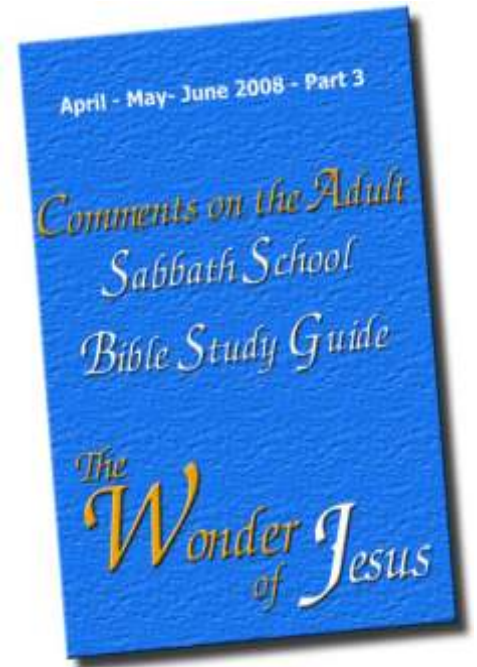


Old Paths

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



Learn about important truths concerning the Adult Sabbath School lessons. See page 10.

"True happiness is found, not in the indulgence of pride and luxury, but in communion with God through His created works (Patriarchs and Prophets, p. 49)."

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Stand Up

There is a popular saying that has been put into a song that if you do not stand for something you will fall for anything. We want to begin our study by looking at the story of a man who was willing to stand as firm as the oak, as straight as the redwood, and as enduring as the cedar. In 1 Kings 18 we read about the story of Elijah the Tishbite. Israel was in a dreadful apostasy and Elijah walked from Gilead into King Ahab's court and told King Ahab that there would not be dew nor rain except by his word. Then Elijah left just as mysteriously and quickly as he had come. Perhaps Ahab sent people to look for him at that time, but there had been plenty of rain until this time and no sign of a drought, so at first it was not an issue to find him. After awhile, it began to become very dry, and we know that three and a half years of a terrible drought came upon Israel. By this time, Ahab wanted to find Elijah, and he exacted an oath from all the kings in the areas around Israel that they did not know the whereabouts of Elijah. Finally, God instructed Elijah to show himself to Ahab, which he did, and Elijah told King Ahab to bring all the prophets of Baal to Mt. Carmel to decide which God to follow. Notice what Elijah said to the people on Mt. Carmel, as recorded in 1 Kings 18:

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

Elijah asked, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" Would Israel follow the God of their fathers, the Lord, or the god of the "new theology," Baal? The word LORD is in all capital letters in this verse, which means it stands for the divine name of Jehovah or Yahweh. Elijah was asking the people to decide to follow either the LORD or Baal. The Hebrew term for Baal simply means lord or father. While some of the Israelites might have been confused over the identities of Jehovah and Baal, thinking that they were still calling upon the God of the fathers when they were worshipping Baal, Elijah was under no such delusion and in his call he made the choices plain. "And all the people answered him not a word."

According to Young's Literal translation, the Hebrew for this verse literally says: "Till when are ye leaping on the two branches?" The Interpreter's Bible reads: "How long will you keep hopping from one branch to another?" It is taken from a metaphor of a bird hopping from one branch to another and not being able to settle down.

There are many things in our lives that we make choices about. Some of these choices are very simple, but other choices are very important. Some of the simple choices we make such as whether to eat pancakes or waffles or the color

of the suit we wear, in the light of eternity will mean nothing to us. These decisions really only affect us for a short period of time. Other decisions, such as what profession or trade we should follow, affect us during our lifetime upon this earth, but what about things eternal? What about the decisions we make concerning the things of God? Is the law of God obligatory for Christians, for example? Or does the seventh day Sabbath have a binding claim upon us? Does it matter how I worship God and Christ? Can we celebrate our God with wild, heavily syncopated music? What kind of worship does he accept and honor? To answer such questions, friends, will determine our eternal destiny. The greatest question we can ask is who is Jesus Christ and what will we do with him? Pilate asked, "What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ (Matthew 27:22)?" And they all answered him, "Let him be crucified!" The question of what shall be done with Jesus did not end with Pilate but has continued and is very much alive and well today, and it presents to each one of us a question we must answer. Will we crucify him afresh or will we accept him as the Son of the living God?

Let us think about the Israelites during Elijah's time. As we consider their situation, it seems obvious to us that they were living in deep apostasy. Anyone who had their eyes open at all could see that there were serious problems, and we assume that the departure from truth was so obvious and striking that the Israelites were unusually obtuse and inexcusable. Israel's apostasy, however, was actually a gradual one, almost imperceptible, requiring about a century to assume the serious proportions that it portrayed during the time of Elijah. Interestingly, it has been nearly one hundred years since the death of the most vital founder of our Advent Movement. That founder well-stated:

What astonishing deception and fearful blindness had, like a dark cloud, covered Israel! This blindness and apostasy had not closed about them suddenly; it had come upon them gradually as they had not heeded the word of reproof and warning which the Lord had sent to them because of their pride and their sins (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, pp. 280, 281).

So Elijah asked them, "How long halt ye between two opinions," and many of them did not even understand that there were two opinions to halt between! As noted, the term Baal simply means lord or father and it is very close to the Hebrew *Adonai* or Lord. When the prophets of Baal prayed on Mt. Carmel, they were simply saying in the common vernacular of the day, "Oh Lord, hear us." Today we can go into many of the professed Christian churches and hear the people crying out, "Lord hear us," thinking they are talking to the Lord God of heaven but they may be worshipping "another Christ." They may have another holy spirit or, actually, an unholy spirit in their midst. They will be praying, "Father, hear us," for Jesus says to pray to our Father in heaven, but is this father the Father of Jesus Christ or the father Baal? Just as these worshipers do not understand they

are worshipping a false god, it was difficult for Israel to really sense that they were worshipping a false god when the name for the false god was the same as the one commonly used for the true God.

The Apostle Paul targets this very concept when he wrote: "For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:13, 14)."

We believe that before the second coming of Jesus, Satan will impersonate Christ. He will appear as a beautiful, dazzling, and majestic being. He will speak with the same melodious tones with which Jesus spoke. Satan will no doubt utter some of the same great truths that Jesus taught. He will appear to heal the sick and do many wonderful works. Beloved, if we are looking for an outward show to determine who the Messiah is, we will think this impersonation is truly Jesus of Nazareth, but, friends, this being does not meet all the requirements of God's Word to be Jesus. Please understand that before Satan comes to impersonate Christ he will first come to each of us through misrepresentation of the person of Christ and his teachings. Before he impersonates, he misrepresents, and although our view of Christ may be close to the truth, it is misrepresented enough so that when Satan comes to us impersonating Christ, we are deceived.

Because Satan comes to us as an angel of light, Jesus says in the next verse: "Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works (2 Corinthians 11:15)." In addition, notice these statements of Jesus in Matthew 24: "And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many (v. 11)." "For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many (v. 5)." They are going to say, "Lo, here is Christ (v. 23)," but Jesus says to believe it not.

There is something interesting I found in a talk by Ellen White on April 16, 1901:

Very many will get up some test that is not given in the word of God. We have our test in the Bible, -- the commandments of God and the testimony of Jesus Christ. "Here are they that keep the commandments of God and have the faith of Jesus." This is the true test, but many other tests will arise among the people...

These things make it necessary that the minister who meets these tests should have a discerning mind, that he may not give credence to any false doctrine. Voices will be heard, saying, Lo, here is Christ, when there is no Christ there at all. It is some human notion which they wish men to accept and believe (*The General Conference Bulletin*, April 16, 1901).

We take the statements of Jesus in Matthew 24 and say, "Well, I do not hear too many people proclaiming that Christ is here or Christ is there." A few people who are extreme do

claim to be Christ, but Jesus is primarily saying to us that there will be those who preach a false doctrine, an idea of their own, and present it to us as representing the true Christ. In a false manner they preach Christ and him crucified in one place or the righteousness of Christ in another, but Jesus said we should have a discerning mind and not go where when the real Christ is not preached. Before the impersonation of Satan comes, misrepresentation will have come to us, and I ask us today, "How long halt *we* between two opinions?" Can we set upon the fence, remain silent, and say nothing?

When Elijah asked his question, "How long halt ye between two opinions?" it was just as if you could have heard a pin drop. "They answered him not a word." It was a fearful crisis that they were in at that very moment. "In the presence of the idolatrous priests and the apostate king, they remained neutral. If God abhors one sin above another, of which His people are guilty, it is doing nothing in case of an emergency. Indifference and neutrality in a religious crisis is regarded of God as a grievous crime and equal to the very worst type of hostility against God (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 3, p. 280)." The people did not say they would follow the Lord and neither did they say they would follow Baal. They were neutral. The Bible says God is a righteous God and he is a holy God, and "if God abhors one sin above another of which his people are guilty it is doing nothing in the case of an emergency." Treason is considered the greatest crime in almost every country because it affects not just the welfare of one or two people, but possibly the welfare of the whole nation and even the existence of the nation. The greatest penalties that the courts hand down are usually for treason. God says he abhors treason. He regards neutrality, beloved, as treason. Neutrality is not being neutral in God's eyes. Jesus said you are either for him or against him (Luke 11:23), and we cannot sit on the fence. God has always called his people to make decisions.

In Genesis chapter 2, we read about the creation of Adam and Eve and about the Garden of Eden and the animals placed in the garden. God made a beautiful home for them.

And the LORD God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die (vs. 15-17).

God laid out this simple requirement in very plain language. God had only asked Adam to make one decision, but the decision that God asked Adam to make was not just a decision about his daily diet but a decision involving terrible consequences that would affect not only Adam but the whole earth and each one of us.

God calls for us to live a certain way. He calls for his people to take a decided stand. Adam was given the opportunity to take a stand for God in the Garden of Eden, but instead he

took a stand for himself and for Eve and fell into the serpent's plan.

There is an incident I want to remind you of recorded in Exodus 32. About forty days before this incident, God had come down to the children of Israel, met with them on Mt. Sinai, and proclaimed his law. Do you remember the response of the children of Israel? They said, "All that the Lord has said we will do." God told them very specifically, as recorded in Exodus 23, not to make gods of silver or gold, but now the children of Israel said that they did not know what had happened to Moses. They could not wait forty days for him to return. Instead they made a golden calf and the ring-leader who helped them do this was none other than Aaron. Aaron was supposed to be a man of God, but he had the backbone of jellyfish. We are told that if Aaron had stood firm during this time he would have checked the apostasy, but he didn't. He was fearful for his life so he submitted to their idolatrous request. When Moses came down from the mountain, he was so righteously angry that he actually broke the tables of stone that God had given him, and he called for a decision to be made. In Exodus 32:26 we read:

Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD'S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him. And he said unto them, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Put every man his sword by his side, and go in and out from gate to gate throughout the camp, and slay every man his brother, and every man his companion, and every man his neighbour. And the children of Levi did according to the word of Moses: and there fell of the people that day about three thousand men (vs. 26-28).

Before you judge Moses to be harsh or difficult in this situation, remember that today Moses is in heaven and we are still upon this earth. Before you judge Moses as being irresponsible, remember that he is the only person in the Bible called the "servant of God." Before you judge the tribe of Levi too straightly, remember that this act of standing against apostasy is the reason the birthright blessing became theirs. I would say to all who have aspirations to become preachers or to work for God in any way, this should speak very strongly to you. Do not desire to be a minister for God unless you are willing to stand for him and do his bidding no matter how disagreeable it may be.

We find, as we read through the Bible, that Jesus was continually and constantly calling for decisions. Do you remember the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 18?

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? none is good, save one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when

Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me (vs. 18-22).

Another account tells us that Jesus, beholding this young man, loved him (Mark 10:21). Jesus called for a decision from the rich young ruler. He called for him to sell everything he had, to relinquish all this world's goods, and then follow him. What was the man's reaction? "And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich (v. 23)." He went away still rich and yet poor because he lost Christ.

Jesus said to Andrew and Peter, as they were fishing by the sea, "Follow me." He said to Matthew sitting at the customs table, "Follow me." Over and over we find Jesus calling people to make a decision to follow him, but he later warns us that though they say Christ is here or Christ is there, go not there. You see, beloved, we have the opportunity to follow Christ, but there is only one Christ even though there is a multitude of impersonations of him, mostly through misrepresentation. What will we do?

In Joshua 24 there is a call we are all familiar with, but, again, it is a call of God:

Now therefore fear the LORD, and serve him in sincerity and in truth: and put away the gods which your fathers served on the other side of the flood, and in Egypt; and serve ye the LORD. And if it seem evil unto you to serve the LORD, choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD (vs. 14,15).

Joshua said to choose, but it is imperative that we understand when we are to choose. He does not tell us to choose after our retirement becomes effective. Friends, tomorrow is not the day of salvation. Joshua says to choose "*this day* whom ye will serve."

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 6:2 that today "is the day of salvation"; today is the day to be separate from Baal. So what are we going to do? Are we going to choose this day whom we will serve? There is a special call made for the church at Smyrna in Revelation 2 verse 10: "Fear none of those things which thou shalt suffer: behold, the devil shall cast some of you into prison, that ye may be tried; and ye shall have tribulation ten days." We have interpreted this text to historically represent the ten years of fierce persecution under Diocletian and this may be an accurate understanding, but notice the command to the people: "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life." What do you think it means to be faithful unto death? In this context, it means to me that we are going to make a decision to follow the Lord and not be hopping between branches. Have you ever gotten a hot potato out of the oven that is a little too hot to hold very long? You have to toss it from one hand to the other. It is the same

when we look at truth and we and say, “Well, this one is a little hot.” So we take one side and then the other and eventually wait to see where everyone else settles on the issue. May I remind you, beloved, that the crowd is almost always wrong in matters of religious faith and conviction. The majority has almost always been wrong. Jesus said: “Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and *few* there be that find it (Matthew 7:14),” “Fear not, *little* flock (Luke 12:32),” and “For many are called, but *few* are chosen (Matthew 22:14).” Do not think that we can straddle the fence, beloved, and wait for the majority to choose for us. If we do that, we will surely choose wrongly.

The Apostle James says: “Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him (James 1:12).” That is what we need—the love of God in our hearts so deeply, so fervently, that no matter what happens, we will serve him. Friends, no amount of money can induce us to do the right thing when we are faced with persecution or death. There are not enough streets of gold or beautiful physical things in heaven to induce us to serve God. It is only the love of God that will induce us. It is our love for him because he first loved us and gave his only begotten Son for us that we will decide and be firm for him regardless of the situation.

In 2 Timothy 4:7 we read: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” What Paul is saying is that he made a decision and did not halt between two opinions. Paul sometimes did not understand everything perfectly and in his zeal he made mistakes, but you never can question Paul’s desire to do the right thing. You can never question his desire to follow Christ. Then in verse 8 Paul says: “Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.” That can include every one of us, but we cannot halt between two opinions. We need to stand for God.

To stand in defense of truth and righteousness when the majority forsake us, to fight the battles of the Lord when champions are few—this will be our test [and our test may come much sooner than we think]. At this time we must gather warmth from the coldness of others, courage from their cowardice, and loyalty from their treason (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 136).

Malachi 4:5 states that God will send Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord. We believe that this received a partial fulfillment in the life of John the Baptist, but John the Baptist did not live during the great and dreadful day of the Lord. We understand that this is a call for a message to be given in the last days that is like Elijah’s message. What was the call of Elijah? It was—behold your God and how long halt ye between two opinions? If there was ever a day those who know the truth about God needed to be calling the church’s attention to beholding God and asking

how long they will halt between two opinions, it is right now! Many of the Sabbath School classes of the worldwide Seventh-day Adventist Church are presenting another Christ and another gospel this quarter. This may be very blunt to say but it is what Elijah would have said. If we are going to carry an Elijah message, we are going to have to speak more like Elijah, to be bolder and plainer. One thing about Elijah is that he did not beat around the bush. He spoke the truth and he spoke it plainly. Elijah was a man of love also, much more love than we realize. He loved Israel enough to say the truth. We may have all heard the expression when discipline is about to occur: “This hurts me more than it hurts you; I do this because I love you.” And this is true if we are good parents. We only discipline our children because we love them, and if we love them, we will not hold back when discipline is necessary. The Bible says not to let the tears of the child refrain us from doing this (Proverbs 19:18). Elijah was used of God in the discipline of Israel and he did not hold back. He said to behold God, and his call was one to decide and not sit upon the fence.

Let us consider some issues we must decide upon today. Peter speaks about being established in present truth (2 Peter 1:12), and we need present truth. Present truth, however, can change through generations. Truth never changes and the need for any one truth does not change, but sometimes different generations are confronted with different issues. When Martin Luther was alive, one of the great emphases had to be justification by faith through grace in Christ alone because this truth had been so neglected. It was a very important verity that Luther brought out. He talked about faith and righteousness. We, however, are living in a time far more advanced from where Martin Luther was standing. We are facing serious issues today that we need to understand. Within the community of Adventism today, and even within the sub-community of the historic Adventists who are trying to restore the truth about God, there are issues facing us that we need to understand. We cannot halt between two, or even three, different opinions. We need to understand the truth about God and the nature of Christ better than we do. We need to understand the nature of sin and how it relates to the law and the Sabbath. We need to not only understand and appreciate justification, but we need to understand sanctification because we are going to be a people, so we claim, who will be the generation living when probation of all humanity closes, when Jesus ceases his ministry in the Most Holy Place of the Heavenly Sanctuary and ceases to be our Mediator. We will have to live in the sight of a holy God without a Mediator, and how shall we stand in that great day? Beloved, we must understand that without holiness we will not see the Lord, and we must have an understanding of this not only intellectually but experientially in our lives, or we will not stand in that day.

Let us turn to Matthew chapter 16: “Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny

himself, and take up his cross, and follow me (v. 24).” Peter had just made the wonderful profession that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God; and then Jesus said to Peter and the disciples, and he says to us today, that if we are going to be his follower, we must deny self. The core issue we must decide, even if we do not see it as such at first, is self, and self must be crucified and set aside.

Titus 3:10 states: “A man that is an heretick after the first and second admonition reject.” We are familiar with the term heretic, and this is the only time it is used in the Bible. We commonly think of a heretic as someone who holds an erroneous doctrine and that is what Paul is talking about here, but the root of this word really means someone who is choosing differently than everyone else. Now, if we are making choices differently from the mainline body, we may be called heretics, but what if the mainline body is in apostasy? We may actually be faithful and still called a “heretic.” Do you think Elijah was well-received in his time? He was called a “heretic,” no doubt. How did the Papacy look upon the Protestant reformers? They were “heretics.” The Papacy excommunicated Martin Luther and said he was banished from heaven because they had the authority to do so and they did it because he was a heretic. He did not teach what was considered by them to be *orthodox*. The word *orthodox* literally means straight truth. How is orthodoxy defined today? Is it defined by the Word of God? In most Christian communities, orthodoxy is defined by the “great” ecumenical church councils, especially the first four councils which were Nicaea, Constantinople, Ephesus, and Chalcedon. In those councils you have the framework laid for every abominable, filthy doctrine that is in the cup of Babylon’s wine. Friends, we should not use the bases of these councils for truth. We need to understand that history teaches many of these false doctrines came up because of selfishness. If you study the history of these councils, you will find it interesting. There were varied topics discussed at these different councils, so I will give a generic illustration. Brother A and Brother B have a fight over a theological position. Because it is politically expedient, the whole group of council participants sides with Brother A. Then something changes politically and almost every time the whole group changes sides. Now Brother A is the heretic and Brother B is said to be teaching the truth. This happened in almost every council. There was some kind of contention, whether it was between Arius and Anathanasus or between others, but the bottom line is self. It is about people trying to find a position for themselves or take a position that promotes self, and it goes back to the concept in the little book *Steps to Christ* where we read that all sin is really selfishness. That is the root of all problems, and it is true in theological issues as well. We sometimes teach wrong theological doctrines not because we are misinformed, not because we have not had an opportunity to be better informed or an opportunity to study, but because we find something, as Paul writing to Timothy says, is pleasing to

itching ears. It pleases people or it pleases me and puts me in a position to sound good to people. People like it and the bottom line, whether we understand it or not, is self. The Bible says that if we continue long enough like this we will become self-deceived and we will believe a lie, and so sometimes people preach things that they really believe it to be true but it may, in fact, be a lie.

Paul strikes at the very root of the problem in Galatians 2:20: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.” He says self has to go; self is what must be crucified. The Bible says Jesus died the death of the cross so that we could hang on that cross with him, so that we could be crucified with him. When we have that experience, it will not be hard to choose. When we have been crucified with Christ, we will not be halting between two opinions any longer.

Ahab, that hopping toad, was a supreme case of selfishness. He was a king. It was his responsibility to care for and protect the people of Israel, but instead, he only cared for himself. Let us go back one more time to 1 Kings 18: “And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself (vs. 5, 6).” Imagine—his kingdom is in shambles, his people are dying, children are perishing, and he is looking for grass for the horses and mules. That is the kind of man and leader Ahab was. Ahab was not a leader who went to the front of the battle and said, “Follow me.” He would have been the guy in the back saying “Charge!” Beloved, the time to be undecided about the issues of the gospel is over. If we truly do not understand them and are confused, then it is time to open our Bibles.

Our Bibles ought to show usage. When I was colporturing, I would often offer to have prayer and read a Scripture. When I asked for a Bible to read from, the people would find one on the shelf that would have to be dusted off. Our Bibles need to have some use. We need to study and know doctrines for ourselves because no one is going to be able to stand in the judgment for any one else. I cannot stand for you and you will not be able to stand for me. If we say we believe but cannot show a reason for our faith (1 Peter 3:15), then we are going to find ourselves halting between two opinions, and we will be swept away. The time for fence straddling is over, and how miserable we will be trying to keep one foot on each side of the fence.

The Bible says that Obadiah feared the Lord greatly and that is good, but Obadiah also served Ahab. Notice what is recorded in 1 Kings 18:

And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou

that my lord Elijah? And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldst deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth (vs. 7-12).

Hiding the prophets in the cave was a good thing, but three times Obadiah asked to be relieved because he thought that Ahab would kill him. He well knew Ahab's anger. Obadiah seemed more interested in his life than in doing the will of the prophet Elijah. He was more interested in his life than in the honor of God. I want to tell you that it is not enough to shelter the prophets of God. We must go forth and show ourselves to Ahab. In this time that we live, when God's wrath is about to go forth in judgment, God says that he is going to have a group of people who will be sighing and crying for the abominations done in the land.

These humble, devoted followers of Christ will be distinguished from the rest of the world by their soul anguish, which is expressed in lamentation and weeping, reproofs and warnings. While others try to throw a cloak over the existing evil, and excuse the great wickedness everywhere prevalent, those who have a zeal for God's honor and a love for souls will not hold their peace to obtain favor of any (*Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 5, p. 210).

You can bank on that!

I ask you, how could Elijah stand before Ahab? What was the source of his strength? 1 Kings 17:1 says: "And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, *before whom I stand.*" That was Elijah's strength! He said he stood before the Lord God! He communed and had fellowship with the Lord God, and that was the strength of Elijah. That is where his power was. Elijah was not afraid of a man that he should die, neither was he afraid of any man that would die. The fear of God made him impervious to all other fears, and, like John the Baptist,

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 (*The Desire of Ages*, p. 103).

Beloved, if we are going to be an Elijah today and carry an Elijah message, no less will be required of us.

Ahab could tolerate Obadiah because Obadiah never rebuked him, but he could not stand Elijah. Ahab said to Elijah, "Art thou he that troubleth Israel (1 Kings 18:17)?" Do you think any less will be said about those proclaiming the Elijah message today? I do not think so. If you are going to be an Elijah today, you will be considered a troubler of Israel, but remember that those who call you a troubler of Israel, they and their father's house, are really the true troublemakers of Israel. Perhaps there is no higher testimony to the consistency of our lives than the hearty hatred of the Ahabs around us. Jesus said we will be hated of all men, but we will be hated because they first hated him (John 15:18, 19).

So, how long shall we halt between two opinions? Are we going to be like the people of Mt. Carmel who answered Elijah not a word? Or are we going to be like Elijah and show ourselves to Ahab and proclaim "You are the troubler of Israel?"

In volume 4 of *The Spirit of Prophecy*, we read:

The true followers of Christ do not wait for truth to become popular. Being convinced of their duty, they deliberately accept the cross, and thus remove the greatest obstacle to the reception of truth,—the only argument which its advocates have never been able to refute. It is weak, inefficient world-servers that think it praiseworthy to have no principle in religious things. We should choose the right because it is right, and leave consequences with God. To men of principle, faith, and daring, is the world indebted for its great reforms. By such men must the work of reform for this time be carried forward (p. 293).

Let us carefully mediate upon these words of Paul in the book of Hebrews:

By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompence of the reward (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Moses would not halt between two opinions, and today Moses is in heaven. Elijah would not halt between two opinions, and he also is in heaven. In chapter 13 of Hebrews we read: "Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate (v. 12)." There is a reason Jesus suffered without the gate. It is because that is the way it has always been and always will be for his people. They will be put out of the gate and they will suffer outside the gate. Paul goes on to say, "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach (v. 13)."

A Ilen Stump

“Ye have heard” but ...

There is an old algebra proof that “proves” $2=1$. Of course, two does not equal one, but the proof seems to show it to be so. Near the beginning of the “proof,” there is an operation that is not allowable in mathematics that is nearly hidden and almost unseen. The step looks logical and good; however, this one piece of bad mathematics allows the rest of the proof to proceed to an incorrect conclusion.

The same happens in theology. One may begin with a premise that sounds logical and very good but is, in reality, false. Once that false premise is accepted, however, and the building begins upon it, the end can hardly be correct. What we need is the truth. Jesus said, “And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free (John 8:32).” It is the truth, and not error, that sets one free, and the freedom Jesus is talking of here is freedom from sin!

Since 1888, the topic of righteousness by faith has been discussed over and over in Adventism, with conflicting theories and ideas. I am reminded of a statement in *Testimonies to Ministers and Gospel Workers* that helps me to sort things out. Ellen White states that “the righteousness of Christ, ... is pure, unadulterated truth (p. 65).” This is what we need now!

As we endeavor to be Bereans, let us remember the counsel of the Holy Spirit to “beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ (Colossians 2:8).” Instead of the philosophy of men, let us seek the inspired Word of God. Sometimes we read and hear things that sound very good at first. They seem logical, but if they are not founded solidly in God’s Word, they are sure to lead to further errors.

Five times during the Sermon on the Mount Jesus used the phrase “Ye have heard,” referring to what the people had heard being taught by the religious leaders. While Jesus specialized in teaching the truth, at times it was necessary for him to contrast his pure teachings of truth with the popular errors of his day. In these cases, just speaking the truth alone would have left some of the people still in confusion. Therefore, without malice and without naming names, Jesus kindly spoke the truth in a manner that would be hard to misunderstand.

Today the need for clarity is no less needed than when Jesus spoke nearly 2,000 years ago because:

The power of Satan now to tempt and deceive is ten-fold greater than it was in the days of the apostles. His power has increased, and it will increase, until it is taken away. His wrath and hate grow stronger as his time to work draws near its close (*Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 2, p. 277).

Now let us look at some points on righteousness by faith that are clearly supported by inspiration.

1a. The first point is the definition of sin. 1 John 3:4 states that “sin is the transgression of the law.” Ellen White states that this is “Our only definition of sin ... given in the word of

God (*The Great Controversy*, p. 493).” According to the Bible and according to the Spirit of Prophecy, sin is defined as our actions (thought, word, or deed) and not as a state of being. Perhaps you have heard it said that we only sin because of what we really are, and it is true that we are born with a sinful nature that has a bent to do wrong, a bent too strong for us to resist of ourselves. Paul notes “the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Romans 8:7).” Interestingly, however, there is more to this story. How was Lucifer created by God? Ezekiel 28:15 tells us he was perfect when created. Adam was created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26) and was pronounced to be “very good (Genesis 1:31).” Yet both of these perfect creations sinned! Now if we sin only because of what we really are, did God make a mistake? I do not think so, but we do know that God has given to all of his intelligent creatures the power of free will. For reasons that cannot be explained or justified, both Satan and Adam sinned. Interestingly, in all the charges that Satan has made against God, he has not blamed God for making him in a particular manner that caused him to sin.

1b. This is not to say that our nature in some small thing to be forgotten about. Not at all, but God has done something that enables us to counteract every single liability of the carnal nature. He offers us a new heart and to be born again. The necessity of this is clearly spoken of by Jesus when he said, “Ye *must* be born again (John 3:7).” John writes: “Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, *because* he is born of God (1 John 3:9).” When we accept Christ into our lives, we receive power from above to conquer all sin. In the fight against sin, let us add the words of David: “Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee (Psalm 119:11)”

2. The reason for sin is two-fold. If we are not born again there cannot be power to avoid sin. Jesus said that without him we can do nothing (John 15:5), but with Christ the Christian can do all things (Philippians 4:13). “Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world (1 John 4:4).” Yet even for born-again believers, choices must be made. We choose to sin. This is why the Bible instructs us to choose the path of truth. “Know ye not, that to whom ye *yield* yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness (Romans 6:16)?”

3. Christ has made provision for us to overcome every sin and temptation, but the battle is not a once-for-all affair. The Apostle Paul wrote, “I die daily (1 Corinthians 15:31).” Selfishness must be beaten back each day. “All sin is selfness (*1888 Materials*, p. 1763).” Satan is no less on the attack when we are converted; in fact, his efforts increase. The Bible says that Satan is “as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).” In fact, Peter

states: "Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you (1 Peter 4:12)." Trials and temptations are to be expected as Christians, but victory in Jesus is also to be expected! Romans 6:7 states, "For he that is dead is freed from sin." Temptations are still very real and we are to battle and "fight the good fight of faith (1 Timothy 6:12)." Does this battle, however, have to be so difficult?

Some folks look with dread upon the thought of having to wage a continual warfare with self and worldly lusts. That is because they do not as yet know anything about the joy of victory; they have experienced only defeat. But it isn't so doleful a thing to battle constantly, when there is continual victory. The old veteran of a hundred battles, who has been victorious in every fight, longs to be at the scene of conflict. Alexander's soldiers, who under his command never knew defeat, were always impatient to be led into the fray. Each victory increased their strength, which was born only of courage, and correspondingly diminished that of the vanquished foe. (E. J. Waggoner, *Living Faith*, p. 13).

When you are tempted to speak cross words, pray for grace to resist the temptation (*Child Guidance*, p. 551).

When you are tempted to criticize and to make difficulty, let your mind dwell on this scripture (*General Conference Bulletin*, April 6, 1903).

4. When we are born again, we receive the mind of Jesus and become a new creature. "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new (2 Corinthians 5:17)." While temptation is still very real, its draw upon my soul lessens the closer I come to Jesus. While we may have the mind of Jesus (Philippians 2:5), we are ever in sinful flesh until Jesus comes back, but the promptings of that flesh may always be subdued by the indwelling spirit of Christ.

5. Truly our eyes must be upon Jesus. We have been instructed to look "unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2)." In Hebrews 3:1, we are told to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." As we more perfectly understand his righteousness and character, we more clearly understand our own weaknesses; therefore, the Christian realizes that he must "watch and pray always (Luke 21:36)."

Struggles between the flesh and the spirit do not end after conversion. Paul stated, "But I keep under, my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway (1 Corinthians 9:27). While this warfare continues, victory is assured to those who put no confidence in the flesh.

6. Righteousness is defined in God's Word as his commandments. Psalm 119:172 says, "My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are righteousness." Isaiah states: "Hearken unto me, ye that know righteousness,

the people in whose heart is my law (Isaiah 51:7)." Though the law never ceases to be the standard of righteousness, the Bible says that we may have the righteousness of Christ "without the law (Romans 3:21)." This is the perfect obedience of Christ lived out in us (Colossians 1:27). The necessity of obedience is not lessened, but instead of our futile efforts to keep the law, Christ living in us, empowers us as to obey.

7. Human effort (the decision of the will) and divine power are exercised in combating sin. Paul stated, "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:14)". Ellen White noted:

While Christ is cleansing the sanctuary, the worshipers on earth should carefully review their life, and compare their character with the standard of righteousness. As they see their defects, they should seek the aid of the Spirit of God to enable them to have moral strength to resist the temptations of Satan, and to reach the perfection of the standard. They may be victors over the very temptations which seemed too strong for humanity to bear; for *the divine power will be combined with their human effort, and Satan cannot overcome them (The Review and Herald, April 8, 1890).*

The Divine power combined with human effort will give to all perfect and entire victory. Every believing mind will be filled with conscious power. The language of the soul will be: I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (*The Signs of the Times*, February 14, 1878).

8. As long as we are in this world, conflict against sin (self) and Satan will happen. While we may have victory in Jesus, it will never cause one to be boastful. The only thing one may boast in is the cross. "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Galatians 6:14)."

None of the apostles and prophets ever claimed to be without sin. Men who have lived the nearest to God, men who would sacrifice life itself rather than knowingly commit a wrong act, men whom God has honored with divine light and power, have confessed the sinfulness of their nature. They have put no confidence in the flesh, have claimed no righteousness of their own, but have trusted wholly in the righteousness of Christ.

So will it be with all who behold Christ. The nearer we come to Jesus, and the more clearly we discern the purity of His character, the more clearly shall we see the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the less shall we feel like exalting ourselves (*The Acts of the Apostles*, p. 561).

As we draw near to Jesus, while realizing that we are great sinners, we come to know him as a greater Saviour and we may rest in him "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)." *To be continued*


West Virginia Camp Meeting

Smyrna Gospel Ministries would like to invite all who are interested in preparing for the return of our Lord Jesus to attend camp meeting June 10-14 at the Smyrna Sabbath Chapel in West Virginia. As always, we eagerly look forward to this special time of study, prayer, and fellowship, and we are very anxious to see all of you once again. We are also very desirous to meet new friends and families. Please do not let anything prevent your attendance this June because time is short and more than ever we need to draw closer to one another and closer to our Redeemer. Our theme this year will be Maranatha (the Lord is Coming)!

While we acknowledge that meetings are the main focus of camp meeting, we also realize it can be difficult to secure personal time with God and with one another when the camp meeting schedule is very full, so we have scheduled free time in the afternoon and between sessions with this in mind. Tentative speakers this year include Elvis Alberto returning from the island of Curacao; Lynnford Beachy; Ed Cyrus; David Sims; Richard Stratton; Allen Stump; Jerry Travers; Dr. William Van Grit; Dr. Glenn Waite; and Sisters Elaine Nailing an attorney, who is planning a special presentation on Sabbath afternoon. Our Spanish brethren will also present a message to us each morning, and the Waldensian School will have a presentation on Tuesday evening. All of this, coupled with a personal testimony each evening, our usual testimony service on Sabbath afternoon, plenty of special music, a communion service, and early morning prayer bands will make this a camp meeting you will not want to miss!

While there is room for RV's, we do not have hook-ups. RV's will need to be self-contained. For those who wish, there are motels in the area. The nearest motels are: The Pocahontas Motel (304) 436-2250, Woody's Motel (304) 732-6540, The Cow Shed (304) 732-7000, and Twin Falls State Park Resort (304) 294-4000. If you need a room, please call early, as the better motels fill up quickly due to a large influx of tourists at this time of year.

As we did last year we plan on broadcasting each meeting over Skype and Highspeed Conferencing. We are also planning on doing some live video streaming via the Internet each day over our video stream site: <http://ustream.tv/smyrna>. Please see the flyer that was included with this issue of *Old Paths* for a copy of our schedule and the times we plan, Lord willing, to broadcast the video.

I know that we are all being crunched by the current gasoline prices making traveling more difficult. Some have suggested that they think the price of travel may be too high to now come to the camp meeting. However beloved, it will only be worse next year. Final events may close quickly and this may be the last chance we have for a camp meeting so I urge you to attend if at all possible. God has provided some wonderful speakers and programs and we do not want you to miss any of it! 

Prayer Requests

This month we are specially focused upon the summer camp meetings and we wish that all to join in requesting God's spirit to be poured out among his people.

Also, Sister Janet Cox's son, Johnny, was seriously injured in a motorcycle accident last month. He is mending but we ask for you to remember him and the family that his healing may be complete.

Also we are sorry to announce that Michael Sibanda who was on death row in Africa and had his sentence commuted to life in prison died after a short illness. We learned this just after going to press last month and we ask that you will lift up his mother Melody Tshabalala and Sister Mercy.

Please also pray for the Beachy family as they continue to seek God about the location he would be please to settle down in. They are currently looking in the Arizona area of the United States.

We are thankful for your prayers for Etha Brummett and that she is making good progress in healing from the terrible accident she was in while visiting in Romania. Please continue to life her up in prayer and also my daughter Heidi who broke her arm and elbow in a hang-gliding accident last month.


Allen Stump

Commentary on the Adult Sabbath School Lessons for Second Quarter

The April, May, June 2008 issue of the *Adult Sabbath School Bible Study Guide*, published by the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, is entitled "The Wonder of Jesus." In these lessons, the author, Dr. Roy Adams, examines the person of Jesus and his wonderful life, works, and teachings. After carefully studying through the lessons, we believe that there are many serious issues that need to be addressed.

Last month we published the second of three small booklets that offer comments paralleling the current lessons of the quarterly. The third booklet is now available on the Internet (<http://www.smyrna.org>).

These booklets will contain extra study material to help those using the *Study Guide* in their quest for truth and to help them intelligently discuss the lessons, from an informed perspective, in their local Sabbath Schools.

We have printed extra booklets for those who wish to share copies with their classmates or teachers. The suggested donation is \$.50 each, plus postage, but if you need copies and funds are an issue, let us know and we will share while supplies last. Two years ago the *Adult Sabbath School Lesson Study Guide* for the second quarter was on "The Holy Spirit." We printed comments in *Old Paths* at that time and the response was without precedent. Please obtain and share as many of these truth-filled booklets as you can! 

Youth's Corner – Sea Captain Under the Table

Some people do not like to travel on a ship because they get seasick. They cannot see the land, there are no trees around them, and they cannot walk on the ground; but being on the ocean is the only thing that Joseph ever wanted to do. His father and his mother, however, wanted him to go to school and learn a profession, but all Joseph talked about was sailing on the ocean. The ocean is where he wanted to work. When he was fourteen years old, his parents finally said, “Okay, we will let you try an ocean voyage once. You can be a cabin boy on a ship.” And that is just what he did! He became a cabin boy and sailed far out on the ocean. All land was lost sight of. He learned to walk sure-footedly on a deck that rolled up and down over the waves, but then something happened. A shark started to follow the ship, and 205 years ago the people thought that when a shark followed a ship it meant someone on that ship was going to die. When a person died while out at sea, the only thing to do with the body was to send it overboard into the depths of the ocean; therefore, if a shark followed a ship it was because the shark knew a body was going to be tossed into the ocean soon and so the shark stayed close to the ship.

One day Joseph was high on a mast doing something with the sail, and, as he was coming down, he lost his footing and fell overboard! Because his clothes quickly became very heavy with water, he could not swim. Providentially, someone on the ship saw him, threw him a rope, and the men dragged him back onto the ship. It was only after he was safely aboard the ship that he remembered the shark was still following the ship, looking for something to eat!

Joseph loved sailing on the ocean. It was the only thing he wanted to do, and he continued to sail on the ocean as he grew up. Even after he married a lady named Prudence, he kept going out to sea. As he became a better seaman, he was even made a captain and given his own ship!

On one of his ocean voyages, he realized he was drinking a lot of alcohol, so he decided to limit his alcohol intake to just one glass a day at his noon meal. This was how he decided to control his drinking, but soon he realized he was looking forward to that one glass of alcohol more than he was looking forward to his food! So he decided to stop drinking alcohol altogether. Out on the ocean, however, everyone drank alcohol—all the sailors, all the captains, all the officers, and when Joseph Bates said he was not going to drink anymore it was a new and strange idea. Everyone made fun of him. They jeered him and sneered at him. They made fun of him behind his back and to his face. In fact, one time in the port of Lima, Peru a wealthy man decided to host a dinner in honor of George Washington’s birthday, and he invited the captains and officers of all the ships in port to join him. At that time, it

was considered polite to drink wine with your meal, but Captain Bates had already made up his mind! One of the ladies at the dinner, who knew about Captain Bates’ decision, called on him in front of everyone to have a drink in honor of George Washington. Do you know what Captain Bates did? He picked up his glass, but what should he do? He went right to the pitcher of water on the table and filled his glass with water! He drank water in honor of the president, refusing to drink alcohol even though he was looked down upon by the people around him. That was how he handled the alcohol problem.

Captain Bates was not yet a Christian, but God was speaking to his heart. After he made his decision about alcohol, he became convinced that tobacco was not good for him either! So he stopped using tobacco also! When he came home from his voyage, he told Prudence about his decisions to stop using alcohol and tobacco, and she was very happy. As he was getting ready for his next ocean voyage, he packed many books to read, but do you know what Prudence did? She put a New Testament on the top of the pile of books he packed, and when he was out at sea with nothing around him but water and nothing to do but think, he started reading the New Testament.



Joseph Bates

God was speaking to his heart! Because he was captain of the ship, he had many responsibilities, and at this time someone was very sick on his boat. Captain Bates was afraid the man would die, and, as the captain, he would have to perform a burial service—read from the Bible and say a prayer, but he did not know how to do that. He was not a Christian, and he had not prayed before. As he was struggling with this, he decided that what he needed to do was to pray right then and there, but there was no place he could go that was private. He needed a “secret” place (Matthew 6:6). The only place that he could think of that was even a little bit private was under the table! And so under the table he went! He prayed, and he poured his heart out to God. He had been troubled and disturbed, and he had not known what to do; but under the table everything was solved! Captain Joseph Bates committed his life to Jesus and decided to follow him. Just as Jesus went to a private place in the Garden of Gethsemane to pray to his Father, Captain Bates went to a private place too. There he found peace, and he came out from under the table a different man!

When he came back home, he told Prudence about what had happened, and she was overjoyed. Then Captain Bates was baptized and joined the same church that Prudence attended.

When Captain Bates had been out on the ocean and unsure of what to do, he had been troubled and disturbed. He even thought about jumping overboard to end his life. A lot of

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A merchant ship such as Joseph Bates might have sailed on when he prayed under the table.

people think that way today, but Captain Bates found the answer under the table! He prayed to his heavenly Father, and God heard and answered his prayer. We can have the same experience also! It does not have to be under a table. We can talk to God out in the field. Sometimes we cannot go into a closet and close the door behind us, as we read about in Matthew 6:6. Maybe we are in a car or out in the garden.

Wherever we are, however, we can talk to our heavenly Father. He hears us and will help us with whatever we find troubling. We do not have to jump overboard! God will help us! So remember, it can be beside your bed, it can be *under* a table, or it can be *at* a table, perhaps, as you do your school work. God wants you to pray to him, and he wants you to come into that closet experience. In meetings we have public prayers, and Jesus promises to be with us, but we also need that secret time in the closet, when we close the door behind us and shut the world out, in order to gain strength, comfort, and solutions from the Source of all wisdom!

Onycha Holt

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