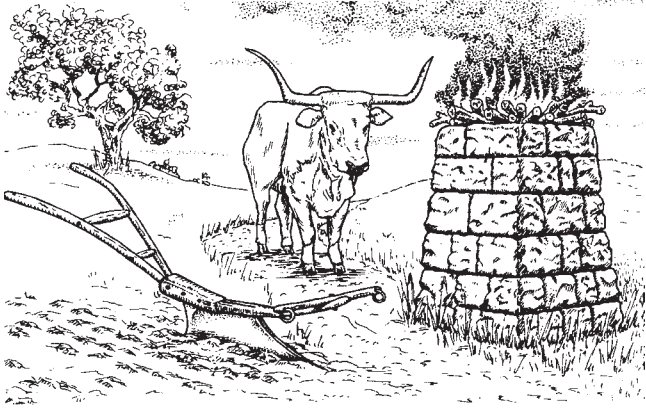
We may start out trying to serve God, and we may stumble and fall, and we may make mistakes, friends. We

may make a commitment today and may fall flat on our face tomorrow, but it doesn’t mean God has forsaken you and it doesn’t mean God has left you. It means God wants you to get up and get going again. The Bible says “if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1) I am so thankful for a God like that who cares for me.

Luke 9:57 says, “And it came to pass, that as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.” Lord, I’m going to dedicate my life, I’m going to commit my life, to you. “And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.” Well, that seems like a reasonable thing to do, too, doesn’t it? “Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God. And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house. And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” Friends, we need to put our hand to the plough and we need to go forward.

Brother Glen Ford is our church elder. He grew up on a farm and learned to plough in the days before most folks had tractors. It was not mechanized farming as we have today. He had horses, and I’ve seen how people plough with horses. The horse is first pulling the plough, followed by the farmer guiding the plough and the horse. You have to look forward. You have to keep your eye on the plough in front of you, and on the horses in front of you. That is where the sight has to be. When you put your hand to the plough, you don’t let go.

I saw an illustration one time, and may be many of you have seen it also, but it is worth repeating. It was a picture of an ox facing an altar and a



READY FOR EITHER

plough. The simple inscription underneath was, "Ready for Either." Ready for service or ready for sacrifice, whatever God calls us to. Let us be committed to His will and not our own.

As we leave this camp meeting, as we leave this mountaintop, we don't have to go live in a valley. We can stay on the mountain, because that's where God stays. If we dedicate our lives to Him fully, so that whatever He asks of us we will be willing to do, we can do that, friends. He has made every provision for us. He wants us to give Him our time. He wants our possessions, everything that we have, and He wants


our talents. He wants to use our abilities. One thing I have found—I've been preaching now for over twenty years—one thing I've found, is that I can't improve upon God's way.

As an illustration: I've counseled with people before who wanted to marry. Maybe it was a Christian girl or a Christian young man who was

going to marry someone who wasn't a Christian, or someone of another faith, and they would say, "But I believe it will work *this time*." You know what, friends? You cannot improve upon what God says. God says, "Don't be unequally yoked," and I have never seen it work. It just doesn't work, friends. It doesn't matter what aspect of our life it is. Here's my tithe—well, I have a broken-down washing machine this month. I could use the tithe for that this month and next month I'll make it up somehow. You know, that just doesn't work. I don't care what we think happens outwardly, in the end, we

cannot improve upon what God says. If God says to be honest, (and He does, doesn't He?), and He says not to lie, then no matter what difficult situation we find ourselves in, telling a little fib or a "white" lie doesn't make things better. It will never make things better, because it is not God's way. God's way is always the best way, choosing His will and doing His will.

One thing I've heard interwoven through several of the messages at this camp meeting, is the concept that simply just thinking about something, just intellectually believing something in our minds, doesn't change our characters any. It's not until we put into action that which we believe, until we start to do that which we profess, that we find our characters being changed. And that's true. Our actions form habits and a habit is what forms the character. Our character is the only thing we can take from this world.

May God bless us to love our Father and His Son so much that we will fully, totally, commit our lives to Them and to do Their will always. 

Youth Corner—Riches of God's Grace

Those who claim to be descendants of Abraham have attempted to number Israel, as though the gift of eternal life belonged to a select few. They would have the benefits of salvation limited to their own nation. But God has placed every individual of our race under divine favor, and all are called upon to contribute to God's glory and to the advancement of his kingdom. Individuals and nations will be held responsible for the grace of God given them through Jesus Christ.

Christ came eating with publicans and sinners, giving them lessons day by day in his association with them. Leaving the ninety and nine in the fold, he went out into the wilderness after the one lost lamb. He said, "I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to

repentance." And his lesson to Simon was, To whom much is forgiven, the same loveth much.

Human selfishness would make a monopoly of the salvation purchased at so great a cost. But Christ died to offer the gift of eternal life to all, and he sends his messengers that they may present the truth, the gift of God's grace, to all. God cannot display the knowledge of his will and the wonders of his grace unless he has his witnesses among men. It is his plan that those who are partakers of this great salvation through Jesus Christ should be his missionaries, bodies of light throughout the world, living epistles, known and read of all men. Their faith and works should testify that they have not received the grace of God in vain. (*Mrs. E. G. White, Youth's Instructor, August 5, 1897*)

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A Note from Georgie Richard

I really feel this year I was praised far too much. When I come to camp meeting I try to come with an attitude of being willing to serve.

I owe many thanks to those who helped me all week. First of those was Dave Shaffer. He saved me so much time and energy. Next is Ken Corklin. Without his efforts, the main meeting room would not have been ready for the meetings. His daughters also were a huge help to me. I feel in the future, when I won't be able to handle it anymore, Ken's daughters may be the ones taking over. They are truly wonderful girls. Also, I owe a huge thank you to Aland Ashton of Peru. He helped me on a daily basis with keeping the bathrooms clean. To everyone who picked up a broom, shook a rug, or emptied a waste basket, thank you very much. When we all work together things get accomplished.



And also to those who ministered to me all week; I owe everything to Ann, Lynnford, Howard, and Karleen. They are as close to me as family. And finally, Allen and Char. I don't have the words to express how strong my love is for them.

Sincerely,

Georgie Richard

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