

the  
**REFORMATION**  
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# No Ordinary Man

Reverence for the House of God and His Word | Who Is Jesus Christ to You?

*Art by K. Olson*

# the REFORMATION *herald*

Volume 59, Number 5

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# Woes on the Pharisees

In His last visit to the temple in Jerusalem, Jesus exposed the real character of the rulers, priests and Pharisees so that the people could be free from their manipulative leadership.

The first warning given by Christ regarding their leaders was that they should receive their instructions but not act like them, because “they say, and do not.”

They were good theoretical teachers, but their behavior contradicted their teachings, which was the reason why their instructions had no power. Christ was exactly the opposite. He taught what He lived and He lived what He taught.

An inconsistent life is confusing. When I was just a little boy, I got confused when my father took me to a highly respected medical doctor. He was telling me that smoking is a very dangerous habit, however, at the same time, he was smoking. I couldn't harmonize his words with his actions. I was not sure if smoking was really a bad habit, since the doctor was using a cigarette in front of his patients.

“There is an eloquence far more powerful than the eloquence of words in the quiet, consistent life of a pure, true Christian. What a man is has more influence than what he says. A godly life is a living epistle, known and read of all men.

“Character is not something shaped from without, or put on; it is something radiating from within. If true goodness, purity, meekness, and equity are dwelling in the heart, this will be manifest in the character; and such a character is full of power.”<sup>1</sup>

“I feel an intense desire that our brethren and sisters shall be correct representatives of Jesus. Do not pierce His wounds afresh, and put Him to an open shame, by an inconsistent life.

Become thoroughly acquainted with the reasons of our faith, and show by word and act that Christ is dwelling in your hearts by faith. May God help you to walk with Jesus. If you do, you will be the light of the world, and in the time of trouble He will say, ‘Come, my people, enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee; hide thyself as it were for a little moment, until the indignation be overpast.’”<sup>2</sup>

I read about a mother who visited Mahatma Gandhi, asking him to advise her son against using sugar. Gandhi asked her to visit him again some days later with her son, which she did. Then Gandhi advised the boy to avoid using sugar to avoid health problems. Then the mother asked him why he asked her to visit him some days after her first visit. He answered her: “Because at that time I was also using sugar.”

In order to live a consistent life, we need God's grace to resist temptation. It is very easy to teach others to do right while we ourselves are acting contrary to what we teach. This is a Pharisaical trait of character.

In Revelation 1:3, we have a blessed promise: “Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand.”

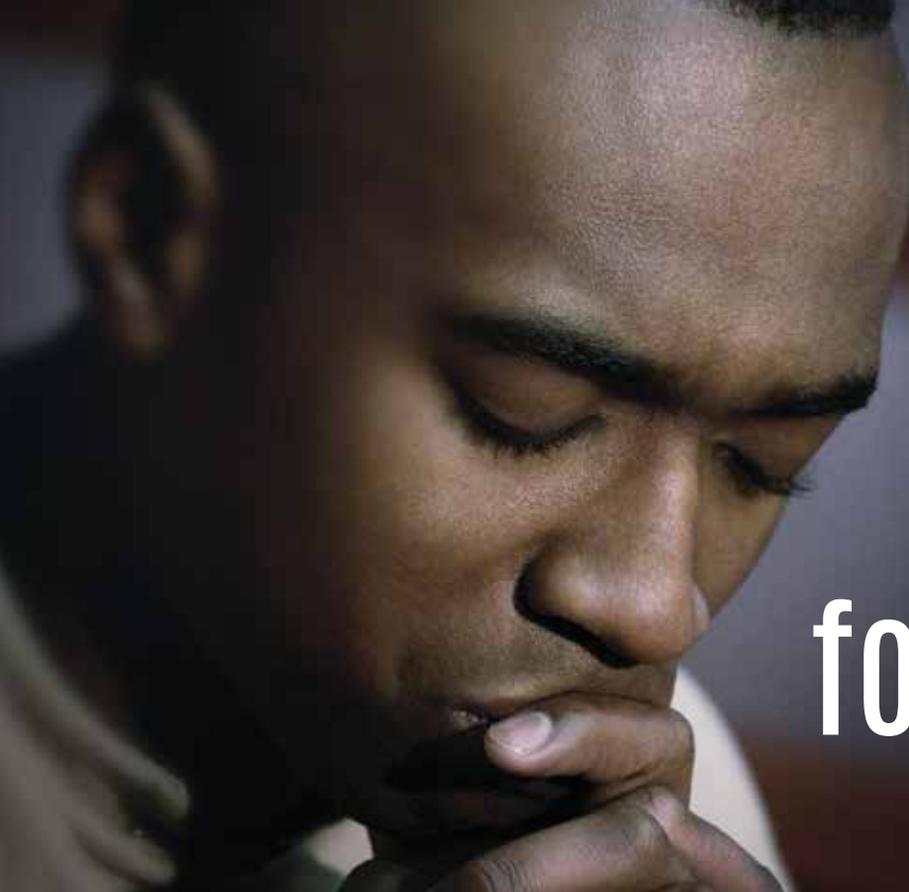
James said something similar: “But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass. For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he



was. But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed” (James 1:22–25). *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, May 18, 1904.
- <sup>2</sup> *Historical Sketches*, p. 144.



# Reverence for the Almighty

## Names in the Bible

In the Bible, names had meanings attached to them. Sometimes one name was given to a child and when something changed in his/her life, the name was also changed. This was the case with Abram, which means “exalted father”—and when special blessings were given him it was changed to that of Abraham, which means “father of a great multitude” (Genesis 17:5, 6). Sometimes it was also changed because of an alteration in character, as in the case of Jacob—the supplanter or deceiver who was ultimately told: “Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (Genesis 32:28). The God that we worship also has a name and because He is Omniscient, Omnipresent, and Omnipotent, it is impossible to describe the name of our Creator with just a few terms. When He either changes His role toward us or reveals another facet of His marvelous character, He uses a new name to describe Himself. “I appeared unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, by the name of God Almighty, but by My name JEHOVAH was I not known to them” (Exodus 6:3).

## The Eternal Deliverer

The true God had been known from the beginning of creation as *El-Shaddai* (God Almighty). But now He was about to reveal another of His many attributes by delivering them from slavery. It was only after experiencing deliverance personally could they truly call Him Jehovah (YHWH, often pronounced YEHOUAH.) (In most parts of the Old Testament in the KJV, whenever you see the word “LORD” in all capital letters, the original is known as Jehovah.) This was also a key as to why they were to keep the Sabbath. Notice what is added when the law is repeated after 40 years of wandering: “Remember that thou wast a servant in the land of Egypt, and that the LORD thy God brought thee out thence through a mighty hand and by a stretched out arm: therefore the LORD thy God commanded thee to keep the sabbath day” (Deuteronomy 5:15).

The verses preceding this speak of God creating the heaven and the earth; but now—through that same creative power—He delivers them out of Egypt. His creative power is used, not only to begin life, but to recreate

it and have it begin anew. This same principle is brought to view when we speak of conversion from spiritual Egypt (sin). “Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10. Why is this? What does true conversion bring about? “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). Since God brought them out of Egypt through this power, and since they were to experience this power in a totally different way than any of their predecessors, He revealed to them a new facet of His character and called himself Jehovah (YEHOUAH), meaning the Self-Existent or Eternal One. Because of this power to save from sin, “I, even I, am the LORD; and beside me there is no savior” (Isaiah 43:11). In this case, the LORD that is speaking is Christ Himself because “Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved” (Acts 4:12). Today people may resist—but ultimately, “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things

# ence ty Name

By Peter D. Lausevic

under the earth” (Philippians 2:10). Recognition will finally come to its rightful place.

## Is mere pronunciation the key?

The verse mentioning several of God’s names at once has been popularized by Handel’s Messiah: “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6). But it is actually not limited to this brief list! As a further example: Immanuel, Holy, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS, Jesus, just to name a few more. (See also Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:21, 23; Isaiah 57:15; Jeremiah 23:6.) And when all is said and done, He will receive a new name commemorating His victory in the great controversy. (See Revelation 3:12.)

When we are speaking about the name of the living God that we worship, we are not necessarily talking about exact pronunciation because we have already seen that God changes His name according

to the need or to a new revelation of Himself. We can see this clearly when the writers of the New Testament wrote the names of Deity—whether of the Father or the Son, they did not keep to the traditional Hebrew names. Instead of Elohiym they used Theos for God and instead of Yehowshuwa or Yehowshu`a they used Iesous for Jesus. The gospel was to go to the Gentile world and new names were given accordingly just like when they left Egypt. In this case, they were the best translations for those names. These New Testament names were given by divine inspiration.

The use of the New Testament name of Jesus was powerful in changing character or giving physical healing. We see this in the case of that lame man who was in the temple begging. “Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have give I thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk.” The immediate response to the name of Jesus was tremendous. “And he leaping up stood, and walked, and entered with them into the temple, walking, and leaping, and praising God” (Acts 3:6–8). What a tremendous response to the name of Jesus, the name of Deity! Some people therefore thought that the name of Jesus was like some magical charm. They assumed that all you have to do is pronounce it properly and it could do wonders. But not so. “Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took upon them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preacheth” (Acts 19:13). We can read the rest of the story in Acts and see that it was not the pronunciation of the name that made the difference. Even when they pronounced the name correctly they were beaten by the devils themselves through the possessed man.

We can expect the same to happen in the last days. “And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, We will eat our own bread, and wear our own apparel: only let us be called by thy name, to take away our reproach” (Isaiah 4:1).

It is not enough to have a name or to pronounce the name correctly. “Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity” (Matthew 7:22, 23). Can you imagine Him saying “I never knew you” to a people who were full of good deeds and claimed to be Christians?

What actually can make the name of our Saviour so powerful? Jesus continues by giving an experience that indeed results in the establishment of a person for eternity—depicting the solid basis of those who build their spiritual foundation upon the rock of His word (Matthew 7:24, 25). The name of God is not in terminology but rather refers to the development of character. This is why it was character that the Lord proclaimed to Moses when showing him His glory, declaring: “I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy” (Exodus 33:19; 34:6, 7). It was this meaning of the name when we read that “then began men to call upon the name of the LORD” (Genesis 4:26).

## Using God’s name in vain

Because of such power in the name of deity, what became a part of the Ten Commandments? “Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain” (Exodus 20:7). This is further clarified by adding also not to profane it. “And ye shall not swear by my name falsely, neither shalt thou profane the name of thy God: I am the LORD” (Leviticus 19:12). Quite a few points are listed in these two verses:

- (1) Respect whenever we are speaking His name.
- (2) When in a court of law not to swear by His name to defend falsehood.

### (3) And not to use it in a bad way.

In Leviticus there is record of a young man whose mother was of the tribe of Dan. He blasphemed God's name and cursed Him. After requesting God's guidance in this matter, what was the final conclusion? "And thou shalt speak unto the children of Israel, saying, Whosoever curseth his God shall bear his sin. And he that blasphemeth the name of the LORD, he shall surely be put to death, and all the congregation shall certainly stone him: as well the stranger, as he that is born in the land, when he blasphemeth the name of the LORD, shall be put to death" (Leviticus 24:1, 16). The problem with human nature is that we get very angry when we do not get our own way. We may manifest it in different ways, but it is still anger. And once we are angry we tend to use our words to convey that anger. As in the case in the wilderness, the young man used words to curse God to show his anger—and you know the results. "Swearing, and all words spoken in the form of an oath, are dishonoring to God. The Lord sees, the Lord hears, and He will not hold the transgressor guiltless. He will not be mocked. Those who take the name of the Lord in vain will find it a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."<sup>1</sup>

"Burning words of passion should never be spoken, for in the sight of God and holy angels they are as a species of swearing."<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes we don't use bad language necessarily or curse God, but we use His name lightheartedly to become our witness in trivial matters. But Jesus tells us to be careful with our language. "But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne: Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King. Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black. But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil" (Matthew 5:34–37).

By making reference to swearing,

Jesus is not speaking here of the judicial oath. At the judgment hall Jesus was silent to all the accusations until placed under judicial oath when the high priest declared, "I adjure thee" in Matthew 26:63. The Lord's messenger explains, "I saw that the words of our Lord, 'Swear not at all,' do not touch the judicial oath."<sup>3</sup> "It was shown me that it was no violation of God's word, when it is actually necessary, for His children when called upon to testify in a lawful manner, to solemnly take God to witness that what they say is the truth, and nothing but the truth. . . . And I saw if there was anyone on earth who could consistently testify under oath, it is the Christian."<sup>4</sup>

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"This commandment not only prohibits false oaths and common swearing, but it forbids us to use the name of God in a light or careless manner, without regard to its awful significance. By the thoughtless mention of God in common conversation, by appeals to Him in trivial matters, and by the frequent and thoughtless repetition of His name, we dishonor Him. 'Holy and reverend is His name' (Psalm 111:9). All should meditate upon His majesty,

His purity and holiness, that the heart may be impressed with a sense of His exalted character; and His holy name should be uttered with reverence and solemnity."<sup>5</sup>

What about the thoughtless repetitions of the name of God when we are praying? "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking" (Matthew 6:7). This is not just speaking about repetitive sentences but also the name of God Himself. "Reverence should be shown also for the name of God. Never should that name be spoken lightly or thoughtlessly. Even in prayer its frequent or needless repetition should be avoided."<sup>6</sup> "I saw then what faint views some have of the holiness of God, and how much they take His holy and reverend name in vain, without realizing that it is God, the great and terrible God, of whom they are speaking. While praying, many use careless and irreverent expressions, which grieve the tender Spirit of the Lord and cause their petitions to be shut out of heaven."<sup>7</sup>

What is the worst method of using the name of God in vain? "I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead" (Revelation 3:1). Professing religion while living contrary to it is the greatest reproach on the name of God. Speaking to unconsecrated youth but applying to all: "Their unconsecrated lives are a reproach to the Christian name; their example is a snare to others. They hinder the sinner, for in nearly every respect they are no better than unbelievers. They have the word of God, but its warnings, admonitions, reproofs, and corrections are unheeded, as are also the encouragements and promises to the obedient and faithful."<sup>8</sup>

We need a heart change, not just a word change. Some feel like saying vain words—so instead of saying God's name in vain, they substitute words. Some common substitutions according to the dictionary are as follows:

**a. goodness:**

“God: used alone or with other words in various emphatic or exclamatory utterances: Goodness knows; for goodness’ sake.”

**b. gee:**

“An exclamation expressing mild surprise, sympathy, etc.: a euphemism for Jesus. Also ‘gee whiz.’”

**c. gosh:**

“An exclamation expressing surprise, awe, etc. [Euphemistic alter. of God].”

“O that there were such an heart in them, that they would fear me, and keep all my commandments always, that it might be well with them, and with their children for ever!” (Deuteronomy 5:29).

## Reverencing His name

What is God’s promise regarding His name among His own people? “And they shall put my name upon the children of Israel; and I will bless them” (Numbers 6:27). We have learned many things about the name of the Creator God who changes hearts. When His name is placed upon His people, they are especially blessed.

The same will be in this last generation. “And I looked, and, lo, a Lamb stood on the mount Sion, and with him an hundred forty and four thousand, having his Father’s name written in their foreheads” (Revelation 14:1). We are obviously not speaking about a literal name being inscribed on the forehead of each individual. Rather it is that character that is finally developed by this special people in the last days. In the midst of a time when people are flocking to worship the beast and his image and to receive the name of the beast upon them, here are a people that would rather sacrifice everything to have the Father’s name in their foreheads. “Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus” (Revelation 14:12).

“Ministers, by carelessly introducing the name of God into

their conversation, may teach lessons of irreverence. By mingling His holy name with common matters, they show that they are not spiritually-minded; for they mingle the sacred and the common. They are not living up to their holy profession.”<sup>9</sup>

What about the terms we use for those in leadership positions? “According to the teaching of the Scriptures, it dishonors God to address ministers as ‘Reverend.’ No mortal has any right to attach this to his own name or to the name of any other human being. It belongs only to God, to distinguish Him from every other being. Those who lay claim to this title take to themselves God’s holy honor. They have no right to the stolen word, whatever their position may be.”<sup>10</sup>

We have lost the sacredness of the name of God and our own place in the whole scheme of things when we take titles that do not belong to us. “But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.” The special role for members of the church as well as their leaders is that of brethren. Instead of titles that call out special honors that we would normally give to Deity, we are called to a different role—that of brethren. The highest place in Christ kingdom is that based on service to others. “But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant” (Matthew 23:8–11). Minister, pastor, these are terms of service and can be appropriately used.

## Eternal life

What is the only Bible definition of eternal life? “And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent” (John 17:3). How do you get to know the One Whom we cannot see until we truly become like Him? (See 1 John 3:1–3.) In His love and mercy God sent Someone into this world to do just that. By taking on His divine nature our sinful human

nature, Jesus is able to bridge that gap and communicate with us. Although He has gone back to the heavens, He left something tangible for us with which to maintain communication with Him. “And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth” (John 1:14). Yes, that word has power to change the lives of all who are willing to submit themselves fully to Him through it. The Creator speaks and it happens. What a truly awesome God we serve!

## Conclusion

What is the best way to honor this Being Who became “God with us”? “Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?” (James 2:7). How do we not blaspheme that name? How do we avoid that as sinful human being? We need His Divine presence to change our natures. “God sends you into the world as His representative. In every act of life you are to make manifest the name of God. This petition calls upon you to possess His character. You cannot hallow His name, you cannot represent Him to the world, unless in life and character you represent the very life and character of God. This you can do only through the acceptance of the grace and righteousness of Christ.”<sup>11</sup>

As we ponder this third commandment, have you accepted Jesus as the Word of God into your life? Have you surrendered to Him fully so that He can justify you by His righteousness and change your nature so that you can reverence His holy name? *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 185.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Adventist Home*, p. 439.
- <sup>3</sup> *Testimonies*, vol. 1, p. 201.
- <sup>4</sup> *Spiritual Gifts*, vol. 4b, p. 43.
- <sup>5</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, pp. 306, 307.
- <sup>6</sup> *Education*, p. 243.
- <sup>7</sup> *Early Writings*, p. 70.
- <sup>8</sup> *Testimonies for the Church*, vol. 1, pp. 496, 497.
- <sup>9</sup> *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 185.
- <sup>10</sup> *Evangelism*, p. 133.
- <sup>11</sup> *Thoughts From the Mount of Blessings*, p. 107.

# Reverence for the *House* of God and His *Word*

**A**s we are preparing for eternity we are to hold the name of our God in supreme reverence both by our character and how we approach Him. Does that include places of worship? What did Jacob do when he realized that the presence of God was in a place after he saw the vision of the angels? “And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not. And

he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it” (Genesis 28:16–18).

“[A] precious grace that should be carefully cherished is reverence. True reverence for God is inspired by a sense of His infinite greatness and a

realization of His presence. With this sense of the Unseen the heart of every child should be deeply impressed. The hour and place of prayer and the services of public worship the child should be taught to regard as sacred because God is there. And as reverence is manifested in attitude and demeanor, the feeling that inspires it will be deepened.”<sup>1</sup>

Why such reference for His name as well as for places of worship and

other sacred services? “He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name” (Psalm 111:9). The commandment teaches us to respect Him whenever we reference the name of our Creator. “God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints, and to be had in reverence of all them that are about him” (Psalm 89:7). “Those who are brought into covenant relation with God are pledged to speak of Him in the most respectful, reverential manner. Many refer to God and mention His name in their religious conversation much as they would mention a horse or any other common creature. This dishonors God. By precept and example parents should educate their children on this point, lest by irreverence they grieve away God’s Spirit from their hearts and the hearts of their children.”<sup>2</sup>

What warning did God give Moses as he approached the presence of the Divine One? “Draw not nigh hither:

put off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground” (Exodus 3:5). “Well would it be for young and old to study and ponder and often repeat those words of Holy Writ that show how the place marked by God’s special presence should be regarded.”<sup>3</sup>

### What about God’s word?

The Bible has been given us as a power to change lives. “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness. That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). By teaching us the truth (doctrine) it shows us where we are wrong (reproof). Not only does it show us our wrongs, but because the Word is Jesus, it has the power to change us (correction) and continue this process until perfection.

Because the Bible can do all that, how should we treat it? “The Bible

is God’s voice speaking to us, just as surely as if we could hear it with our ears. If we realized this, with what awe we would open God’s Word and with what earnestness we would search its precepts. The reading and contemplation of the Scriptures would be regarded as an audience with the Infinite One.”<sup>4</sup>

What about the printed book itself? “We should reverence God’s word. For the printed volume we should show respect, never putting it to common uses, or handling it carelessly. And never should Scripture be quoted in a jest, or paraphrased to point a witty saying. ‘Every word of God is pure;’ ‘as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.’ Proverbs 30:5; Psalm 12:6.”<sup>5</sup>

### References

<sup>1</sup> *Education*, pp. 242, 243.

<sup>2</sup> *Sermons and Talks*, vol. 2, p. 185.

<sup>3</sup> *Education*, p. 243.

<sup>4</sup> *My Life Today*, p. 283.

<sup>5</sup> *Education*, p. 244.

# The Feasts, New Moons, and Sabbaths of the Hebrews— How Do These Differ From the Seventh-day Sabbath?

Excerpts adapted from *The History of the Sabbath* by J. N. Andrews

A brief survey of the Jewish festivals is necessary to the complete view of the subject before us. Of these there were three feasts: the Passover, the Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles; each new moon, that is, the first day of each month throughout the year; then there were seven annual sabbaths, namely,

1. The first day of unleavened bread.
2. The seventh day of that feast.
3. The day of Pentecost.
4. The first day of the seventh month.
5. The tenth day of that month.
6. The fifteenth day of that month.
7. The twenty-second day of the same.

In addition to all these, every seventh year was to be the sabbath of the land, and every fiftieth year the year of jubilee.

## Passover

The passover takes its name from the fact that the angel of the Lord passed over the houses of the Hebrews on that eventful night when the firstborn in every Egyptian family was slain. This feast was ordained in commemoration of the deliverance of that people from Egyptian bondage. It began with the slaying of the paschal lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month, and extended through a period of seven days, in which nothing but unleavened bread was to be eaten.

**Its great antitype was reached when Christ our passover was sacrificed for us.**

## Pentecost

The Pentecost was the second of the Jewish feasts, and occupied but a single day. It was celebrated on the fiftieth day after the first-fruits of barley harvest had been waved before the Lord. At the time of this feast the first-fruits of wheat harvest were offered unto God. **The antitype of this festival was reached on the fiftieth day after the resurrection of Christ, when the great outpouring of the Holy Ghost took place.**

## Feast of Tabernacles

The feast of tabernacles was the last of the Jewish feasts. It was celebrated in the seventh month when they had gathered in the fruit of the land, and extended from the fifteenth to the twenty-first day of that month. It was ordained as a festival of rejoicing before the Lord; and during this period the children of Israel dwelt in booths in commemoration of their dwelling thus during their sojourn in the wilderness. It probably **typifies the great rejoicing after the final gathering of all the people of God into his kingdom.**

## New moons and annual sabbaths

In connection with these feasts it was ordained that each new moon, that is, the first day of every month, should be observed with certain specified offerings, and with tokens of rejoicing. The annual sabbaths of the Hebrews have been already enumerated. The first two of these sabbaths were the first and seventh days of the feast of unleavened bread, that is, the fifteenth and twenty-first days of the first month. they were thus ordained by God:

“Seven days shall ye eat unleavened bread; even the first day ye shall put away leaven out of your houses. . . . And in the first day there shall be an holy convocation, and in the seventh day there shall be an holy convocation to you; no manner of work shall be done in them, save that which every man must eat, that only may be done of you” (Exodus 12:15, 16).

The third in order of the annual sabbaths was the day of Pentecost. This festival was ordained as a rest-day in the following language:

“And ye shall proclaim on the selfsame day, that it may be an holy convocation unto you: ye shall do no servile work therein; it shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Leviticus 23:21).



The first day of the seventh month was the fourth annual sabbath of the Hebrews. It was thus ordained:

“Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, in the first day of the month, shall ye have a sabbath, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, an holy convocation. Ye shall do no servile work therein; but ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord” (Verses 24, 25).

The great day of atonement was the fifth of these sabbaths. Thus spake the Lord unto Moses:

“Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement; it shall be an holy convocation unto you. . . . Ye shall do no manner of work; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be unto you a sabbath of rest, and ye shall afflict your souls: in the ninth day of the month at even, from even unto even, shall ye celebrate your sabbath” (Verses 27, 31, 32).

The sixth and seventh of these annual sabbaths were the fifteenth and twenty-second days of the seventh month, that is, the first day of the feast of tabernacles, and the day after its conclusion. Thus were they enjoined by God:

“Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the Lord seven days; on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be sabbath” (Verse 39).

## The year of jubilee

Besides all these, every seventh year was a sabbath of rest unto the land. The people might labor as usual in other business, but they were forbidden to till the land, that the land itself might rest. After seven of these sabbaths, the following or fiftieth year was to be the year of jubilee, in which every man was to be restored unto his inheritance. There is no evidence that the jubilee was ever observed, and it is certain that the sabbatical year was almost entirely disregarded.

**Such were the feasts, new moons, and sabbaths, of the Hebrews. A few words will suffice to point out the broad distinction between them and the Sabbath of the Lord.** The first of the three feasts was ordained in memory of their deliverance from Egyptian bondage, and was to be observed when they should enter their own land. The second feast, as we have seen, could not be observed until after the



settlement of the Hebrews in Canaan; for it was to be celebrated when the first fruits of wheat harvest should be offered before the Lord. The third feast was ordained in memory of their sojourn in the wilderness, and was to be celebrated by them each year after the ingathering of the entire harvest. Of course this feast, like the others, could not be observed until the settlement of the people in their own land. The new moons, as has been already seen, were not ordained until after these feasts had been instituted. The annual sabbaths were part and parcel of these feasts, and could have no existence until after the feasts to which they belonged had been instituted. Thus the first and second of these sabbaths were the first and seventh days of the paschal feast. The third annual sabbath was identical with the feast of Pentecost. The fourth of these sabbaths was the same as the new moon in the seventh month. The fifth one was the great day of atonement. The sixth and the seventh of these annual sabbaths were the fifteenth and twenty-second days of the seventh month, that is, the first day of the feast of tabernacles, and the next day after the close of that feast. As these feasts were not to be observed until the Hebrews should possess their own land, the annual sabbaths could have no existence until that time. And so of the sabbaths of the land. These could have no existence until after the Hebrews should possess and cultivate their own land; after six years of cultivation, the land should rest the seventh year, and remain untilled. After seven of these sabbaths of the land came the year of jubilee.

## The clear contrast

The contrast between the Sabbath of the Lord and these sabbaths of the Hebrews is strongly marked.

1. The Sabbath of the Lord was instituted at the close of the first week of time; while these were ordained in connection with the Jewish feasts.

2. The one was blessed and hallowed by God, because that he had rested upon it from the work of creation; the others have no such claim to our regard.

3. When the children of Israel came into the wilderness, the Sabbath of the Lord was an existing institution, obligatory upon them; but the annual sabbaths then came into existence. It is easy to point to the very act of God, while leading that people, that gave existence to these sabbaths; while every reference to the Sabbath of the Lord shows that it had been ordained before God chose that people.

4. The children of Israel were excluded from the promised land for violating the Sabbath of the Lord in the wilderness; but the annual sabbaths were not to be observed until they should enter that land. This contrast would be strange indeed were it true that the Sabbath of the Lord was not instituted until the children of Israel came into the wilderness of Sin; for it is certain that two of the annual sabbaths were instituted before they left the land of Egypt.

5. The Sabbath of the Lord was made for man; but the annual sabbaths were designed only for residents in the land of Palestine.

6. The one was weekly, a memorial of the Creator's rest; the others were annual, connected with the memorials of the deliverance of the Hebrews from Egypt.

7. The one is termed "the Sabbath of the Lord," "my Sabbaths," "my holy day," and the like; while the others are designated as "your sabbaths," "her sabbaths," and similar expressions.

8. The one was proclaimed by God as one of the ten commandments, and was written with his finger in the midst of the moral law upon the tables of stone, and was deposited in the ark beneath the mercy-seat; the others did not pertain to the moral law, but were embodied in that hand-writing of ordinances that was a shadow of good things to come.

9. The distinction between these festivals and the Sabbaths of the Lord was carefully marked by God when he ordained the festivals and their associated sabbaths. Thus he said: "These are the feast of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, . . . **BESIDE** the Sabbaths of the Lord" (Verse 4, 38).

## A very different picture

The annual sabbaths are presented by Isaiah in a very different light from that in which he presents the Sabbath of the Lord. Of the one he says:

"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they

are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them” (Isaiah 1:13, 14).

In striking contrast with this, the same prophet speaks of the Lord’s Sabbath;

“Thus saith the Lord, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil. Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the Lord, speak, saying, The Lord hath utterly separated me from his people; neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus saith the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters; I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt-offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people” (Isaiah 56:1–7).

Hosea carefully designates the annual sabbaths in the following prediction:

**“I will also cause all her mirth to cease, her feast-days, her new moons, and HER sabbaths, and all her solemn feasts”** (Hosea 2:11).

This prediction was uttered about B.C. 785. It was fulfilled in part about two hundred years after this, when Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar. Of this event, Jeremiah, about B.C. 588, speaks as follows:

“Her people fell into the hand of the enemy, and none did help her: the

adversaries saw her, and did mock at **HER** sabbaths. . . . The Lord was as an enemy; he hath swallowed up Israel, he hath swallowed up all her palaces; he hath destroyed his strongholds, and hath increased in the daughter of Judah mourning and lamentation. And he hath violently taken away his tabernacle, as if it were of a garden; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly; the Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion, and hath despised in the indignation of his anger the king and the priest. The Lord hath cast off his altar, he hath abhorred his sanctuary, he hath given up into the hand of the enemy the walls of her palaces; they have made a noise in the house of the Lord, as in the day of a solemn feast” (Lamentations 1:7, 2:5–7).

The feasts of the Lord were to be holden in the place which the Lord should choose, namely, Jerusalem; and when that city, the place of their solemn assemblies, was destroyed and the people themselves carried into captivity, the complete cessation of their feasts, and, as a consequence, of the annual sabbaths, which were specified days in those feasts, must occur. The adversaries mocked at her sabbaths, by making a “noise in the house of the Lord as in the day of a solemn feast” (Verse 7). But **the observance of the Lord’s Sabbath did not cease with the dispersion of the Hebrews from their own land; for it was not a local institution, like the annual sabbaths.** Its violation was one chief cause of the Babylonish captivity; and their final restoration to their own land was made conditional upon their observing it in their dispersion. The feasts, new moons, and annual sabbaths, were restored when the Hebrews returned from captivity, and with some interruptions, were kept up until the final destruction of their city and nation by the Romans. But **ere the providence of God thus struck out of existence these Jewish festivals, the whole typical system was abolished, having reached the**

## The Lord’s Sabbath did not cease with the dispersion of the Hebrews from their own land; for it was not a local institution.

**commencement of its antitype, when our Lord Jesus Christ expired upon the cross.** The handwriting of ordinances being thus abolished, no one is to be judged respecting its meats, or drinks, or holy days, or new moons, or sabbaths, “which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ” (Colossians 2:17). But the Sabbath of the Lord did not form a part of this handwriting of ordinances; for it was instituted before sin had entered the world, and consequently before there was any shadow of redemption; it was written by the finger of God, not in the midst of types and shadows, but in the bosom of the moral law; and the day following that on which the typical sabbaths were nailed to the cross, the Sabbath commandment of the moral law is expressly recognized. Moreover, **when the Jewish festivals were utterly extinguished with the final destruction of Jerusalem, even then was the Sabbath of the Lord brought to the minds of His people. Thus have we traced the annual sabbaths until their final cessation, as predicted by Hosea.** It remains that we trace the Sabbath of the Lord until we reach the endless ages of the new earth, when we shall find the whole multitude of the redeemed assembling before God for worship on each successive Sabbath. *R*

# Promoting *Life* or Fo

by Radu Ionita

**A**uschwitz-Birkenau, Buchenwald, Dachau . . . or the death camps in Siberia, the Philippines, or Japan, or the genocide in Rwanda . . . may all feel like fearful black holes of human behavior. One may wonder how humans, created in the image of the true God, “merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving...” (Exodus 34:6, 7), could ever reach such a terrible state of decay as to make a “science” of how to afflict and kill their fellows. And these instances were not in the dark age of slavery, but in recent decades. At closer look, we might agree that those happenings were not so different in nature from some other recent terrorist attacks, for which we just cannot find any logical explanation, either. The difference may be only in the size, or numbers, but the roots tend to be the same.

How can it be? Why do these things occur?

Why did Andreas B. Breivik kill 77 and injure more than 300 people in Norway in July 2011? Let us take that example. The Italian MEP Francesco Speroni, an ex-minister of the Italian government, a leading member of the Lega Nord, said: “Breivik’s ideas are in defense of western civilization.”<sup>1</sup> What does it possibly mean? That having in view such a noble task, to defend the western civilization, those crimes are . . . not really crimes?! Breivik himself, the attacker, stated in his trial that he acknowledged the

killings, but not the guilt (?!), because he acted in defense of what he referred to as “Christian Europe.” That means that in his mind, Breivik believes that his action was RIGHT. After the 8 hours of reconstruction of the whole massacre on the Utoya island, the police officers explained that Breivik seemed to be a bit moved, but felt no remorse. Was/is he sane? To our astonishment, the second evaluation done by 5 judges found that, yes indeed, he was sane. . . . Yet what fearful “sanity”!

## “Lord, is it I?”

We all feel sane. To call someone a criminal is a shocking, painful approach to take toward people. We would feel heavily offended if somebody would suggest such a thing to us. But let us remember the disciples. They sincerely loved Christ, for whom they had left everything, and whom they followed enthusiastically. Christ had just informed them that one of them would sell Him to death, “and they were **exceeding sorrowful**, and began every one of them to say unto him, **Lord, is it I?**” (Matthew 26:21, 22). What saved them was the wonderful, sweet, deep love of Jesus. They were not offended by His words, but rather were “exceeding sorrowful”! And because they loved Him too, they did the wisest thing possible: they tried to examine their own hearts by considering in their minds, “No, it can’t be! But what if it is?! What if the betrayer is I?” To point to oneself as

a criminal by the sharp judge of your own conscience, is a deep, shocking experience! But it is necessary, and welcomed.

Let us take the ideal context. There was One who for three years and a half “went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him” (Acts 10:38), employing all His energies to bless and comfort. “There were whole villages where there was not a moan of sickness in any house, for He had passed through them and healed all their sick.”<sup>2</sup> He was healing hundreds of hopelessly sick people, sometimes feeding thousands for free, teaching them the words of God. Crowds were flooding the places of His presence; it was hard for Him even to rest, as the interest in His ministry and His popularity were so high! Few days before the Passover feast, thrilled by joy, they were crying, “Hosanna, to the son of David” (Matthew 21:9). Yet, incredibly, less than two weeks later, on a Friday morning those same people—the people of God—were fiercely screaming: “Crucify Him, crucify Him”! How can such a fact be understood? What are the reasons?!

The implications are even more disturbing. Are we not the Lord’s people? Are we not His disciples? Are we not loving Him, and waiting for His coming? So were they! But all this did not prevent them from committing the grievous crime of murdering the Son of God! How was it possible? Let’s ask God’s Word for the answer:

“The greatest deception of the

# stering *Death?*

human mind in Christ's day was that a mere assent to the truth constitutes righteousness. In all human experience a theoretical knowledge of the truth has been proved to be insufficient for the saving of the soul. It does not bring forth the fruits of righteousness. A jealous regard for what is termed theological truth often accompanies **a hatred of genuine truth** as made manifest in life. The darkest chapters of history are burdened with the record of **crimes committed by bigoted religionists.**"<sup>3</sup>

Sadly, this truth has been proven true in the following centuries. I recently visited the death camps Auschwitz-Birkenau and Buchenwald. In the name of a "superior" doctrine, the Nazis invented terrifying methods to kill millions of people, the great majority of whom were Jewish. And what is most surprising is that they were under the belief that they were serving their country, even the interests of humanity for a better world!

We remember the Crusades, the shameful wars done in the Name of the One Who silently extended His arms on a cross, praying forgiveness for His persecutors! Marching under the flags "of the cross," for centuries Christ's "followers" were bringing death under the name of salvation, under the blessings of cardinals and bishops who were supposed to represent Christ on earth!

The holocaust with its millions of victims is explained and discussed

in many places around our planet! And it has to be! It is a horrific reality of our human history, and it has not to be repeated! What about the twenty-times more horrific number of 50 million (officially registered) heretics killed by so-called the "Holy Inquisition"—the institution of the "Holy Church," which was supposed to promote the love, the mercy and the grace of God?... Have you ever visited any museum that commemorates those centuries-long massacres?!

Yes, we may have repugnant feelings toward these realities! But we are forced to admit that they do not represent some abnormal individuals, but, sadly, the very root of mankind. Too soon after sin entered our world and our human nature, the crime of Cain testified of our new, tragic state of being.

## The truth made a curse

What about today? Are you and I any better? How do we react to things we don't like or don't agree with?

Do we ever get angry? Have we ever hated even for only a few minutes someone who has deeply, intentionally hurt us? If yes, then who were we at such a moment? Were we not some miniature Hitler, just not having an Auschwitz in which to apply the supposedly deserved "purification," or simply, just to discharge our hatred? At a sincere examination in the light of God's Word, we may painfully find out that we are suffering from the same disease, howbeit on a different scale. But the fearful fact is that five cancerous cells are cancer, just as a one-pound tumor is cancer. It is only a matter of time to be visibly proven as such.

"The same danger still exists. Many take it for granted that they are Christians, simply because they subscribe to certain theological tenets. But they have not brought the truth

**Too soon after sin entered our world and our human nature, the crime of Cain testified of our new, tragic state of being.**

into practical life. They have not believed and loved it, therefore they have not received the power and grace that come through sanctification of the truth. Men may profess faith in the **truth**; but if it does not make them sincere, kind, patient, forbearing, heavenly-minded, **it is a curse** to its possessors, and through their influence it is a curse to the world.”<sup>4</sup>

Anki Gerhardsen, a respected drama critic and journalist, wrote, in the context of the Andreas B. Breivic’s killings, about what he called the “collective guilt.”<sup>5</sup> He claimed that society (social services or other agencies) had betrayed a little boy through certain impulses and movements of our culture in such a way that might have developed the narcissistic perpetrator—in other words, claiming that society had collectively “created” a mass murderer, sharing his guilt.

The idea stands: Any lack of true love is, in a sense, the root of crime. “He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love” (1 John 4:8). Any disconnection from God, necessarily renders it impossible to love, which opens the door for crime. We might deceive ourselves, thinking that we observe God’s law, that we didn’t “kill” anybody. Yet is this the reality?

Obviously, some forms of killing are regarded with abhorrence, and we would never associate ourselves with them. But what about those that are subtler? Let the Word of God explain: “All acts of injustice that tend to shorten life; the spirit of hatred and revenge, or the indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others, or causes us even to wish them harm (for ‘whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer’); a selfish neglect of caring for the needy or suffering; all self-indulgence or unnecessary deprivation or excessive labor that tends to injure health – all these are, to a greater or less degree, violations of the sixth commandment.”<sup>6</sup> How does it feel? Aren’t we, all of us, in this decayed state? “The indulgence of any passion that leads to injurious acts toward others....” We don’t have to perform

those injurious acts to be accounted as criminals. It is sufficient to be so far away with God’s spirit, as to indulge those passions to rule our mind. The simple, “understandable” neglect to care for the other’s needs or sufferings is regarded by our Father in the same way. What would a father say about his son upon discovering that he carelessly left his younger brother/sister to suffer when he could have helped him/her? Is it not that neglect regarded as criminal, even by us? How much more by our loving Father? Thus, all kinds of abuses we cause to ourselves by overworking, by knowingly transgressing the laws of our living machinery are added to the list of our transgressions of the sixth commandment.

The essence of Lucifer’s sin ended up in a hidden desire to kill the Creator! Lucifer could not grasp that; he thought it an exaggeration, meant to make him to change his mind. And he did not alter his wicked plans.... Four thousand years later, to the astonishment of billions of faithful angels, Satan proved true the theory of sin—he was indeed seen as the most abject sort of murderer!

It is only by faith that we may not repeat this deception!

The core of our problem is not that we sometimes behave in a distorted way as described above. The problem is that human nature IS like that. We as humans are only revealing from time to time our true, desperate condition! And the additional problem is that we don’t even realize it. We assume that if we never use a gun or knife to shed blood, we are okay. But we are not! The painful truth is that we all have screamed with the Jewish leaders: “Crucify Him, crucify Him!” We all have pierced His dear hands, nailing Him on the cross, and thrust upon His loving forehead that thorny crown! And even worse, we continue to do it, any time we injure any of our fellows, directly or potentially, in our thinking. “Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.” (Matthew 25:40). The terrible question we may

bring forward is: “Am I that criminal?” And the truthful answer will come from His holy lips: “Yes, you are!” (See Matthew 26:25.) It is only by His grace that we may agree, accepting this awful truth about ourselves. Only by His grace will we not run away from Him, ashamed, or revengeful, as Judas did!

By faith we may agree that any sin, however small we may regard it, contains the hidden desire of killing the Creator!

We may cry, facing our desperate condition, together with Paul: “O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from this body of death?” (Romans 7:24, RSV.)

## Beloved “criminals”!

Praise be unto God for His graceful solutions! There is One, only One who can and will deliver all those who accept His help! The good news is that even the worst sinner can enjoy the complete recovery of God’s redeeming power! The thief on the cross, after wasting all his life in all kind and sorts of crimes, heard the beautiful, life-giving words: “Verily I say unto thee today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43) On the other cross, the Sin-Bearer Lamb of God was paying the price! Infinite Love was paying the crime! Life was conquering death. The sin of separation from God, was being redeemed by the blood of the Creator Himself! Oh, what a wonderful solution to the deep-rooted problem of murder, of sin!

At the foot of that cross is the only fountain of healing! “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1). The fountain of redeeming grace opened on Golgotha is sufficient not only to pay the penalty of all crimes of the whole humanity, but to quench the very root of them: to uproot the enmity between our hearts and God’s heart! Seeing the holy Sufferer hanging on that cross, we will be overwhelmed by realizing our ingratitude, our cruelty, and

our sinfulness. What a manner of reconciliation! “But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8). “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son *to* be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:10, 11). Instead of casting on us the death penalty we deserve, the dear eternal Father made it fall upon Jesus! “The chastisement of our peace *was* upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). This is the power of God! The arms of Jesus, spread widely to be nailed on the cross, are the warranty that the eternal arms of the Father are likewise spread widely, waiting for you and for me!

Any soul that accepts this eternal love, is led through a divine process of healing his enmity, his hatred against God and His principles! Drawn by that love, he mourns over his sins in tears of repentance and God is giving him His Own Spirit as “the Spirit of God through faith produces a new life in the soul. The thoughts and desires are brought into obedience to the will of Christ. The heart, the mind, are created anew in the image of Him who works in us to subdue all things to Himself. Then the law of God is written in the mind and heart, and we can say with Christ, ‘I delight to do Thy will, O my God’ (Psalm 40:8).”<sup>7</sup> This is The Way! (John 14:6.)

The only way to eradicate the hatred that originated in Lucifer’s heart is to accept for God’s Spirit to freely work in our lives. The result “is not a modification or improvement of the old, but a transformation of nature. There is a death to self and sin, and a new life altogether. This change can be brought about only by the effectual working of the Holy Spirit.”<sup>8</sup>

Can we love? Can we, who were **“by nature the children of wrath, even as others”** (Ephesians 2:3) love as He loved? We can, indeed, by this resurrection to His life! “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” (2 Corinthians 3:18). He is Love! Beholding Him day after day, contemplating His character, we are changed into His likeness. “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” (1 John 4:17).

### A changed life

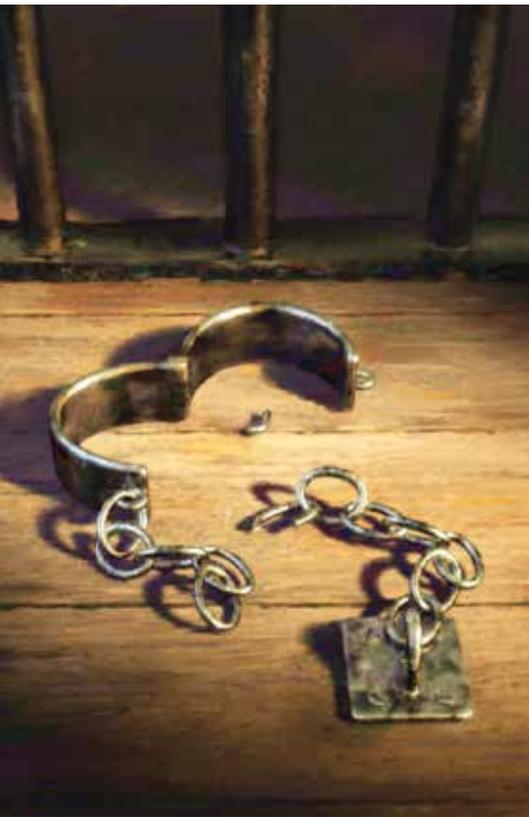
I remember when I was six, while visiting my grandparents, I saw a meek and gentle old man, talking with my grandfather. What impressed me was that in spite of his size—he was a really big man—he was nice and peaceful. The story was from the time of their detention for the Lord’s sake.

They were speaking about a double murderer who had been the terror of the entire prison.... I knew that my grandfather had spent six years in jail for the sake of his Saviour, but I did not understand who could have been that terrible man they were speaking about... Then later at home I asked my father. I still remember to my great surprise: The terrible criminal from the story was ... the same gentle old man, speaking with Grandpa! How?! My father explained: The fearful criminal asked Grandpa, many years ago, while in the same jail, about the reason why he was there. Grandpa explained about his own faith, about Jesus and His sacrifice and about Christians not partaking in any war or bloodshed. And when the criminal heard the words, “and Jesus loves you, too”, he became aggressive, and heavily beat my grandfather: “Nobody loves me! If you say it again, I will kill you.”

After some days, the story repeated almost the same way, and being hit so badly, Grandfather said: “Even if you kill me, the Lord Jesus still loves you! One day you will understand it!” It looked like that was the day! The big criminal burst in tears. “Do you really mean that He loves me? I’m a criminal! ...” “Exactly for this did Jesus come: To save criminals...” And in that prison, the miracle started to the amazement of the other prisoners. Once again, Eternal Love conquered a

The miracle started to the amazement of the other prisoners. Once again, Eternal Love conquered a criminal!





criminal! The man ended up being hit and injured by other inmates, because they would not believe how he had changed, and they wanted to prove it.

Oh, the precious story of salvation! It can be ours as well, if we accept it as the worst sinners! (See 1 Timothy 1:15.) The same Spirit of the Lord will write in our hearts, as He did thousands of thousands of times with others, before us! “When the heavenly principle of eternal love fills the heart, it will flow out to others, not merely because favors are received of them, but because love is the principle of action, and modifies the character, governs the impulses, controls the passions, subdues enmity, and elevates the affections. This love is not contracted, so as merely to include ‘me and mine,’ but is as broad as the world and as high as heaven. It is in harmony with that of the angel workers. This love, cherished in the soul, sweetens the entire life, and sheds a refining influence on all around. Possessing it, we cannot but be happy, let fortune smile or frown. And if we love God with all the heart, we must love His children also. This love is the spirit of God.”<sup>9</sup>

“Thou shalt love...”! “On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets” (Matthew 22:37-40). The law of life, the law of liberty resides in this heaven-born principle: to love as God loves. This is biblical Christianity; this is to belong to His family, to be “born of God” (John 1:13). And this, being divine, cannot be produced by humans. Only by receiving Him, who is “the way, the truth, and the life” can we live like Him and love like Him! “In him was life; and the life was the light of men” (John 1:4). And this is the ideal of God for us. “Higher than the highest human thought can reach is God’s ideal for His children. Godliness—godlikeness—is the goal to be reached.”<sup>10</sup>

How can it be fulfilled? By accepting Him, with His life, in us! “The law requires righteousness—a righteous life, a perfect character; and this man has not to give. He cannot meet the claims of God’s holy law. But Christ, coming to the earth as man, lived a holy life, and developed a perfect character. These He offers as a free gift to all who will receive them. **His life stands for the life of men.** Thus they have remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God. More than this, Christ imbues men with the attributes of God. He builds up the human character after the similitude of the divine character, a goodly fabric of spiritual strength and beauty. Thus the very righteousness of the law is fulfilled in the believer in Christ. God can ‘be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.’ (Romans 3:26).”<sup>11</sup>

And in this way, he Who is “the light of the world” (John 8:12), surprisingly, tells us: “ye are the light of the world” (Matthew 5:14). How? By the manifestation of the mystery of godliness: “which is Christ in you, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:27). It is our golden opportunity to give up to our so-called “living” and receive His life! Not only to be moral people, but to be brilliant, shining children of God. As the apostle Paul testified, so to testify likewise about our true life, acquired by faith: “...I live; yet

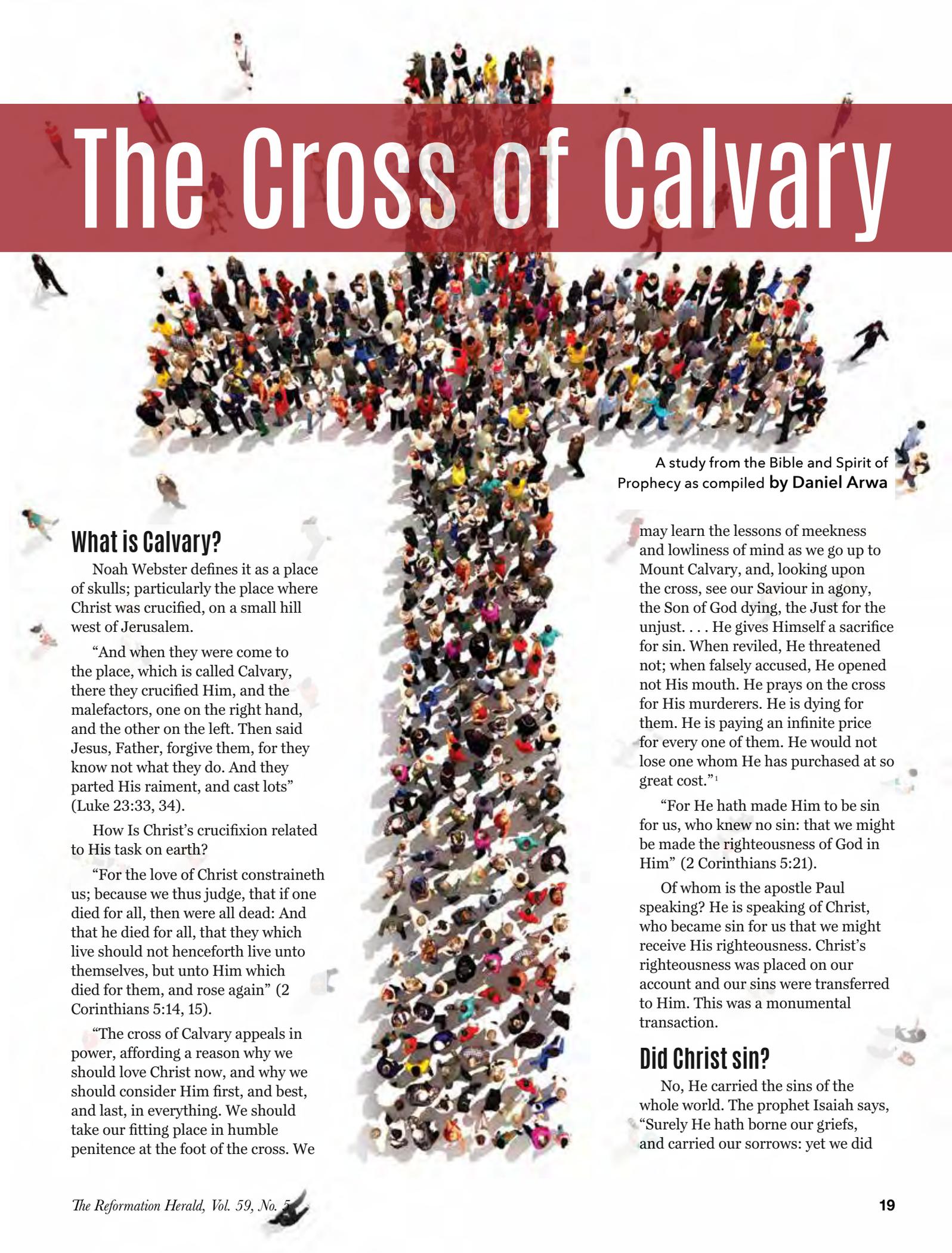
not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

## How does this happen?

The whole miracle of being “partakers on His divine nature” (2 Peter 1:4), of having in us the mind “which was also in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 2:5) revolves around the submission of self under His divine will. “When we submit ourselves to Christ, the heart is united with His heart, the will is merged in His will, the mind becomes one with His mind, the thoughts are brought into captivity to Him; **we live His life.**”<sup>12</sup> In this way we have passed from death to life; to His Life! Will you submit to Him? Will I? “He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life” (1 John 5:12). By crucifying self, together with all its sinful tastes and inclinations, we will receive and live His life. “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that **the life also of Jesus** might be made manifest in our mortal flesh” (2 Corinthians 4:10, 11). In this way eternity has been already begun for us! May this be our experience, by His abundant grace! Amen. *R*

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- <sup>1</sup> John Hooper (27 July 2011): “[Ex-Berlusconi minister defends Anders Behring Breivik](#)”. *The Guardian*. London. Retrieved 16 August 2011.
- <sup>2</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 11.
- <sup>3</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 309. [Emphasis supplied.]
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 309, 310.
- <sup>5</sup> Anki Gerhardsen, *teaterkritiker og journalist*. “Kronikk: Hvem eier 22. juli?”. *Aftenposten.no*.
- <sup>6</sup> *Patriarchs and Prophets*, p. 308.
- <sup>7</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 175.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 172.
- <sup>9</sup> *Our High Calling*, p. 175.
- <sup>10</sup> *Education*, p. 18.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 762.
- <sup>12</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, p. 312.

A large crowd of diverse people, seen from an overhead perspective, is arranged to form a large cross shape on a white background. The vertical bar of the cross is a long, narrow line of people, while the horizontal bar is a wide, flat area of people. The people are dressed in various casual and semi-formal attire, and their shadows are cast on the white surface.

# The Cross of Calvary

A study from the Bible and Spirit of Prophecy as compiled by **Daniel Arwa**

## What is Calvary?

Noah Webster defines it as a place of skulls; particularly the place where Christ was crucified, on a small hill west of Jerusalem.

“And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left. Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. And they parted His raiment, and cast lots” (Luke 23:33, 34).

How Is Christ’s crucifixion related to His task on earth?

“For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead: And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto Him which died for them, and rose again” (2 Corinthians 5:14, 15).

“The cross of Calvary appeals in power, affording a reason why we should love Christ now, and why we should consider Him first, and best, and last, in everything. We should take our fitting place in humble penitence at the foot of the cross. We

may learn the lessons of meekness and lowliness of mind as we go up to Mount Calvary, and, looking upon the cross, see our Saviour in agony, the Son of God dying, the Just for the unjust. . . . He gives Himself a sacrifice for sin. When reviled, He threatened not; when falsely accused, He opened not His mouth. He prays on the cross for His murderers. He is dying for them. He is paying an infinite price for every one of them. He would not lose one whom He has purchased at so great cost.”<sup>1</sup>

“For He hath made Him to be sin for us, who knew no sin: that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him” (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Of whom is the apostle Paul speaking? He is speaking of Christ, who became sin for us that we might receive His righteousness. Christ’s righteousness was placed on our account and our sins were transferred to Him. This was a monumental transaction.

## Did Christ sin?

No, He carried the sins of the whole world. The prophet Isaiah says, “Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did

esteem Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon Him; and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep had gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way; and the Lord had laid on Him the iniquities of us all” (Isaiah 53:4–6).

“Christ was treated as we deserve, that we might be treated as He deserves. He was condemned for our sins, in which He had no share, that we might be justified by His righteousness, in which we had no share. He suffered the death which was ours, that we might receive the life which was His. ‘With His stripes we are healed.’”<sup>2</sup>

In order for Christ to do this, He had to humble Himself and be obedient unto death and to be treated as the worst criminal of all ages by His own people.

“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Philippians 2:5–8).

“Now, of the human: He ‘was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death.’ He voluntarily assumed human nature. It was His own act, and by His own consent. He clothed His divinity with humanity. He was all the while as God, but He did not appear as God. He veiled the demonstrations of Deity, which had commanded the homage, and called forth the admiration, of the universe of God. He was God while upon earth, but He divested Himself of the form of God, and in its stead took the form and fashion of a man. He walked the earth as a man. For our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be made

rich. He laid aside His glory and His majesty. He was God, but the glories of the form of God He for a while relinquished. . . . But He walked the earth unrecognized, unconfessed, with but few exceptions, by His creatures. The atmosphere was polluted with sin and curses, in place of the anthem of praise. His lot was poverty and humiliation. . . . He voluntarily laid down His life, that in so doing He might give life and bring immortality to light. He bore the sins of the world, and endured the penalty, which rolled like a mountain upon His divine soul. He yielded up His life a sacrifice, that man should not eternally die. He died, not through being compelled to die, but by His own free will. This was humility. The whole treasure of heaven was poured out in one gift to save fallen man. He brought into His human nature all the life-giving energies that human beings will need and must receive.”<sup>3</sup>

## God became man

“Wondrous combination of man and God! He might have helped His human nature to withstand the inroads of disease by pouring from His divine nature vitality and undecaying vigor to the human. But He humbled Himself to man’s nature. He did this that the Scripture might be fulfilled; and the plan was entered into by the Son of God, knowing all the steps in His humiliation, that He must descend to make an expiation for the sins of a condemned, groaning world. What humility was this! It amazed angels. The tongue can never describe it; the imagination cannot take it in. The eternal Word consented to be made flesh! God became man! It was a wonderful humility.

“But He stepped still lower; the man must humble Himself as a man to bear insult, reproach, shameful accusations, and abuse. There seemed to be no safe place for Him in His own territory. He had to flee from place to place for His life. He was betrayed by one of His disciples; He was denied by one of His most zealous followers. He was mocked. He was crowned with a crown of thorns.

He was scourged. He was forced to bear the burden of the cross. He was not insensible to this contempt and ignominy. He submitted, but, oh! He felt the bitterness as no other being could feel it. He was pure, holy, and undefiled, yet arraigned as a criminal! The adorable Redeemer stepped down from the highest exaltation. Step by step He humbled Himself to die—but what a death! It was the most shameful, the most cruel the death upon the cross as a malefactor. He did not die as a hero in the eyes of the world, loaded with honors, as men in battle. He died as a condemned criminal, suspended between the heavens and the earth—died a lingering death of shame, exposed to the tauntings and revilings of a debased, crime-loaded, profligate multitude! ‘All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head’ (Psalm 22:7). He was numbered with the transgressors.”<sup>4</sup>

## He died in our behalf

“[Christ] was to die as man’s substitute. Man was a criminal under the sentence of death for transgression of the law of God, as a traitor, a rebel; hence a substitute for man must die as a malefactor, because He stood in the place of traitors, with all their treasured sins upon His divine soul. It was not enough that Jesus should die in order to fully meet the demands of a broken law, but he died a shameful death.”<sup>5</sup>

## Our usual attitude toward the scene of Calvary

Notwithstanding that Christ has done everything for us, how do we too often respond with regard to the cross? “Lo, this only have I found, that God hath made man upright; but they have sought out many inventions” (Ecclesiastics 7:29).

### a. The case of Judas

“Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, I

have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that. And he cast down the pieces of silver to the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matthew 27:3–5).

“Judas saw that his entreaties were in vain, and he rushed from the hall exclaiming, it is too late! it is too late! He felt that he could not live to see Jesus crucified, and in despair went out and hanged himself.”<sup>6</sup>

#### **b. The case of Peter**

“And after a while came unto [Peter] they that stood by, and said to [him], Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech bewrayeth thee. Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew. And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly” (Matthew 26:73–75).

“Peter did not know his own danger. Self-confidence misled him. He thought himself able to withstand temptation; but in a few short hours the test came, and with cursing and swearing he denied his Lord.

“When the crowing of the cock reminded him of the words of Christ, surprised and shocked at what he had just done he turned and looked at his Master. At that moment Christ looked at Peter, and beneath that grieved look, in which compassion and love for him were blended, Peter understood himself. He went out and wept bitterly. That look of Christ’s broke his heart. Peter had come to the turning point, and bitterly did he repent his sin. He was like the publican in his contrition and repentance, and like the publican he found mercy. The look of Christ assured him of pardon.”<sup>7</sup>

“Jesus died to save His people from their sins, and redemption in Christ means to cease the transgression of the law of God and to be free from

every sin; no heart that is stirred with enmity against the law of God is in harmony with Christ, who suffered on Calvary to vindicate and exalt the law before the universe. . . .

“Today sin is the same malignant thing that it was in the time of Adam. The gospel does not promise the favor of God to anyone who in impenitence breaks His law. The depravity of the human heart, the guilt of transgression, the ruin of sin, are all made plain by the cross where Christ has made for us a way of escape.”<sup>8</sup>

“In consideration of this, can men have one particle of exaltation? As they trace down the life and sufferings and humiliation of Christ, can they lift their proud heads as though they were to bear no trials, no shame, no humiliation? I say to the followers of Christ, Look to Calvary, and blush for shame your self-important ideas. All this humiliation of the Majesty of heaven was for guilty, condemned man. He went lower and lower in his humiliation, until there were no lower depths that he could reach in order to lift man up from his moral defilement. All this was for you who are striving for the supremacy—striving for human praise, for human exaltation; you who are afraid you will not receive all that deference, that respect from human minds, that you think is your due. Is this Christlike?

“‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.’ He died to make an atonement, and to become a pattern for every one who would be his disciple. Shall selfishness come into your hearts? And will those who set not before them the pattern, Jesus, extol your merits? You have none except as they come through Jesus Christ. Shall pride be harbored after you have seen Deity humbling himself, and then as man debasing himself, till there was no lower point to which he could descend? ‘Be astonished, O ye heavens,’ and be amazed, ye inhabitants of the earth, that such returns should be made to our Lord! What contempt! what

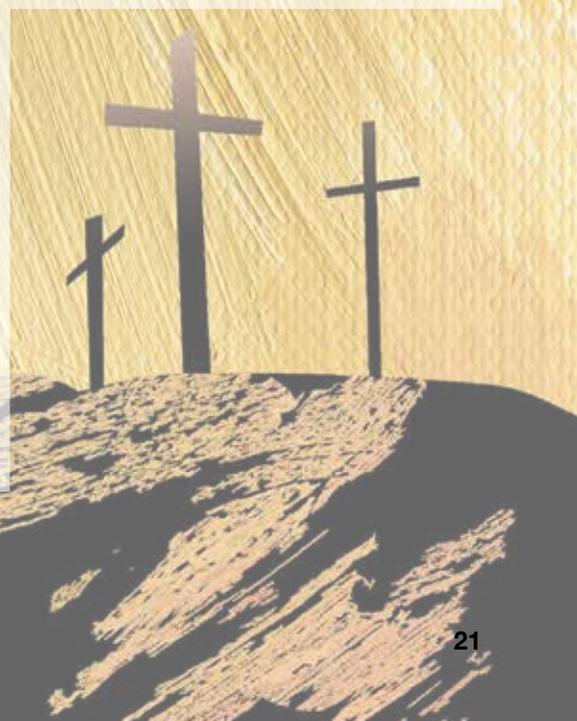
wickedness! what formality! what pride! what efforts made to lift up man and glorify self, when the Lord of glory humbled himself, agonized, and died the shameful death upon the cross in our behalf!”<sup>9</sup>

## **The cross triumphant**

“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).

“For I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ, and Him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2).

“The death of Christ upon the cross made sure the destruction of him who has the power of death, who was the originator of sin. When Satan is destroyed, there will be none to tempt to evil; the atonement will never need to be repeated; and there will be no danger of another rebellion in the universe of God. That which alone can effectually restrain from sin in this world of darkness, will prevent sin in heaven. The significance of the death of Christ will be seen by saints and angels. Fallen men could not have a home in the paradise of God without the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Shall we not then exalt the cross of Christ? The angels ascribe honor and glory to Christ, for even they are not secure except by looking to the sufferings of the Son of God.



It is through the efficacy of the cross that the angels of heaven are guarded from apostasy. Without the cross they would be no more secure against evil than were the angels before the fall of Satan. Angelic perfection failed in heaven. Human perfection failed in Eden, the paradise of bliss. All who wish for security in earth or heaven must look to the Lamb of God. . . . The death of Christ on the cross of Calvary is our only hope in this world, and it will be our theme in the world to come. . . . If men would contemplate the love of Christ, displayed in the cross, their faith would be strengthened to appropriate the merits of his shed blood, and they would be cleansed and saved from sin.”<sup>10</sup>

“Without the cross, man could not have connection with the Father. On it hangs our every hope. In view of it the Christian may advance with the steps of a conqueror; for from it streams the light of the Saviour’s love. When the sinner reaches the cross, and looks up to the one who died to save him, he may rejoice with fullness of joy; for his sins are pardoned. Kneeling at the cross, he has reached the highest place to which man can attain.... Through the cross we learn that our heavenly Father loves us with an infinite and everlasting love, and draws us to Him with more than a mother’s yearning sympathy for wayward child. Can we wonder that Paul exclaimed, ‘God forbid that I should glory, save in

the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ.’ It is our privilege also to glory in the cross of Calvary, our privilege to give ourselves wholly to Him who gave Himself for us. Then with the light of love that shines from His face on ours, we shall go forth to reflect it to those in darkness.”<sup>11</sup>

“Jesus placed the cross in line with the light coming from heaven, for it is there that it shall catch the eye of man. The cross is in direct line with the shining of divine countenances, so that by beholding the cross men may see and know God and Jesus Christ whom He hath sent.... In beholding the cross that view is extended to God, and His hatred of sin is discerned. But while we behold in the cross God’s hatred of sin, we also behold His love for sinners, which is stronger than death. To the world the cross is the incontrovertible argument that God is truth and light and love.”<sup>12</sup>

## Conclusion

“Look, O look upon the cross of Calvary; behold the Royal victim suffering on your account!”<sup>13</sup>

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments: for this is the whole duty of man” (Ecclesiastics 12:13).

“The Son of God was rejected and despised for our sakes. Can you, in full view of the cross, beholding by the eye of faith the sufferings of Christ, tell

your tale of woe, your trials? Can you nurse revenge of your enemies in your heart while the prayer of Christ comes from His pale and quivering lips for His revilers, His murderers, ‘Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do’ (Luke 23:34)?”<sup>14</sup>

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us (our) sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

“It is high time we devoted the few remaining precious hours of our probation to washing our robes of character and making them white in the blood of the Lamb that we may be of that white-robed company who shall stand about the great white throne.”<sup>15</sup>

“In the cross, In the cross, Be my glory ever, Till my ransomed soul shall find, Rest beyond the river.”<sup>16</sup> *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> *That I May Know Him*, p. 65.
- <sup>2</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 25.
- <sup>3</sup> *The SDA Bible Commentary [E. G. White Comments]*, vol. 5, pp. 1126, 1127.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 1127.
- <sup>5</sup> *The Review and Herald*, September 4, 1900.
- <sup>6</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 722.
- <sup>7</sup> *Christ’s Object Lessons*, pp. 152–154.
- <sup>8</sup> *Faith and Works*, pp. 95, 96.
- <sup>9</sup> *The Review and Herald*, July 5, 1887.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, December 30, 1889.
- <sup>11</sup> *The Review and Herald*, April 29, 1902.
- <sup>12</sup> *The Signs of the Times*, March 7, 1895.
- <sup>13</sup> *That I May Know Him*, p. 65.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*
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# JUSTIFICATION BY *Faith*

by Davi Paes Silva

## What is justification?

Justification is the divine act of declaring sinners to be righteous on account of their faith in Jesus. The Lord paid the price for the sins of the whole world completely and finally on the cross, and those who accept Him by faith are forgiven (see Romans 3:21; 4:5; 5:1).

“The Greek noun for justification is derived from the Greek verb *dikaioo*, meaning ‘to acquit’ or ‘to declare righteous’ (used by Paul in Rom 4:2, 5; 5:1). It is a legal term used of a favorable verdict in a trial.”<sup>1</sup>

“Justification is wholly of grace and not procured by any works that fallen man can do.”<sup>2</sup>

“In [Christ] is our hope, our justification, our righteousness.”<sup>3</sup>

“The repentant soul realizes that his justification comes because Christ, as his Substitute and Surety, has died for him, is his atonement and righteousness.”<sup>4</sup>

“As the penitent sinner, contrite before God, discerns Christ’s atonement in his behalf and accepts this atonement as his only hope in this life and the future life, his sins are pardoned. This is justification by faith. . . .

“Pardon and justification are one and the same thing. Through faith, the believer passes from the position of a rebel, a child of sin and Satan, to the position of a loyal subject of Christ Jesus, not because of an inherent goodness, but because Christ receives him as His child by adoption. The sinner receives the forgiveness of his sins, because these sins are borne by his Substitute and Surety. The Lord speaks to His heavenly Father, saying: ‘This is My child, I relieve him from the condemnation of death, giving him My life insurance policy - eternal life - because I have taken his place and have suffered for his sins. He is even My beloved son.’ Thus man, pardoned, and clothed with the beautiful garments of Christ’s righteousness, stands faultless before God. . . .

“Justification is the opposite of condemnation. God’s boundless mercy is exercised toward those who are wholly undeserving. He forgives transgressions and sins for the sake of Jesus, who has become the propitiation for our sins. Through faith in Christ, the guilty transgressor is brought into favor with God and into the strong hope of life eternal.”<sup>5</sup>

## What is faith?

“Belief, trust’; faith is the means by which sinful people can experience and enjoy all the blessings of salvation. It is a complete trust in Jesus for salvation from sin and coming judgment.”<sup>6</sup>

“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen” (Hebrews 11:1).

“Faith is the clasping of the hand of Christ in every emergency.”<sup>7</sup>

“Saving faith is a transaction by which those who receive Christ join themselves in covenant relation with God. Genuine faith is life. A living faith means an increase of vigor, a confiding trust, by which the soul becomes a conquering power.”<sup>8</sup>

“Faith is trusting God - believing that He loves us and knows best what is for our good. Thus, instead of our own, it leads us to choose His way. In place of our ignorance, it accepts His wisdom; in place of our weakness, His strength; in place of our sinfulness, His righteousness. Our lives, ourselves, are already His; faith acknowledges His ownership and accepts its blessing. Truth, uprightness, purity, have been pointed

out as secrets of life's success. It is faith that puts us in possession of these principles."<sup>9</sup>

## What does the Bible say about justification by faith?

Let us quote some Bible portions about the theme in the Old and New Testaments.

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord said that "we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousness are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away" (Isaiah 64:6). The prophet uses the expression "filthy rags" referring to garments stained during menstruation. We should take very seriously this declaration. This Bible verse says that "we are all as an unclean thing," and there is no exception.

The apostle Paul in his epistle to the Christians in Rome wrote:

"What then? Are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone

out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God" (Romans 3:9-19).

After describing the condition of men and women, Paul affirms: "Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (verse 20).

The law of God is a perfect reflection of God's character and His character is righteous. Then, to be considered righteous before God, we need to be in perfect harmony with His law. On the other hand, Paul declares that no one will be considered righteous by the deeds of the law, because the purpose of the law is not to justify sinful man but to reveal his true spiritual condition. In other

words, we cannot be justified or be considered righteous by obeying God's law. "We do not earn salvation by our obedience."<sup>10</sup>

But the Bible speaks about several people that were known as "righteous men." Let us mention some of them:

**Abel:** "By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous" (Hebrews 11:4).

**Enoch:** "Before his translation [Enoch] had this testimony, that he pleased God" (verse 5).

**Noah:** "[He] became heir of the righteousness which is by faith" (verse 7).

**Abraham:** "What shall we say then that Abraham our father, as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory; but not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness" (Romans 4:1-3). What "scripture" is Paul talking about?

In Genesis 15, we find the following dialogue between the Lord and Abram:

"Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward. And

Debis vendi as aut aut  
explita qui optat etum  
hilitati intur, con exeribu  
sdant, cuptati blatestios  
nonseque nimportint,  
ipsam ut qui bearum  
eaquossi utendit



Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus? And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed: and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir. And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir. And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be. And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness” (verses 1-6). The faith of Abram in the promises of the Lord was accounted righteousness in his behalf.

Did Abram commit any sin or mistake after being declared righteous by the Lord? What happened when he “journeyed from thence toward the south country, and dwelled between Kadesh and Shur, and sojourned in Gerar”?

“And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent, and took Sarah. But God came to Abimelech in a dream by night, and said to him, Behold, thou art but a dead man, for the woman which thou hast taken; for she is a man’s wife” (Genesis 20:1-3).

When questioned by Abimelech about the reason of his deception, Abraham explained: “Because I thought, Surely the fear of God is not in this place; and they will slay me for my wife’s sake. And yet indeed she is my sister; she is the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife” (verses 11 and 12).

This fact demonstrates that when a person is justified he or she is still subject to the weakness of sinful humanity. As a matter of fact, Abraham had this weak point in his character. Before this problem in Gerar, he had committed the same mistake in Egypt. (See Genesis 12:10-20.)

How about Noah? “Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God” (Genesis

6:9). The whole life of Noah, his willing obedience to the instructions of the Lord in spite of the opposition of the whole world, proved him to be an “heir of righteousness.” But he was not free from the frailties of human beings. After the Flood, he also committed a serious mistake when he became drunk “and became uncovered in his tent.”

The reason why men and women cannot be justified by their obedience or good works is because they are sinners; they have sinful natures and sinful tendencies. Being sinners, they cannot produce righteous acts of obedience.

Jesus said in plain words that the condition to enter into the kingdom of God is possessing a “righteousness that exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees” (Matthew 5:20). God demands much more than this.

## **How can we possess the righteousness that satisfies God’s standard?**

Paul answers this vital question with the following words: “But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference: For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus. Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law” (Romans 3:21-28).

We should stress some essential points contained in this scripture:

The righteousness of God (the only true righteousness) has been revealed apart from the law, being witnessed by the law and the prophets. Who revealed the righteousness of God to the world? Jesus Christ in His life and His death on the cross of Calvary. Since Christ, being God, is the Source of the true righteousness, only He could reveal the perfect righteousness of God. And the law declares that His righteousness is perfect. It is the only righteousness that satisfies the demands of the law. This righteousness is offered to all who believe, and it can be received only by faith in Jesus Christ.

In verse 23 Paul declares that “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” Then all the world is in need of justification.

Verse 24 says that we are justified freely by His grace. There is no other way.

Verse 26 reads: “That [God] might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.” This is indeed a powerful scripture, and we should spend some time on it. How can God be just and, at the same time, justify repentant sinners who believe in Jesus? By faith in Jesus, the confessed sins are transferred to Him, and His perfect righteousness is credited to the account of the sinner. In this way he or she is considered a righteous person.

Paul concludes his explanation about justification in verse 28, when he declares: “We conclude that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law.”

Romans chapter 3 is closed with this powerful declaration: “Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law” (verse 31).

We are not saved by our obedience to the law, but we are saved from the disobedience to the law. The angel Gabriel said to Joseph about Jesus: “Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

According to many scriptures quoted so far, faith is the key element

in justification. But we should keep in mind that faith is not a human byproduct. Faith is a gift of God. “So they faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Romans 10:17).

“Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1, NKJV).

## Imputed righteousness

The apostle Paul starts chapter 4 of Romans with an interesting question: “What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.” And he continues his reasoning: “For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness” (verse 1-4, NKJV).

Paul makes it clear that the only way we can be justified before God is by faith. Let us continue reading Romans 4: “Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt” (verse 4). In other words, if we work during a whole month, and at the end receive a salary, this money is not the result of grace but of works. But if at the end of the month, without working, we receive wages, these are given totally by grace, because we did not deserve them.

“But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness, just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works: ‘Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; Blessed is the man to whom the Lord shall not impute sin’” (verses 5-8, NKJV).

## David’s personal experience

The verses quoted by Paul in Romans 4 are found also in Psalm 32. “Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. Blessed is the man unto whom the

Lord imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.” And then David identifies himself as that man: “When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long. For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” (verses 1-5).

Whose sins is David talking about? He is acknowledging the terrible sins that he committed against the Lord as recorded in 2 Samuel 11. He committed adultery with Bathsheba and murder against her husband. How could David be justified? How could the Lord not impute sin to David? He said: “I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin.” When David acknowledged and confessed His sin he was forgiven or justified. How could this be?

“To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him” (2 Corinthians 5:19-21).

Why was David’s sin not imputed to him? Why was he justified? Though he was a great sinner, when he acknowledged his transgression his sin was transferred to Christ, the pure Lamb of God, in whom there was no sin. In other words, our sins, through heartfelt confession, are imputed to Christ, who knew no sin, and His perfect righteousness is imputed to us, who knew no righteousness. A wonderful transaction!

What did David do to be justified? He believed in his Substitute, the sin-bearer; he repented of his sin and confessed it to the Lord. This is the only way that sinners can be justified. *R*

## References

- <sup>1</sup> From Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible. © Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997. Used by permission.
- <sup>2</sup> *Faith and Works*, p. 20.
- <sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 36.
- <sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 101.
- <sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 103, 104.
- <sup>6</sup> From Nelson’s NKJV Study Bible, © Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1997. Used by permission.
- <sup>7</sup> *Gospel Workers*, p. 262.
- <sup>8</sup> *The Desire of Ages*, p. 347.
- <sup>9</sup> *Education*, p. 253.
- <sup>10</sup> *Steps to Christ*, p. 61.

# No Ordinary Man

By Charles Balbach

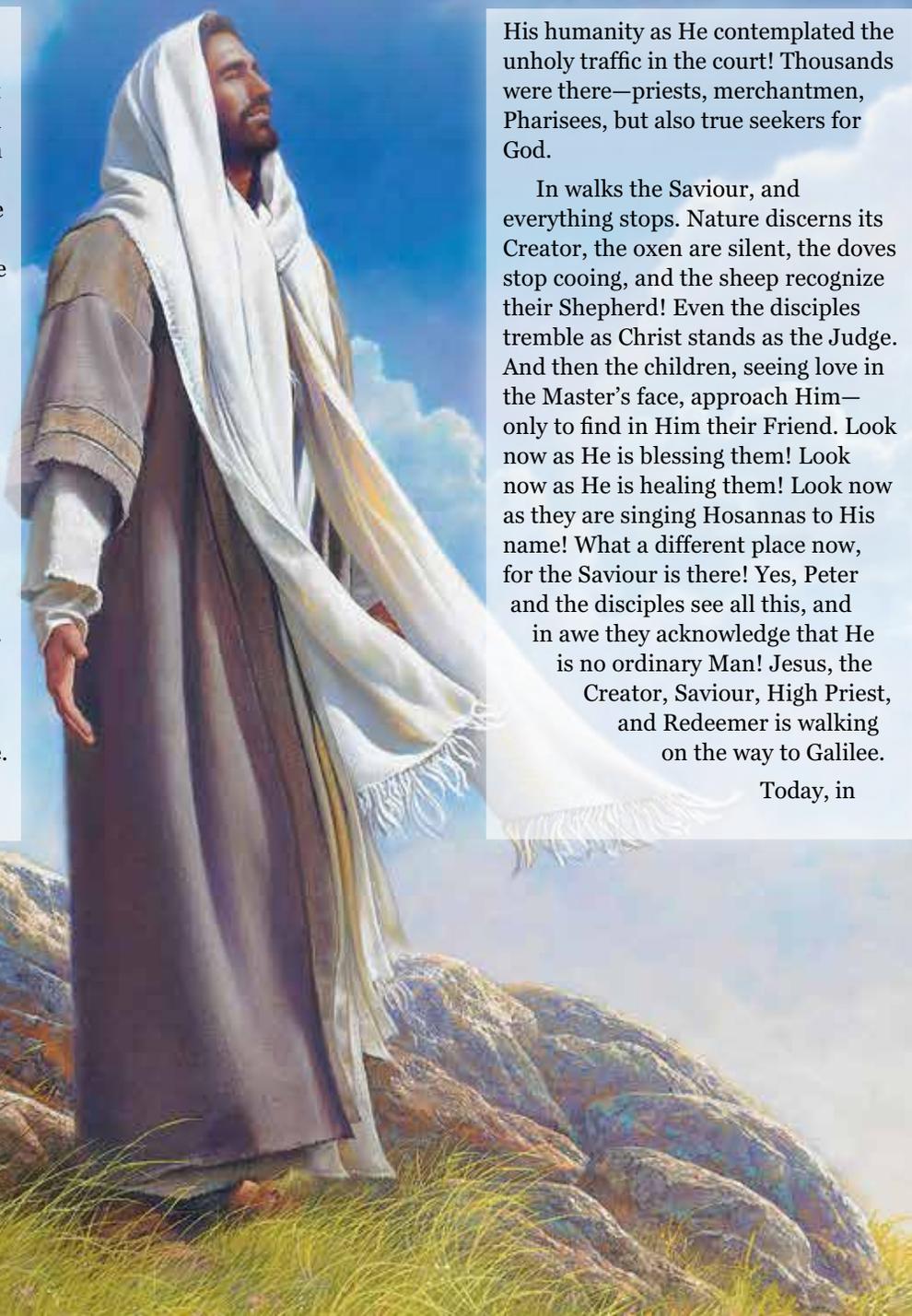
All of the gospel according to John is beautiful, from the 1<sup>st</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> chapter. It begins with the Word, and ends with saying that all the books in the world are not enough to contain the things that Jesus did. My favorite book has always been John's gospel, for he captures so beautifully the love of God through Jesus Christ! (For that matter, the whole Bible is God's special gift to us!)

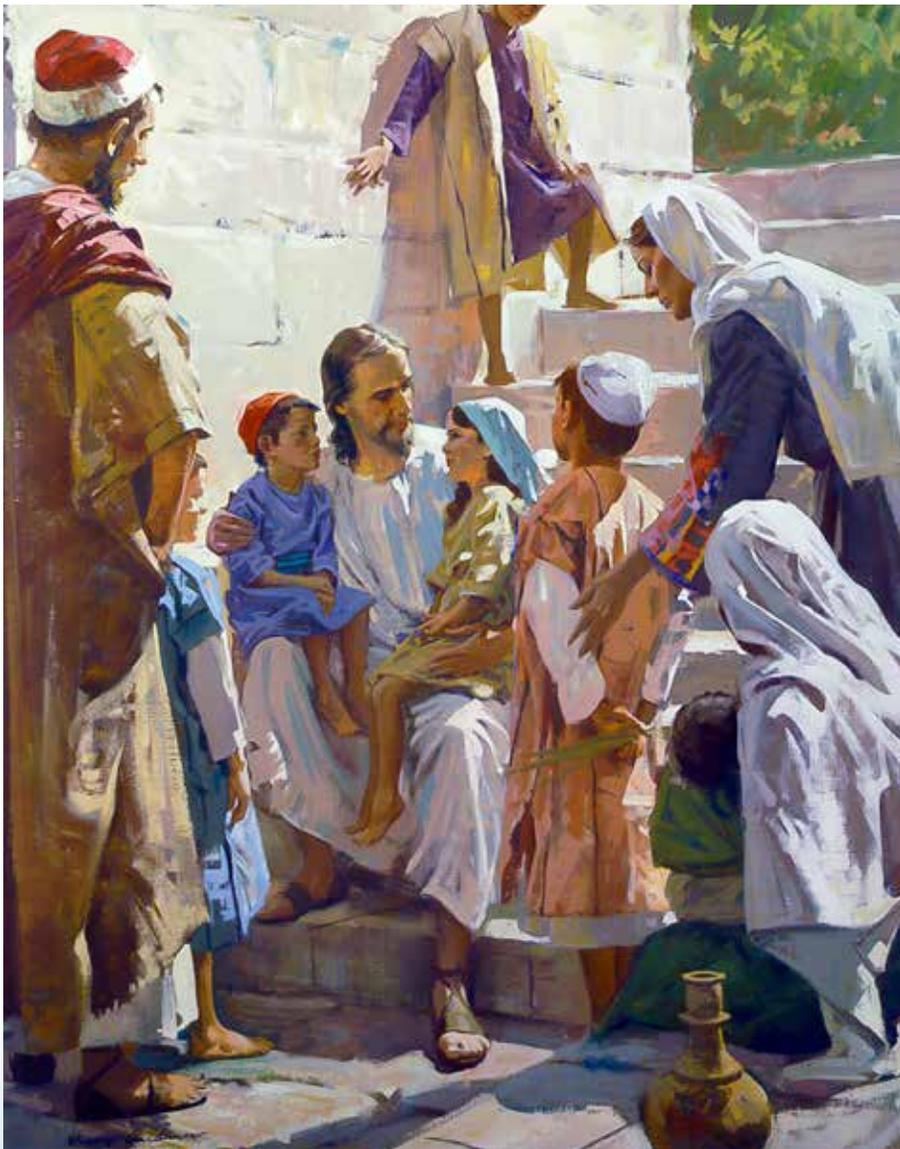
The 4<sup>th</sup> chapter is where we'll stop today, a gem! Christ and His disciples start early, on foot, but cheerful. There is Peter with them, so it must not be too quiet. They pass by peasants coming the other way toward Jerusalem, and merchantmen as well. These all see Jesus, but see only an ordinary man. Peter and the other disciples know that He's not ordinary, for they have witnessed His work at the wedding feast and the cleansing of the temple. Yes, they were there on that day when His divinity flashed through

His humanity as He contemplated the unholy traffic in the court! Thousands were there—priests, merchantmen, Pharisees, but also true seekers for God.

In walks the Saviour, and everything stops. Nature discerns its Creator, the oxen are silent, the doves stop cooing, and the sheep recognize their Shepherd! Even the disciples tremble as Christ stands as the Judge. And then the children, seeing love in the Master's face, approach Him—only to find in Him their Friend. Look now as He is blessing them! Look now as He is healing them! Look now as they are singing Hosannas to His name! What a different place now, for the Saviour is there! Yes, Peter and the disciples see all this, and in awe they acknowledge that He is no ordinary Man! Jesus, the Creator, Saviour, High Priest, and Redeemer is walking on the way to Galilee.

Today, in





priests and Levites pass by that way and see only an ordinary man, nothing more than a Galilean among others. Nothing stands out, for they're too busy with their "holy responsibilities" to notice what the Baptist did when he first saw Jesus.

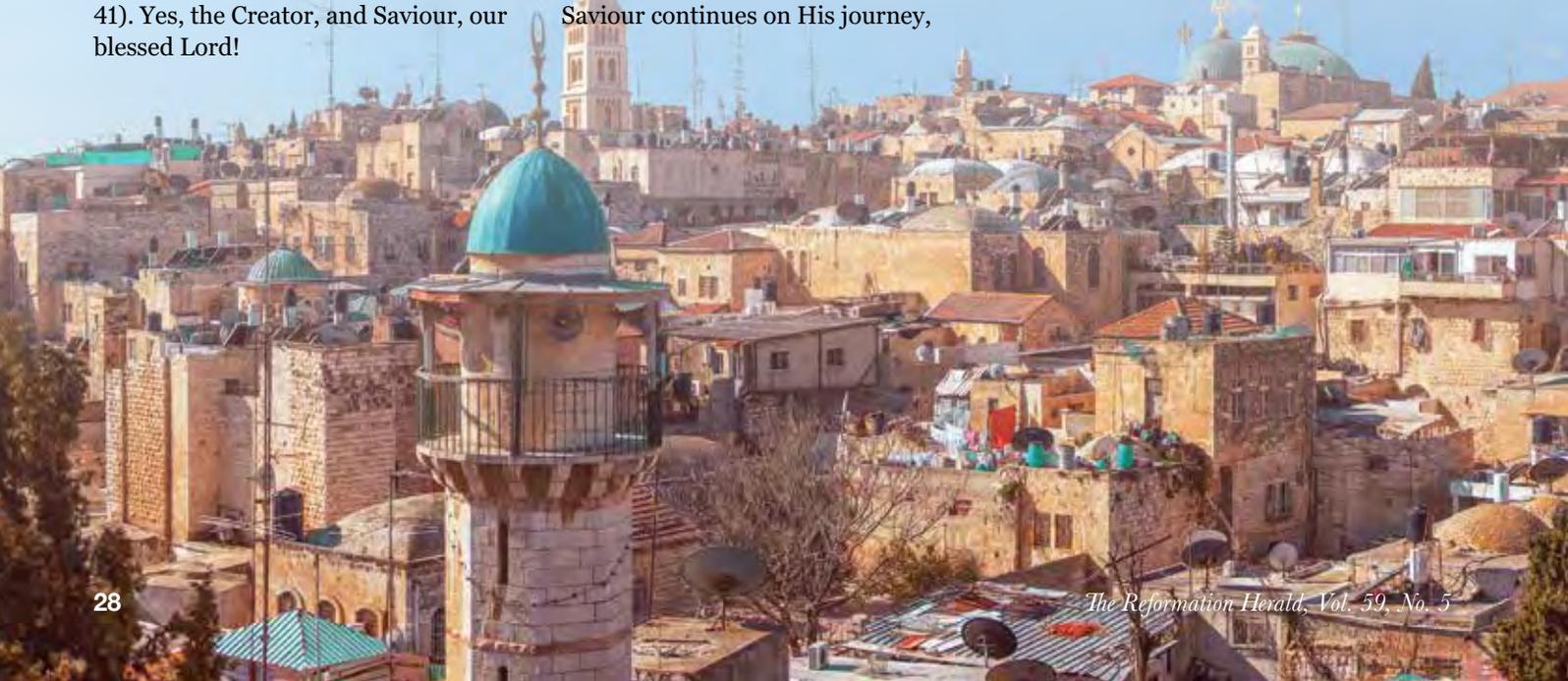
"When Jesus came to be baptized, John recognized in Him a purity of character that he had never before perceived in any man. The very atmosphere of His presence was holy and awe-inspiring. . . . Never had He come in contact with a human being from whom there breathed an influence so divine."<sup>1</sup>

You can imagine John the Baptist, a man of God, seeing God in this Man. He must have lit up, the Baptist. No wonder he uses the word "Behold" and again "Behold"—it flows out so freely from him!

Mothers with their little ones also cross His path. O! Would you look a little closer, please? He would love to bless your children! Only an ordinary man, they see! Well, let's ask the angels what they think. What think ye, angels, ordinary? "Oh no! No! No! A thousand times NO! He is our blessed Creator, and the Redeemer of the world." Ask them again, and they will shout, "Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in. Who is this King of

a special way, we see Him as the Saviour, for He will save one (verse 29), He will save many (verse 39), and He will save many more (verse 41). Yes, the Creator, and Saviour, our blessed Lord!

What think ye? Which day did He prefer, one of creation's days, or this day, where He would save and rescue one, many, and many more? As the Saviour continues on His journey,



glory? The Lord of hosts, he is the King of glory” (Psalm 24:7–10).

And now our Saviour is at the opening of the beautiful valley of Shechem, and soon at Jacob’s well! The beloved in his account tells us in verse 4 that He “must needs go through Samaria.” Yes, yes, He must needs go through Samaria, blessed Samaritans. Surely the road passes that way, but you and I know the real reason He “must needs go through Samaria.” There was one, and there were many, and many more whom He must save! O yes, Saviour, pass by and bless them!!!

The woman in our story, the woman of Samaria, has left her house, pitcher in hand. To the well she would go and back. Her heart was heavy, a secret she held made it so. Coming to her destination, she sees an ordinary man—an ordinary Jew, that is. But her heart He had read and her secret was known to Him. Free her of her burden He would, thereby letting her know that He was not quite as ordinary a man as she thought.

“Give me to drink,” was His request, when in reality what He was more interested in was the Living Water she needed.

Surprised she was, for this was not ordinary! Never had a Jewish man spoken to her before in a conversation, “for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans” (Verse 9). She little knew how much this Jewish Man had to do with her. But she catches the difference in this Man—impossible not to notice if you look a little

closer. Soon she’s calling Him “Sir,” 3 times actually. She must have seen something special! He offers her a different type of water, one that quenches thirst! Living water, He said.

Wow, this conversation was no longer ordinary. Then it was that He mentioned her burden: “Go, call thy husband!” I have none, says she—and O surprise when He says, yes, I know. Five you’ve had, and the one whom you’re with is not yours. No longer ordinary to her, this Man had revealed her secret in less than 5 minutes. She was convinced that He knew all things that she ever did. “A prophet you are,” said she, soon enough wondering what kind of prophet. Her heart was opened to this stranger, at least a prophet. But there’s a question kept coming up, and ask she must:

“I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ: when He is come, He will tell us all things” (Verse 25).

Could it be? O friend, please appreciate this moment. Satan and his host were there, powerless to intervene. Had they just lost a soul? There was silence in heaven, as the angels waited for the answer. God’s universe beheld and wondered. O blessed Saviour!

Jesus said unto her, “I that speak unto thee am he” (Verse 26).

Settled, she thought, too good to be true. The Messiah here, at the entrance of the valley of Shechem, so close to the city of Sychar!

Dear friends, Jesus said that He is the Messiah, no ordinary man, and the

Father confirmed it 3 times, calling Him, “My Son.”

“It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true. I am one that bear witness of myself, and the Father that sent me beareth witness of me” (John 8:17, 18).

Well, that settles it for me! How about you? Does He pass by as an ordinary man or as your Saviour?

The woman then left her water pot—there was too much in her heart! How different from her walk to the well with a burdened heart. It is now a run to the city, for her heart is joyous, for the Messiah was at Jacob’s well. Everyone needs to know!

“Come, see a man,” she said to all in the town. I rather think she yelled as loud as possible. Much noise, much commotion, too much to miss if you didn’t listen!

He “told me all things that I ever did” (John 4:29). How many times she repeated these words, we’ll know only in heaven. She doesn’t say He is a Jew, but says instead, “Is not this the Messiah?”

They came out of their houses and shops and it made a beautiful line of people walking to the Saviour. Look at them, for they walk quickly. Admire them we shall, for they saw that He was a Jew, but they nevertheless heard Him. Into their home He was invited, and there He abode. What a fuss they made about His lodging and eating. You see, hospitable they were, and when they saw the love of God in the face of their Guest, O how special



He became! I can see them all wanting Him in their homes and giving Him the best sleeping quarters they had. The best place at the eating table no doubt was given Him.

Pomegranates, figs, dates, and raisins were set before Him. They spared nothing. There was very little sleeping that first night for many of those Samaritans; their hearts were filled with God's love for them. They were assured by Jesus that God loved them, that God loves each individual. Some searched the scrolls, reading over and over the prophecies concerning the Messiah. Others went to their relatives and friends in nearby villages. Come, come, the Messiah is in Sychar, the Messiah is with us. Those two days went by too quickly, the hours seemed like minutes. The Messiah was with them, and their homes felt like mansions in heaven. First an ordinary Jew, but after two days they confirmed and said to the woman, "Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world" (Verse 42).

They also knew, they were SURE, they said. He had done no miracles in the 2 days, but they were sure! Why? They heard Him, and they saw the love of God in His face!

O friend, have you invited Him to your home for 2 days? It'll never be the same, never, ever! He is a Friend, He is the Saviour, No ordinary Man, this One!

Now, how do I personally know that He is no ordinary Man? Dear friend, please listen a moment:

I have stage 4 cancer, time limited on this earth, but "he that believeth on the Son HATH eternal life" (John 3:36). In our recovery efforts, I say ours, because the whole family, church family, and friends, all who are praying for me are involved, are at a clinic in Mexico! Three weeks of therapy, treatments, challenges, and blessings! Saturday night, the

28<sup>th</sup>, brought a crisis, the blessed Holy Spirit, always working to draw all men unto God! My sinful life was too much, I had slipped from the Lord; we always do when in our own strength. As I said, a crisis came, and I needed to be brought back to the not-so-ordinary Man, to the Saviour. Well, in Mexico, Saturday nights are extremely noisy, in a district where the nightclubs and event centers are. The clinic happens to be in this district. Impossible to sleep!

The Holy Spirit would try again, this time reminding me of Jacob's struggle with the Angel. And that story kept getting bigger and bigger in my mind. Is it possible that God still loves me, the filth I have been? "O Lord, if so, You're going to have to teach me to live for You, 24 hours a day. I don't know how to do that. Always getting tempted by the entertainment of this world! O Lord, I don't have the strength of Jacob, but I won't let you go, Lord, till You bless me!" Dear friend, tears and more tears, I needed to know that He still loved me! "I won't let You go, blessed Saviour, You supply the strength for even bothering You!"

Well, true to a heart of God and only God, the answer came in the form of two words. Now I want to tell you that it was audible, for so it seemed. But through the conscience, these two words were expressed, "My son!" Two words, but said so beautifully, "My son." I sensed His smile as He spoke that precious phrase! My son, My son, My son! Those two words have not stopped ringing in my ears! He knows exactly how He spoke to me, but it was clear; and now I know, He still loves me. Now I have my Jesus again!!! Dear friend, I, too, came to the well with not only a burden, but chains! But there was the Saviour!

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest; and finding none, he saith, I will return unto my house whence I came out. And

when he cometh, he findeth it swept and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh to him seven other spirits more wicked than himself; and they enter in, and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first" (Luke 11:24-26).

At His command, I was freed. He specializes in breaking chains! Now I also left the pitcher, and am running to the city. I also need to shout to everyone, the Messiah is come, and He has living waters.

The next morning I told my boys, "I've given my heart to the Lord Jesus, and I'm cleaning up my phone from things that have distracted me." I did, and haven't missed any of it a bit! I talked to the nurses and doctors, if not once, then twice about my Jesus. As many patients as are here, I'm telling them about Jesus. I called my friends far and near, they need to know, Jesus saves. I talked to my friend Bosco in Africa, and he said to me, "Brother Charles, if I don't see you on earth, I'll see you in heaven!" I said, "Yes, by God's grace, in heaven. But first I want to come to Africa one more time to tell all my brethren there, Jesus saves, Jesus saves!" Then I talked to my friend Flavio in Brazil. He said, "I want to see you at the General Conference here in Brazil in 2019." I told him, "Yes, I'd like to be there." But I told him that I want to come before that, for I want to go to all our churches in Brazil and shout, "Jesus saves! Jesus saves!" He told me that I need to stay at his house, and I said, "Yes, pick me up at the airport!" I also want to visit our brethren and youth in Peru. Samaritan woman, maybe you can outrun me, but I still have a very loud voice. Jesus saves, Jesus saves! All in God's hands, if He will give me strength!

O blessed Saviour—No Ordinary Man! *R*

## Reference

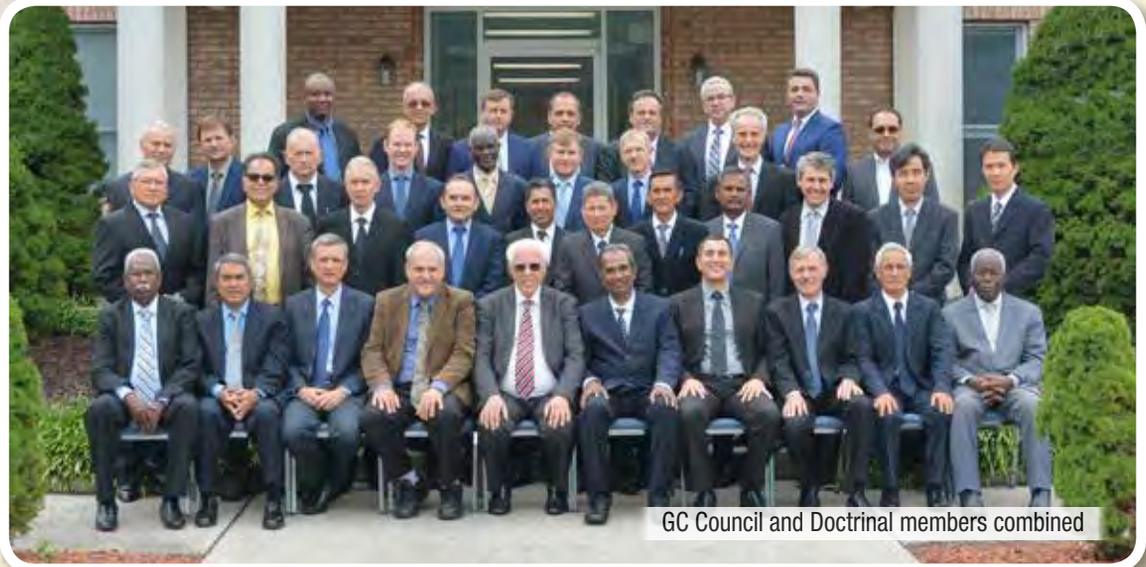
<sup>1</sup>*Desire of Ages*, p. 110.

# General Conference Annual Council

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# Thankful for Time

By Bethany Montrose

**W**hy does Billy always get new toys?" little Danny mused as he sat on an old log and chiseled off a piece of wood for his birdhouse.

Billy the neighbor had just gotten a drone. "And it's not just a drone, but the newest and best model," he thought enviously.

Soon the rumble of Dad's old pick-up truck was heard.

"I wonder what Johnny's dad's car sounds like when he drives up..." thought Danny as he washed the sawdust off his hands. "I heard that he just got a brand new BMW last week. I bet it sounds a lot better than our old clunker."

"Good evening!" called that ever-friendly voice of Dad. That was the signal to come say hello and receive a big warm hug before heading to the dinner table.

After dinner, Dad asked, "Do you have all the pieces for our birdhouse? All you were missing was just that one little end piece, right?"

"Yes," replied Danny sadly. "But I don't feel like working on it tonight."

"Remember, we decided to glue it tonight and take it to the Craft Fair tomorrow to raise money for missions," reminded Dad.

Meanwhile, Danny thought to himself, "If we don't get it ready in time, then maybe I can keep it and sell it myself and maybe start saving for that kite I want to buy." But he knew better than to say anything; surely Dad would not be pleased with such thinking.

As they started on their project, Dad asked, "How was your day?"

Billy blurted out, "Bad..."

"I'm sorry to hear that," said Dad. "The birdhouse looks great. What's the matter?"

"Well, you see.... Billy got a new drone today and got to play with it all day. I saw when the mailman brought it in a nice, big box," answered Danny.

"I'm sorry you feel hurt by that. Do you think that is the right attitude to have about it, though?" asked Father.

"But I never get things like that..." moaned Danny.

"Well, if you cheer up, perhaps we could ask Billy to give us a tour. Let's try."

As they finished the birdhouse and walked over to Billy's house, Danny said a prayer in his mind: "Dear Jesus, forgive me for being jealous and discontent. Help me to do better and be happy for others."

When they arrived, Danny got the courage to ask, "Billy, I saw you got a drone. I've never seen one close-up. Would you give me a tour sometime?"

Billy smiled and said, "Sure, I'd be glad to. I'm still learning about it... But I'd love to. You see, my dad is always away on business and it seems that my mom is always at work. So it gets lonely here. Would you like to come over and we can take turns flying it?"

The next day, Danny and Dad took the birdhouse to the Craft Fair. An older lady bought it and said, "You know, I used to have a grandson, but he moved far, far away. I'm getting rid of some of his toys. Would you like a kite? It was a really good one that flies high."

That night, as Danny went to bed, he thought, "Poor Billy. He has lots of stuff. But it doesn't make him happy. I'm so thankful my dad is able to make things with me and have fun times together. And I even got a kite today!"

Just before falling asleep, he remembered the Bible verse, "Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Philippians 4:11).